



Let Us Work Together to Protect Biodiversity and Build a Green World with Human Beings in Harmony with Nature



Speech by H.E. Minister Chen Jining at the Ceremony Celebrating the
2015 International Day for Biological Diversity, 22 May

Distinguished Mr. Dias

Ladies, Gentlemen and Friends,

Today we are here celebrating the International Day of Biodiversity, with a call to the whole society for their awareness of biodiversity issues, and for their actions to enhance biodiversity conservation and to protect a planet shared by us all. On behalf of the Ministry of Environmental Protection of China, I wish to extend a warm welcome to Mr. Dias and all the representatives from home and abroad attending this event. I also wish to give our heartfelt thanks to all the people from different walks of life that have been supporting biodiversity conservation in China.

Biodiversity is the natural wealth that should be cherished by us all. It is fundamental for the survival and development of our human beings. It is also an important indicator of the level of ecological civilization. So strengthening biodiversity conservation is a strong guarantee to maintain and upgrade its capacities of providing ecosystem services, an important channel to maintain ecological integrity, improve the environmental quality and meet the public expectations for the better environment. It's also urgently needed for protecting national ecological security and promoting the building of an "ecological civilization". Meanwhile, biodiversity, as important economic and strategic resources, needs to be conserved and utilized rationally, which will usher in new changes in industries and sciences and even in the patterns of human production and consumption. We see great empowering, potentials and prospects in development through sustainable use of biodiversity and natural resources.

The theme of the International Day of Biodiversity this year is "biodiversity for sustainable development". We understand that it means we need to promote sustainable use of natural resources and sustainable development based on biodiversity conservation for the benefit of all the people in the world. This theme has profoundly revealed the close relationship between development and conservation, which is very consistent with the concept and practice of protecting the environment and building an "ecological civilization" that China is currently promoting.

As the biggest developing country in the world, the Government of China has been making great efforts in the past decades to find solutions to address the conflict between economic development and environmental

protection. In recent years, China has integrated “building an ecological civilization” into China’s overall development strategy, which proposes that China will achieve sustainable development through building a Beautiful China and moving towards a new era of “ecological civilization”. The Chinese President Xi Jinping stressed that the civilization would prosper if the environment is protected, and the civilization would decline if the environment is degraded. He also emphasized that protecting the environment is protecting our productivity and improving the environment is also enhancing our productivity. We need not only mountains of gold and silver but also clean water and green mountains. Clean water and green mountains are also our wealth. Environmental quality is essential for our livelihood, with green mountains being the beauty we are pursuing and blue sky being part of our happiness. All he said about the environment has indicated our deepened understanding of the laws of human development, nature and socio-economic development. They have also demonstrated the strong determination of our Government to build an “ecological civilization”. What President Xi Jinping said provides important guidance for our future work in the field of the environment and poses higher requirements for biodiversity conservation in China.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The Government of China attaches great importance to biodiversity conservation and has integrated it as an important part of the efforts to promote “ecological civilization”. President Xi Jinping clearly required that we need to protect our biodiversity and enhance its capacities to provide goods and services, through implementing major ecological conservation and restoration projects. In 2011, China established National Committee for Biodiversity Conservation. Premier Li Keqiang was the Chairman of this Committee and now Vice Premier Zhang Gaoli is the Chairman. They chaired committee meetings on strengthening biodiversity conservation. China has launched its updated National Biodiversity Conservation Strategy and Action Plan (2011-2030) and initiated China Action for the United Nations Decade of Biodiversity. China has undertaken nationwide studies and surveys on ecological changes in the decade of 2000-2010, marine biological resources of offshore and coastal areas, forest resources and livestock genetic resources. China also joined the Global Partnership for Business and Biodiversity in 2014. With the development and implementation of a series of policies and measures and the common efforts of all sectors and regions, China has achieved remarkable results.

First we have established networks of protected areas. In addition to nature reserves, we have set up a network of *in-situ* conservation of biodiversity of various types, including scenic areas, forest parks, wetland parks, geological parks, specialized marine protected areas, germplasm protected areas and cultural and natural heritages. The area of various types of protected areas has exceeded 1.7 million km², accounting for around 18% of the total land area of China. We have achieved part of Aichi Target 11 adopted by the Convention on Biodiversity, which sets 17% as the target of land protected areas by 2020. The total number of nature reserves is 2,729, with a total area covered reaching 1.47 million km² and accounting for about 14.8% of the total land area of the country, higher than the world average percentage of 12.7%. As a result, 85% of the terrestrial ecosystems and wild plants and animals have been effectively protected. 35 priority areas have been identified for biodiversity conservation.

Second, we have achieved considerable results in ecological conservation and restoration. China has been implementing such projects as natural forest protection, returning farming land to forests, and returning grazing land to grassland. So far China has invested 362.6 billion yuan RMB in the natural forest protection project, covering about 1.05 million km² of natural forests. Now the Government of China has decided to implement this project across the country. In the past decade, China has achieved a net increase of 100,000 km² in the forest area. The grassland coverage in important ecological function zones has increased by 11%. More than 2,800 km² of degraded wetlands such as mangroves have been restored. Soil conservation and closing mountains for ecological restoration have been implemented in areas of 720,000 km². The marine

ecosystems in Bohai Sea and the Yellow Sea as well as the ecosystems in Songhuajiang River have been partially restored. As a result, rare species such as Ussuri whitefish were re-found, and the autumn harvesting of some marine species, such as Chinese shrimp and crab, has returned.

Thirdly, we have enhanced the implementation of the CBD and other related international treaties. China is one of the first countries in the world that began the development of local biodiversity strategies and action plans. So far 17 provinces and municipalities in China such as Chongqing, Sichuan, Yunnan and Guangxi have launched their PBSAPs. Other provinces will launch their PBASPs before the end of 2016. China has completed assessments of the endangerment status of more than 30,000 higher plants and over 6,000 vertebrate animals, and launched China's Red Lists of higher plants and vertebrate animals. China has issued three lists of invasive alien species. China has undertaken bilateral cooperation in the field of biodiversity, with the EU, Italy and other countries and regions. China has organized 24 training workshops on biodiversity for personnel working on biodiversity issues of developing countries, which has obtained international recognition. In 2013, China was awarded the prize for South-South cooperation.

Fourthly the public awareness of biodiversity conservation has been obviously increased. We have organized more than 200 large campaigns for China Action for the UNDB. More than 200 organizations and institutions, both international and domestic, have participated in these campaigns, with more than 1 billion person/time involved. We have been promoting the integration of biodiversity into the school curriculum, community activities and business practices. We have been popularizing the knowledge of biodiversity issues through meetings, training activities and social media. We have been encouraging companies and enterprises to sign on to initiatives for biodiversity conservation.

Meanwhile, we are clearly aware that the overall biodiversity decline trend of China has not been halted yet, the habitats for animals and plants substantially lost and fragmented, and the impacts of invasive alien species are still very serious. Faced with all these challenges and huge tasks ahead, we will do more against all odds, and bring our work in biodiversity conservation to a higher level.

Ladies and gentlemen,

To this end, last month the Government of China issued "Recommendations on Accelerating the Building of Ecological Civilization". These recommendations provide a master plan and propose that synergies should be promoted in drives towards new types of industrialization, urbanization, information society building, agricultural modernization and environmental protection. These recommendations aim to promote green development, cycling development and low carbon development, with the view to build a Beautiful China and maintain blue sky, green mountains and clean water. The recommendations have included targets such as controlling the rate of biodiversity loss and enhancing the stability of national ecosystems. Tasks or measures such as implementing major biodiversity conservation projects, strengthening the establishment and management of nature reserves, and actively participating in the international negotiation of and enhancing the implementation of biodiversity-related MEAs have been included in the recommendations. We believe that these recommendations have provided new opportunities for further enhancing our efforts in biodiversity conservation.

For now and for a period in the future, we should focus our efforts on the following priorities, guided by the principles of ecological civilization and the core task being the improvement of environmental quality and ecological integrity while promoting the synergies of both.

First, we need to strengthen our supervision and management of biodiversity conservation. To do this we need to enforce the newly revised Environmental Protection Law. We also need to develop or revise other laws and regulations, such as Regulation on Nature Reserves and Regulation on Management of Genetic Resources. We

will strengthen the system of accountability, supervision and punishment of those behaviors damaging biodiversity. All the provinces will identify as early as possible “ecological red lines” in those important ecological function zones and ecologically sensitive and vulnerable areas, according to the technical guidelines recently issued by the Ministry of Environmental Protection. Strict protection should be accorded to those zones and areas to ensure that ecological functions will not decline, coverage will not be reduced and nature of use will not be changed.

Second, we will streamline management mechanisms and bodies for biodiversity conservation. We will set up a coordinated system of management of biodiversity conservation, with clear powers and responsibilities identified and according to the concept of “mountains, water, forests, land and lakes being integral parts of nature”. We will set up a coordinated system of national park management with responsibilities assigned to different levels of governments to protect the integrity of natural environment, natural and cultural heritages. Mechanisms of ecological compensation will be improved to ensure that the damagers and beneficiaries will pay and the protectors will be compensated. The property ownership of natural resources and the system of regulating their use will be improved to ensure that payments will be made for use of natural resources.

Thirdly, we will comprehensively implement major projects for biodiversity conservation. Priorities will be given to 35 key areas for biodiversity conservation. We will undertake biodiversity assessments, establish a network of biodiversity monitoring, strengthen *in-situ* and *ex-situ* conservation, implement restoration projects as well as demonstration projects in alleviating poverty and biodiversity conservation, and strengthen capacities for management of biodiversity conservation. All this will enhance networking, management capacities and scientific and technical support level for biodiversity conservation.

Finally, we will strengthen communication and public education and participation. We will continue to organize annual activities for the China Action for the UNDB as well as activities for observing important days such as IDB, the World Environment Day and the Earth Day. The role of media will be fully played for educational and communication purposes and popularizing biodiversity-related knowledge. Good examples or practices will be broadly disseminated and illegal behaviors will be exposed, with the view to increase public awareness of biodiversity issues. Support will be provided to civil society for their efforts in biodiversity studies and demonstration projects. Schools will be also encouraged to integrate biodiversity into school curriculum. Communities will be guided to participate more actively in biodiversity actions. All this will create an atmosphere where Governments provide guidance, the private sector exercise their responsibilities for and the general public participates in biodiversity actions.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Biodiversity loss is a common challenge for all nations of the world. China is willing to work together with the international community to take up our common responsibility to protect biodiversity and contribute more to the global efforts to promote sustainable development.

Thank you.

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22 MAY 2015
INTERNATIONAL DAY
FOR BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY
BIODIVERSITY FOR SUSTAINABLE
DEVELOPMENT