

20 Years of Environmental Cooperation



among China, Japan and
the Republic of Korea

Edited by
Department of International Cooperation,
Ministry of Ecology and Environment, PRC

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中国环境出版集团



中国环境出版
天猫旗舰店

ISBN 978-7-5111-3923-8



9 787511 139238 >

定价：45.00 元

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China Environment Publishing Group · Beijing

图书在版编目 (CIP) 数据

中日韩环境合作二十年 = 20 Years of Environmental Cooperation among China, Japan and the Republic of Korea: 英文 / 生态环境部国际合作司主编. — 北京: 中国环境出版集团, 2019. 4

ISBN 978-7-5111-3923-8

I. ①中… II. ①生… III. ①区域环境—环境保护—国际合作—研究—中国、日本、韩国—英文 IV. ①X321.3

中国版本图书馆 CIP 数据核字 (2019) 第 041030 号

出版人 武德凯
责任编辑 董蓓蓓
责任校对 任丽
装帧设计 宋瑞

出版发行 中国环境出版集团
(100062 北京市东城区广渠门内大街 16 号)
网 址: <http://www.cesp.com.cn>
电子邮箱: bjgl@cesp.com.cn
联系电话: 010-67112765 (编辑管理部)
发行热线: 010-67125803, 010-67113405 (传真)

印 刷 北京建宏印刷有限公司
经 销 各地新华书店
版 次 2019 年 4 月第 1 版
印 次 2019 年 4 月第 1 次印刷
开 本 787×960 1/16
印 张 10.5
字 数 200 千字
定 价 45.00 元

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Preface

The Tripartite Environment Ministers Meeting (TEMM) is the most successful and longest-standing cooperation mechanisms within the framework of the Trilateral Summit Meeting of China, Japan and the Republic of Korea and has greatly contributed to building a clean and beautiful Northeast Asia since its launch in 1999. Especially in recent years, following the consensus in the Joint Statement on Environmental Cooperation Among China, Japan and the Republic of Korea of the 6th Trilateral Summit Meeting in 2015 (hereinafter referred to as Joint Statement), the three countries have proactively collaborated in the initiatives advocated by the leaders of the three countries, carried out environmental policy dialogues and reached consensus on important regional and global environmental issues, making significant contributions to the improvement of the environment in Northeast Asia.

In recent years, China's neighborhood diplomacy is undergoing profound and complicated changes in the external environment, especially in the Northeast Asia, an important neighboring sub-region with volatile international political landscape. Against the new situation, China has proactively promoted the relationship with neighboring countries by adhering to the principle of building friendship and partnership with neighboring countries thus to bring harmony, security and prosperity to them on the basis of amity, sincerity, mutual benefit, and inclusiveness. Since its launch in 1999, TEMM has been held every year despite all changes in the political relations among Northeast Asian countries. 2018 marks the 20th anniversary for this mechanism, making environmental cooperation one of the earliest, longest-standing and most fruitful areas of cooperation among China, Japan and Republic of Korea.

The past two decades has witnessed China's tremendous progress in environmental protection. The Chinese government has attached great importance to the construction of ecological civilization and has made important progress in promoting ecological environmental protection. The 19th National Congress of the Communist Party of China has made a new top-level design for ecological civilization construction and ecological environmental protection; Xi Jinping Thought on Ecological Civilization has officially been confirmed at the National Conference on Ecological and Environmental Protection; new development concepts, ecological civilization and the construction of Beautiful China have been written into Constitution of the People's Republic of China; the newly formed Ministry of Ecology and Environment has integrated all the previous functions of the Ministry of Environmental Protection together with relevant functions segmented in other six ministries. While promoting the improvement of the domestic ecological environment, China is also actively participating in global environmental governance, vigorously promoting the construction of a green "Belt and Road", sharing the concept of ecological civilization construction and green development concepts with countries along the the Silk Road, and promoting the International Coalition for Green Development on the Belt and Road and the construction of the Big Data Service Platform on Ecological and Environmental Protection. China stands ready to work together with the international community to promote global and regional sustainable development.

As neighbors across the sea, China, Japan and the Republic of Korea, facing many common environmental challenges, are in a community of shared environmental interests. Thanks to 20 years of hard work, the consensus on cooperation reached by TEMM has been increasing, making the mechanism an important channel for the three countries to communicate and address environmental problems in Northeast Asia together. As the highest-profile environmental cooperation mechanism in Northeast Asia, TEMM identified priority areas of cooperation respectively at TEMM1, TEMM11 and TEMM16, and established and implemented the two-phase *Tripartite Joint Action Plan on Environmental Cooperation* (hereinafter referred to as *Joint Action Plan*). Fruitful results have been achieved in many of the priority areas under the Joint Action Plans such as air pollution control, dust and sandstorm (DSS) control, environmental education, chemical management, transboundary movement of e-waste and transition to green economy.

In the future, global environmental governance will enter a new historical

period where the environmental cooperation among China, Japan, and the Republic of Korea will play a more important role globally. The three countries will more closely focus on global development issues such as the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and actively cooperate within a global framework including the *United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change* and the *Convention on Biological Diversity*. In order to consolidate the fruits of environmental cooperation between China, Japan and the Republic of Korea, and to exert the spillover effects and radiating influence of them on regional and global environmental cooperation, three suggestions have been proposed as follows.

First, earnestly implement the gist of the China-Japan-South Korea trilateral summit and make the cooperation more focused and pragmatic. We will continue to deepen cooperation in various areas specified in the *Tripartite Joint Action Plan on Environmental Cooperation*, carry out exchanges of environmental technologies, implement demonstration cooperation projects, thus to generate more pragmatic results and further improve the level of tripartite environmental governance. We also need to adhere to the consensus in the *Joint Statement on Environmental Cooperation Among China, Japan and Korea*, implement the cooperation initiatives proposed by leaders of the three countries, creatively carry out the “3+1” modality to share our experiences and successful practices of environmental cooperation with more countries, in the hope of working together to promote regional sustainable development.

Second, cooperate to solve regional and global environmental problems and focus on building one environmental community. The three countries should be more active in implementing the *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*, the *Paris Agreement* and *Convention on Biological Diversity*, strengthen communication and coordination in global and regional environmental affairs, work together to build a new type of partnership featuring win-win cooperation, jointly create a community of shared interests, responsibilities and future, as well as promote the construction of a community of shared future for mankind, thereby play a more proactive and important role in building a global environmental governance system.

Third, share the tripartite environmental cooperation model and achievements and make positive contributions to the green and low carbon development in the Asia-Pacific region and beyond. The environmental cooperation structure model and experience of the three countries have important reference significance

for ecological and environmental cooperation in other countries and regions, and the experience should be shared with more partners to benefit more people. We will promote communication and cooperation among the three countries within the frameworks of ASEAN Plus Three Cooperation, East Asia Summit, APEC and the G20, thus to build a closer cooperation network in the field of environmental protection and promote sustainable development in the region.

This book consists of three parts. *Part I. Report on China-Japan-Korea Tripartite Environmental Cooperation and its Outlook* was written by Wang Yuyi, Zhang Nan and Tian Fang. Professor Zhang Haibin from Peking University and Professor Li Wen from the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences provided valuable opinions and suggestions. *Part II. Joint Communiqué of Tripartite Environment Ministers Meeting among China, Japan and the Republic of Korea* and *Part III. Tripartite Joint Action Plan on Environmental Cooperation* were proofread by Wang Jing, Liu Ping, Li Panwen and Wang Menghan. The compilation of this book has received strong support and valuable guidance from the leaders of Department of International Cooperation, Ministry of Ecology and Environment, PRC and China-ASEAN Environmental Cooperation Center. At the same time, thank the colleagues from Ministry of the Environment of Japan and Ministry of Environment of the Republic of Korea. Here, our sincere gratitude is extended for all the support!

The environmental cooperation among China, Japan and the Republic of Korea has gone through 20 years of extraordinary development and achieved brilliant results. At this new historical starting point, the three countries share enormous common interests and cooperative potential in the environmental field. On the basis of the traditional friendly cooperation, we should implement the spirit and initiatives of China–Japan–South Korea trilateral summit, strengthen pragmatic cooperation in priority areas, address our own environmental problems while also paying more attention to regional and global environmental issues, thus to promote the environmental quality in Northeast Asia and even in East Asia as a whole, in an effort to make more important contributions to global environmental governance.

Editorial Committee
September, 2018



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Part I

**Report on China-Japan-Korea
Tripartite Environmental Cooperation
and its Outlook**

1 A Historical Review of the Tripartite Environmental Cooperation Mechanism

1.1 Start of Cooperation

In November 1999, Zhu Rongji, then Premier of China, Keizo Obuchi, then Prime Minister of Japan, and Kim Dae-jung, then President of the Republic of Korea when attending a breakfast meeting at the ASEAN Plus China, Japan and ROK (APT) Summit in the Philippines, officially launched cooperation among the three countries within the APT framework. In 2000, at the second breakfast meeting, leaders of the three countries decided to hold regular meetings within the APT framework. In December 2008, the three countries began to hold the tripartite summit outside the framework, and since then the three countries started to take turns to serve as the coordinating country. At present, the three countries have established more than 20 ministerial conference mechanisms and over 50 exchange and cooperation platforms in the fields of diplomacy, science and technology, information and communication, finance, human resources, environmental protection, transportation and logistics, economy and trade, culture, health, central bank, customs, intellectual property, tourism, earthquake, disaster management, water resources, agriculture, auditing, etc.

At the 1st APT Leaders' Meeting, leaders of the three countries proposed an initiative to strengthen environmental cooperation and dialogue, which laid a political foundation for the tripartite environmental cooperation. In order to follow through on the initiative, the TEMM mechanism was put in place in 1999. The Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs issued a white paper entitled *China-Japan-ROK Cooperation (1999-2012)* in May 2012, stating that the environmental protection is one of the first and most fruitful areas of trilateral cooperation. In November 2015, the 6th China-Japan-South Korea trilateral summit, which had already been suspended for three years, was held again in the Republic of Korea. This meeting issued the *Joint Declaration for Peace and Cooperation in Northeast Asia* which appreciated the environmental cooperation among China, Japan and the Republic of Korea, and approved the *Joint Statement on Strengthening Environmental Cooperation*, which marks the first time for leaders of the three countries to release a statement on a certain field. 2018 registers the 20th anniversary of environmental cooperation among China, Japan and the Republic of Korea. The 7th Tripartite Summit held in May 2018 gave a positive evaluation of the three countries' environmental cooperation and made strategic plans

for further cooperation.

1.2 Evolution of Cooperation

The tripartite environmental cooperation is centered on TEMM and is comprised of a number of multi-layer cooperation mechanisms that involve government authorities, research institutes and the civil society. TEMM is held alternately among the three countries on an annual basis, where the parties update one another on their latest environmental policies, address regional and global environmental issues and seek to promote sustainable development in the region. Outcome of the sessions are presented in Joint Communiqués. From 1999 to 2018, 20 sessions of TEMM have been held.

In order to fully implement the outcome of TEMM and promote pragmatic cooperation, environmental authorities of the three countries, based on their cooperation needs, have identified priority areas for the TEMM cooperation and formulated and implemented the two-phase *Joint Action Plan for the priority areas*. The work and activities in each area as specified in the *Joint Action Plan* are jointly carried out by the relevant authorities of the three countries.

TEMM is the highest-level inter-governmental cooperation mechanism in the area of environmental protection in the Northeast Asian region. Since TEMM1 in Seoul, Korea, the three countries' environmental cooperation has made remarkable achievements in goal and agenda setting, concept development and implementation. TEMM has played a key role in promoting regional environmental cooperation and sustainable development and is becoming the most important result-oriented environmental cooperation mechanism in Northeast Asia.

To date, the tripartite environmental cooperation centered on TEMM has undergone three stages in its evolution.

Stage I: 1999-2009, Foundation Stage. The three countries worked together in six priority areas, including raising the awareness of a shared environmental community, increasing information exchanges, strengthening environmental research cooperation, promoting cooperation in environmental protection industry and technologies, taking appropriate measures to prevent air pollution and protect the marine environment, and further strengthening conservation of biodiversity and addressing global environmental challenges such as climate change.

Major achievements in this stage include the following: first, it is made clear that tripartite environmental cooperation should be strengthened to enhance their abilities to jointly meet environmental challenges. Second, a mechanism is established to facilitate the implementation of cooperation projects. Third, domestic policies and best practice

in addressing regional and global environmental issues have been shared, the ability to collaboratively cope with regional and global environmental issues has been improved, and the influence of environmental cooperation is on the rise. TEMM was declared by the 1st China-Japan-Korea Trilateral Summit Meeting held in December 2008 to be one of its key components.

Stage II: 2010-2014, Deepening Stage. At TEMM11 held in Beijing in June 2009, the three countries identified ten priority areas for their environmental cooperation, namely, Environmental Education, Environmental Awareness and Public Participation, Climate Change, Biodiversity Conservation, Dust and Sandstorms (DSS), Pollution Control, Environment-Friendly Society/3R/Sound Resource Recycle Society, Transboundary movement of E-Waste, Sound Management of Chemicals, Environmental Governance in Northeast Asia, and Environmental Industries and Technologies. Based on the ten priorities, the environmental authorities of the three countries jointly introduced the *Joint Action Plan (2010-2014)*, which was adopted at TEMM12 in May 2010 and was written into the *2020 China-Japan-ROK Cooperation Outlook* jointly published by the governments of the three countries in 2010.

Major achievements at this stage include the following: first, the cooperation models for the priority areas have been developed, which encompasses information collection and sharing, joint academic research, and policy exchange and project delivery. Second, the improved TEMM mechanism with its three-tier meeting structure (on the ministerial level, director-general level and working level) allowed more effective coordination and further strengthened partnership. Third, the three parties made necessary investment in capital, technology and human resources, and involved various stakeholders including the government, research institutes, businesses and experts, leading to expanding the scope of cooperation.

Stage III: 2015-2019, Steady Development Stage. In April 2014, TEMM16 was held in Daegu, ROK. The meeting identified nine new priority areas for environmental cooperation from 2015 to 2019, namely, Air Quality Improvement, Biodiversity, Chemical Management and Environmental Emergency Response, Circulative Management of Resources/3R/Transboundary Movement of E-Waste, Climate Change Response, Conservation of Water and Marine Environment, Environmental Education, Public Awareness and Corporate Social Responsibility, Rural Environmental Management, and Transition to Green Economy. In April 2015, TEMM17 was held in Shanghai, China. The *Joint Action Plan (2015-2019)*, which covered 37 activities under the nine priority areas, was officially adopted at the meeting. At the 6th China-Japan-ROK Trilateral Summit Meeting held in 2015, the three countries issued the first Joint Statement on Environmental Cooperation and recognized the cooperation achievements of the three countries in the field of the environment.

Major achievements at this stage include: first, the results of cooperation in various fields have become increasingly apparent while the cooperation continued to be deepened and broadened, and a distinctive tripartite environmental cooperation model took shape. Second, a good coordination and communication mechanism was established to jointly deal with regional and global environmental issues. Third, the influence of the tripartite environmental cooperation has increased in the global and regional environmental governance landscape.

1.3 Distinctive Features of the TEMM Cooperation

1) Resilience without Interruptions

Northeast Asia has one of the most complicated political and security landscape in the world. Since its inauguration in 1999, TEMM has continued for 20 years despite changes in the situation in Northeast Asia. The meeting has never suffered from interruptions even at times when the three countries' political relations encountered great difficulties, demonstrating the strong resilience of the tripartite environmental cooperation. This is a distinctive feature that sets the TEMM cooperation apart from other regional environmental cooperation mechanisms in the world.

2) Steady Progress with a Step-by-Step Approach

In the past 20 years, based on mutual respect and mutual trust, the tripartite environmental cooperation has been making steady advances. TEMM has taken a step-by-step approach in expanding and deepening the cooperation, which has successfully turned agreements into actions. Now TEMM is not only an environmental cooperation mechanism for the three countries, but also an important platform for building a beautiful Northeast Asia.

3) Synergetic Development through Openness and Inclusiveness

Though the TEMM cooperation is tripartite, it is an open mechanism that has sought to engage with other Northeastern Asian countries and the international community at large. The three countries have witnessed progress in one another's domestic environmental governance and have maintained close ties with multilateral environmental agreements such as the *United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change* (UNFCCC) and the *Convention on Biological Diversity* (CBD) as well as regional programs including the Acid Deposition Monitoring Network in East Asia (EANET), and Long-range Trans-boundary Air Pollutants in North East Asia (LTP) and the *Action Plan for the Protection, Management and Development of the Marine and Coastal Environment of the Northwest Pacific Region* (NOWPAP), and thus have had a profound impact on the way countries participate in global and regional environmental governance.

1.4 Major Achievements in Each TEMM

TEMM1 was held in Seoul, the Republic of Korea on January 13, 1999. The ministers recognized that, as China, Japan and Korea are playing important roles in economic and environmental cooperation in the Northeast Asian region, close cooperation among the three nations is indispensable to sustainable development in Northeast Asia. Priority should be given to the following areas: ① raising awareness that the three countries are in the same environmental community; ② activating information exchange; ③ strengthening cooperation in environmental research; ④ fostering cooperation in the field of environmental industry and on environmental technology; ⑤ pursuing appropriate measures to prevent air pollution and to protect the marine environment; ⑥ strengthening cooperation on addressing global environmental issues such as biodiversity and climate change. It was decided that TEMM shall be held every year in turn.

TEMM2 was held in Beijing, China on February 26-27, 2000. The Ministers reaffirmed the TEMM as an important forum for fostering regional environmental cooperation and sustainable development. They shared the view on the importance of adopting appropriate methods and utilizing appropriate channels to further enhance the active role of TEMM in advancing environmental cooperation. The Ministers reviewed the efforts made by the three countries, since the 1st TEMM in Seoul, in environmental protection and noted that it is necessary to further promote exchanges and cooperation of various forms, including among central governments, local governments, science and research institutes, industrial enterprises, and NGOs. The Ministers also discussed various issues of common concern, including air, water and marine pollution, biodiversity, combating desertification and climate change issues.

TEMM3 was held in Tokyo, Japan on April 7-8, 2001. The Ministers exchanged views on recent progress in environmental management in their respective countries and in the Northeast Asian region. They reaffirmed that TEMM should play an important role in promoting environmental cooperation and sustainable development in the Northeast Asian region. Discussion covered global issues, including climate change and preparation for the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD). The meeting determined that the three countries should strengthen cooperation and further promote joint projects in the systematic studies on sand dust (yellow sand or kosa), which is exacerbated by soil degradation, air pollution and acid deposition, water management, marine pollution, as well as the conservation and the sustainable use of bio-diversity, etc.

TEMM4 was held in Seoul, Korea on April 20-21, 2002. The Ministers agreed that providing information on TEMM to other regional and global environmental meetings would prove valuable to the international environmental endeavor. They