

White Paper on Environmental Protection

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*The State Council Information Office published on Monday, June 5, 2006, a white paper entitled *Environmental Protection in China (1996-2005)*. The document, composed of 10 chapters, gives a systematic introduction to the unremitting efforts made by China in environmental protection over the past ten years. The full text of the white paper follows:*

Environmental Protection in China (1996-2005)

Foreword

- I. Environmental Protection Legislation and System
- II. Prevention and Control of Industrial Pollution
- III. Pollution Control in Key Regions
- IV. Protection of the Urban Environment
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- VII. Economic Policy and Investment Concerning the Environment
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- IX. Environmental Science and Technology, Industry and Public Participation
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Conclusion

Foreword

China is the most populous developing country in the world. Since the late 1970s, China's economy has developed rapidly and continuously. During the process, many environmental problems that have haunted developed countries in different phases of their 100-year-long industrialization have occurred in China all at the same time. The conflict between environment and development is becoming ever more prominent. Relative shortage of resources, a fragile ecological environment and insufficient environmental capacity are becoming critical problems hindering China's development.

The Chinese government attaches great importance to environmental protection. It believes that environmental protection will have a direct impact on the overall situation of China's modernization drive and its long-term development, and considers environmental protection an undertaking that will not only benefit the Chinese people of today but also their children and grandchildren. Years ago, the Chinese government established environmental protection as a basic national policy and sustainable development as an important strategy, and has adhered to the road of a new type of industrialization. While promoting economic growth, it has adopted a whole array of measures to strengthen environmental protection. Especially in recent years, the Chinese government, with the scientific outlook on development as the guiding principle of environmental protection, has adhered to focusing on preventive measures, comprehensive control and overall progress with breakthroughs at some key points, and worked hard to solve conspicuous environmental problems threatening people's health. At the same time, it has continued its efforts for institutional innovation, relied on scientific and technological advances, strengthened the legal system of environmental protection, and brought into full play the initiative of people of all walks of life. Thanks to these efforts, although the amount of resource consumption and pollutants is increasing greatly, the

trend toward aggravated environmental pollution and ecological destruction is slowing down; especially, environmental pollution control in some river valleys has seen some positive results, the environmental quality of some cities and regions has improved, the amount of pollutant emission of industrial products has declined, and the people's awareness of the importance of environmental protection has enhanced.

As World Environment Day nears, in order to let people in other countries have a better understanding about the situation of environmental protection in China, we would like to give a systematic introduction to the unremitting efforts made by China in environmental protection over the past ten years.

I. Environmental Protection Legislation and System

The Constitution of the People's Republic of China (PRC) stipulates, "The State protects and improves the environment in which people live and the ecological environment. It prevents and controls pollution and other public hazards." Since the PRC was founded in 1949, the National People's Congress (NPC) and its Standing Committee have formulated nine laws on environmental protection and 15 laws on the protection of natural resources. Since 1996, the State has formulated or revised laws on environmental protection, such as those on prevention and control of water pollution, marine environment protection, prevention and control of air pollution, prevention and control of noise pollution, prevention and control of solid waste pollution, evaluation of environmental impact, and prevention and control of radioactive pollution, as well as laws closely related to environmental protection, such as those on water, clean production, renewable energy, agriculture, grassland and animal husbandry. The State Council has formulated or revised over 50 administrative regulations, such as the Regulations on Environmental Protection Management of Construction Projects, Rules for the Implementation of the Law on the Prevention and Control of Water Pollution, Regulations on the Safety Management of Dangerous Chemicals, Regulations on the Management of Collection and Use of Waste Discharge Fees, Measures on the Management of Dangerous Waste Operation Licenses, Regulations on the Protection of Wild Plants, and Regulations on the Safety Management of Agricultural Genetically-modified Organisms. It has promulgated documents with similar power to laws and regulations, such as the Decision on Implementing the Idea of Taking the Scientific Outlook on Development and Strengthening Environmental Protection, Opinions for Quickening the Development of a Cyclical Economy, and Circular on the Recent Work of Effectively Building a Resource-efficient Society. Relevant departments of the State Council, local people's congresses and local people's governments have, within the limit of their powers, formulated and promulgated over 660 central and local rules and regulations in order to implement the national laws and administrative regulations on environmental protection.

China has established a system of environmental protection standards at both the national and local levels. National-level environmental protection standards include environmental quality standards, pollutant discharge (control) standards, and standards for environmental samples. Local environmental protection standards include environmental quality and pollutant discharge standards. By the end of 2005, the State had promulgated over 800 national environmental protection standards. The municipalities of Beijing and Shanghai, and the provinces of Shandong and Henan had promulgated over 30 local environmental protection standards.

China has constantly strengthened checks on the enforcement of environmental legislation, and improved administrative law enforcement. In recent years, the State has conducted checks on the enforcement of laws on environmental protection, and the prevention and control of air pollution, water pollution and solid waste pollution, so as to push forward pollution control in key areas. China's criminal law has special provisions on destruction of environmental resources. The State has promulgated the Interim Regulations on the Punishment of Violations of Environmental Protection Laws or Disciplines, and put in place a responsibility system of administrative law enforcement in the area of environmental

protection. For three years in a row, the State has launched special environmental protection campaigns to rectify enterprises that have discharged pollutants in violation of the law and to protect people's health. It has dealt with over 75,000 environmental law violation cases, and had 16,000 enterprises closed down for having discharged pollutants in violation of the law. More than 10,000 warnings have been issued to environment polluters, obliging them to remedy the problems under government supervision. The State has also conducted special checks on the enforcement of laws regarding mining areas eco-environmental protection and maritime environmental protection, and has dealt with a number of law violations.

China has implemented an environmental management system, whereby governments at all levels are responsible for the environmental quality of the areas within their jurisdiction, the competent administrative departments in charge of environmental protection have the power of overall supervision and management, while other relevant departments exercise such supervision and management functions according to the provisions of the law. In 1998 the Chinese government changed the name of the State Environmental Protection Bureau to the State Environmental Protection Administration (SEPA), and elevated it to the ministerial level. Thus, SEPA became an organization directly under the State Council to be responsible for exercising overall supervision and management of China's environmental protection work. The State has set up a national inter-ministry joint conference system for environmental protection and established representative offices for regional environmental supervision, in an effort to strengthen coordination and cooperation between departments and regions. The governments of all the provinces (autonomous regions and municipalities directly under the Central Government), cities and counties have set up organs responsible for addressing and coordinating environmental protection issues. There are now 3,226 environmental protection administration departments at different levels all over China, with 167,000 people engaging in environmental administration, monitoring, scientific research, publicity and education. There are 3,854 environmental supervision and environmental law enforcement organs with more than 50,000 staff members. Environmental protection organs are also found in some government departments for comprehensive affairs or resource administration departments, as well as in most large and medium-sized enterprises, responsible for their own environmental protection work. More than 300,000 people are employed by these organs.