Overview of CCICED 2010 Annual General Meeting

China Council for International Cooperation on Environment and Development (CCICED) 2010 Annual General Meeting was held in Beijing during November 10-12, with theme on “Ecosystem Management and Green Development”. More than 200 participants, including CCICED members, special invited guests, Chinese and international experts, observers and other guests attended the meeting. Heads of relevant departments such as the General Office of the State Council, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, National Development and Reform Committee (NDRC), Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Environmental Protection (MEP), Ministry of Commerce, Research Office of the State Council and NPC Environment and Resource Committee were also present at the meeting. This Annual General Meeting was held when the Chinese Government takes developing resource-conserving and environment-friendly society as a focal point for accelerating economic development mode and green transformation of China’s economic development mode, which has attracted great attention at home and abroad.

Mr. Wen Jiabao, Member of Standing Committee of CPC Political Bureau and Premier of the State Council met with international members and representatives attending 2010 AGM in Ziguangge at Zhongnanhai in the morning of November 11, 2010.

Mr. Li Keqiang, Member of Standing Committee of CPC Political Bureau, Vice Premier of the State Council and CCICED Chairman attended the opening ceremony and gave an important speech in the afternoon of November 10, 2010.

Concerning the theme “Ecosystems and Green Development”, findings of the following five study teams were reported to the AGM, i.e. China’s Ecosystem Service and Management Strategy, Ecosystem Issues and Policy Options Addressing Sustainable Development of China’s Ocean and Coast, China’s Ecological Footprint Report, the Soil Environmental Protection Policies in China, and Policy Framework for Improving the Water Ecosystem Service Functions. Two Open Forums entitled “A New Path for Environmental Protection in China: Focus on Ecology and Economy” and “The 12th Five-Year Plan: Energy Conservation, Emissions Reduction and Green Development” were held. Mr. Xie Zhenhua, Vice Minister of NDRC and Vice Chair of
CCICED, Ms. Jiang Zehui, Vice Director of CPPCC Committee of Population, Resources and Environment, Mr. Li Ganjie, Vice Minister of MEP, Ms. Biggs, President of Canadian International Development Agency and CCICED International Executive Vice Chair, Mr. Achim Steiner, UNEP Executive Director, Ms. Julia Marton-Lefèvre, IUCN Director General, and Mr. James Leape, WWF Director General made remarks or reports at the meeting.

Mr. Zhou Shengxian, CCICED Chinese Executive Vice Chair and MEP Minister made a special report with the title of “Vigorously exploring the new path for environmental protection in China and striving for a higher level of ecological civilization” at the meeting. He first reviewed the major progress of environmental protection during the “11th Five-Year Plan” period, then discussed the relationship between ecological civilization and the exploration of new path for environmental protection in China. He further addressed the major characteristics of deepening the understanding of ecological civilization, and elaborated the underlying meaning of exploring the new path for environmental protection in China and identified the main tasks of striving for a higher level of ecological civilization.

During discussions, the international members and experts held the view that by promoting low carbon economy, developing circular economy and striving for ecological civilization, the Chinese Government has maintained steady and rapid economic growth despite a recession in the world economy. They especially noticed that the Chinese Government would consistently take the construction of a resource-conserving and environment-friendly society as the focal point of accelerating the shift for the economic development mode, facilitate the harmony between economic and social development and population, resources and the environment, and follow the path towards a sustainable future in the 12th Five-Year Plan period. In doing so, China sets a good example for the world economic development and its success is an important experience for the world’s environment and development process.

The Chinese and International Council members noted that in the post-financial crisis era, green development has become the world trend. Exploration of the new path for environmental protection for China means we need to find new thinking and new approach to facilitate the balance of ecological conservation and economic development. Relevant policy recommendations on handling the relationships between ecological protection and economic development have been raised.

Based on the policy study findings of CCICED and the comments of the members as well as the experts, the Policy Recommendations of 2010 AGM to the Chinese Government has been developed and adopted.

After in-depth discussions, members have reached the following agreements on strengthening management and conservation
of ecosystems and promoting green development in China:

1) Based on the progress and achievements of environmental protection of China over the past five years, China should firmly grasp the period of the strategic opportunity for environmental protection development cause in the next five years;

2) China should take the chance of green development to facilitate the harmony between the shift of economic development mode and environmental protection;

3) China should strengthen ecological management and allow the key ecosystems to self-restore;

4) China should continue to explore the new path to environmental protection from a new starting point.

Open Forums of CCICED 2010 Annual General Meeting

Open Forum 1: China’s New Path for Environmental Protection: Addressing Ecology and Economy

The Open Forum on “China’s New Path for Environmental Protection: Addressing Ecology and Economy” was held on November 12, 2010. Mr. Li Ganjie, Council member and MEP Vice Minister and Mr. Brende, CCICED Vice Chairman and Secretary General of Norwegian Red Cross co-chaired the Forum. Over 70 people, including CCICED members, Task Force Co-chairs, invited experts and representatives of relevant departments and research institutes attended the Forum.

Ms. Jiang Zehui, Vice Director of CPPCC Committee of Population, Resources and Environment and member of CCICED, and Ms. Julia Marton-Lefèvre, IUCN Director General and Council member were invited to give the leading speech. Mr. Zhuang Guotai, Director General of MEP Department of Nature and Ecology Conservation and Mr. John MacKinnon, Technical Expert of Office of EU—China Biodiversity Program presented special speeches. Mr. Hans van der Vlist, Council member and Secretary General of the Netherlands Ministry of Housing, Spatial Planning and Environment gave a commentary presentation.

Based on the Policy Recommendations to the Chinese Government, the Forum discussed the relations between ecosystem and economic development and relevant policies. Participants agreed that to find out new thinking and approach that facilitate harmonious and coordinated ecological and economic development were necessary for the exploration of new path for environmental protection in China. We need to take the development of a resource-conserving and environment-friendly society as the focal point for promoting economic development mode, optimizing economic growth by environmental protection and promoting ecological civilization.

The Forum focused its discussions on the following three issues:

First is the severity and urgency of the
current eco-environment problems. Human activities and development bring about such problems as marine pollution, heavy metal pollution and loss of biodiversity. The climate change further aggravates these problems.

Second is to consider and address the increasingly pre-eminent ecosystem problems in the view of ecosystems. China should adopt systematic thinking rather than focusing on separate or local ecosystems.

Third is correctly handling the relations between eco-environment and economic development to finally achieve green, inclusive and sustainable development.

In view of the above issues, participants presented the following suggestions:

Firstly, it should be recognized that development and environmental protection are complementary to each other. Talking about environmental protection without economic development is not people-oriented, while talking about development without considering environmental protection could not be sustainable. The three pillars of sustainable development—economy, society and the environment, not a single one can be omitted. The green development contains two meanings: one is development and the other is green. The essential requirements are to protect eco-environment, maintain and enhance the ecosystem services. It should be recognized that natural environment is the property of common wealth and is the foundation and support to human development.

Secondly, China should actively explore effective approach to achieve green development and make more efforts in facilitating transition toward a green economy. To some extent, green economy is a goal that contains core ideas including inclusive development, while low carbon economy and circuler economy are tools and approaches. On one hand, China should draw up laws and regulations and further enhance the guiding and constraining role of them; on the other, China should further take economic incentives, and strengthen scientific innovations and facilitate green development by science and technology.

Thirdly, China should practically proceed plans based on its actual conditions. The situation of different countries and regions vary and should not be treated as the same. China should seek for the methods that protect eco-environment and promotes green development based on its own situation.

Participants agreed that although there is hard work ahead and a long way to go for green economy development, with firm determination and heading towards the right direction, China will surely achieve green development and prosperity in the future.

The outcomes of the Forum were reported to 2010 AGM. Relevant suggestions have been included in CCICED Policy Recommendations to the Chinese Government.
Open Forum 2: China’s 12th Five-Year Plan: Energy Conservation, Emission Reduction and Green Development

The Open Forum “China’s 12th Five-Year Plan: Energy Conservation, Emission Reduction and Green Development” was held on November 11, 2010. Mr. Zhu Guangyao, Secretary General of CCICED and Mr. Roger Beal, Council member and former Portfolio Secretary of Australian Department of Environment and Heritage co-chaired the Forum. More than 70 participants, including CCICED members, Task Force Co-chairs, invited experts and representatives of relevant government departments and research institutes attended the Forum.

Mr. Han Wenke, Director of NDRC Energy Institute and Mr. Lars-Erik Liljelund, CCICED member and Executive Director of the Swedish Foundation for Strategic Environmental Research were invited to give the opening speeches. Director General Zhao Hualin from MEP Department of Total Pollutants Control and Mr. Dirk Messner, Council member and Director of German Development Institute presented special speeches. Mr. Daniel J. Dudek, CCICED member and Chief Economist of Environmental Defense Fund gave a commentary speech.

The Forum discussed on how to further achieve energy conservation and emission reduction target and green development during the “12th Five-Year Plan” period. The experts agreed that China’s economy will meet new development objectives in its “12th Five-Year Plan”. This will put more pressure on resources and the environment. China will face a huge challenge on how to make a balance between economic development and energy conservation and emission reduction in the next five years. Thus there is an urgent need for more practical, effective and innovative policy measures.

The Forum focused its discussion on the following three issues:

1) How to further facilitate optimum energy mix and promote energy-saving?
2) How to achieve more effective emission reduction?
3) How to balance economic development and environmental protection?

Participants put forward the following recommendations on approaches to achieve energy conservation and emission reduction, better balance between economic growth and environmental protection as well as achieving green development during the “12th Five-Year Plan” period:

First, carry out four measures including “adherence”, “adjustment”, “phasing out” and “strengthening”. “Adherence” refers to continuous set up strict reduction target of energy consumption per unit GDP; “Adjustment” refers to making great efforts in adjusting industrial structure and internal structure, strictly controlling the growth of industries with high energy consumption and emissions; “Phasing out” refers to further phasing out outdated productivity, facilitating technical progress and strengthening management of energy conservation; “Strengthening” refers to
further strengthening energy conservation in industrial enterprises and facilitating energy conservation in buildings, commercial and civil utilities and transport at the same time.

Second, coordinately promote emission reduction and improvement of environmental quality. The emission reduction practice during the “11th Five-Year Plan” period shows that there is relatively big gap to overall improvement of environmental quality if we only achieve individual emission reduction targets. Therefore, apart from adhering to comprehensive emission reduction indicators, special efforts should be made to closely combine emission reduction with improvement of environmental quality.

Third, integrate eco-environment protection into rapid economic development of China to achieve greater economic development with minimum cost of eco-environment. Meanwhile, China should make comprehensive balance of economic development and protection of the eco-environment. We should not measure the development only by a single indicator. Otherwise, we may pay higher cost.

The outcomes of the Forum were reported to CCICED 2010 AGM. Relevant suggestions have been integrated into CCICED Policy Recommendations to the Chinese Government.