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Top News

Minister Zhou Shengxian Met Mr. Tse Hausing, Vice President of CIDA

Mr. Zhou Shengxian, Minister of State Environmental Protection Administration and Chinese Executive Vice Chairman of CCICED met Mr. Tse Hausing, Vice President of Canadian International Development Agency on January 11, 2006 in China. They exchanged views on CCICED and the cooperation on other environmental fields. Mr. Xu Qinghua, Director General of the Department of International Cooperation of SEPA and Deputy Secretary-General of CCICED, and Mr. Guo Jing, Director of CCICED Secretariat accompanied Minister Zhou at the meeting.

Mr. Zhou Shengxian was appointed as the New Minister of SEPA by the State Council on Dec. 1st 2005 after Mr. Xie Zhenhua's resignation due to the Songhuajiang River Water Pollution Accident.

Vice Minister Zhu Guangyao Met Mr. Tse Hausing, Vice President of CIDA

Mr. Zhu Guangyao, Vice Minister of State Environmental Protection Administration and Secretary General of CCICED met Mr. Tse Hausing, Vice President of Canadian International Development Agency on January 9, 2006 in China. They have exchanged views on issues in relation to CCICED Phase IV and reached preliminary common understanding. Mr. Xu Qinghua, Director General of the Department of International Cooperation of SEPA and Deputy Secretary-General of CCICED accompanied Vice Minister Zhu at the meeting.

Lead Experts Group

Lead Experts Group Held the First Working Meeting of 2006

CCICED Lead Expert Group held the First Working Meeting of 2006 on January 16-17, 2006. The meeting discussed the topics such as the Terms of Reference of the Task Force on China's Environment and Development Progress and Prospects, the theme of 2007 Annual General Meeting and the proposed establishment of new Task Forces. The Chinese Lead Expert Mr. Shen Guofang, the International Lead Expert Dr. Arthur Hanson, and Mr. Guo Jing, Director of CCICED Secretariat, attended the meeting.

Lead Experts Group Held the First Chinese Working Meeting of 2006

Mr. Shen Guofang, the Chinese Lead Expert of CCICED chaired the First Chinese Working Meeting of the Lead Expert Group of 2006 on January 10, 2006. The meeting discussed the Terms of Reference of the Task Force on China's Environment and Development Progress and Prospects, internal work division of the Chinese group of the Lead Experts Group and the temporary agenda of the Lead Experts Group Working Meeting on January 16-17. Mr. Guo Jing, Director of CCICED Secretariat attended the meeting.

Task Forces

Task Force on Environmental Governance Held a Working Meeting

Task Force on Environmental Governance held a working meeting on December 19-21, 2005. The meeting discussed the work progress since last working meeting held in September of 2005, listened to the introduction of the foreign experts of the TF on the experience in environmental governance in their country and discussed with focus on the Songhuajiang River water pollution accident. After the meeting, it put forward suggestions and recommendations to relevant departments of China including SEPA, which was spoke highly by such departments.

CCICED Policy Recommendations

OVERVIEW

On November 18-20, 2005 the CCICED Annual General Meeting was held in Beijing. It discussed the theme of Sustainable Urbanization and put forward policy recommendations on the basis of the work of the five Task Forces.

The next 5 years will be critical for China to build a well-off (*Xiaokang*) society in a comprehensive way. More specifically, the path chosen for China's urban development will determine all aspects of environmental protection and resource use in China, and will also be of global relevance.

Urbanization in China has increased the living standard of urban as well as rural residents. However, serious problems resulting from rapid urbanization have emerged. Natural resources are increasingly in short supply. Problems such as pollution, excessive use of groundwater and waste have worsened the environmental situation and led to shortage of water resources. The tension between the great demand for urban land on the one hand, and the shortage of suitable areas for urban development on the other, is increasingly acute and leads to a widespread increase of urban ecological deficit. Authorities have not done enough to raise efficiency standards. Energy diversification and efficiency is unsatisfactory, yet there is a fast growing demand. Initiatives for sustainable transportation in cities are not keeping up with needs. Rapid growth in private vehicles will further exacerbate this situation. Air and water quality in cities is a major problem, with many negative regional effects. Industrial resource efficiency is still very low by comparison to international standards. While China's cities are making a major contribution to the nation's poverty reduction, they also contribute to the dramatically expanding gap between the rich and the poor. There is increasing evidence of extravagance which is troubling for any society. With the rapid growth in urbanization, and the expanded rural migration to cities, increasing inner city poverty may become a matter of significant concern for the future. These are some of the key problems examined by the Task Forces and the Members of the Council during the 2005 Annual General Meeting.

Policy Recommendations are presented by the Members and Experts of CCICED with the

objective to promote urban centers that are viable from an economic, environmental and social point of view. Cities are only attractive living and working spaces if their multifunctionality reflects the needs of all citizens. The following 4 main recommendations are made with this in mind. A summary of individual Task Force recommendations is attached as Annex.

GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS ON SUSTAINABLE URBANIZATION

1. Plan scientifically for sustainable urbanization through policy setting, implementation and enforcement

- More scientific understanding and measurement on environmental resilience and carrying capacity in urban and surrounding areas are needed. Avoiding urban sprawl, thus preventing cities from expanding in an excessive and uncontrolled manner which has negative environmental and social implications, is of utmost importance.
- Planning for sustainable urbanization requires effective use of new tools such as environmental impact assessment, geographic information systems, and improved recognition and application of environmental protection laws. The purpose is to be able to direct decisions away from exceeding local and regional carrying capacity, to avoid negative impacts on poor people, and to promote a positive environment and development outcomes.
- The impact of climate change in terms of variations of rainfall, temperatures, extreme weather events and sea level rise in coastal areas should be addressed at the planning stage through mitigation and adaptation measures.
- Housing should be kept practical and highly efficient in terms of material consumption, as well as energy and water use. There should be strict controls on the amount of land allocated for luxury homes. After appropriate environmental impact assessment, the use of remediated brownfield sites for housing should be given priority over greenfield sites, to avoid affecting natural and agricultural areas.
- Sustainable urbanization planning should recognize the great variety of landscapes and cultural settings in which Chinese cities and towns will develop. Regional development should be optimized by clear zoning for settlement and urbanization. The risk that in 20 years there will be "1000 cities, all looking the same" needs to be avoided. There is a need to stop the loss of cultural wealth, biodiversity, natural lakes and rivers as well as wetlands and forests, as a consequence of homogeneous urban planning and development.
- Regional planning should ensure a better coordination in the development process of regions; in particular by addressing issues of trans-regional environmental pollution. Integrated regional planning efforts require central government facilitation to set in place a coordinated regional planning institutional framework with particular attention to the functions of the individual towns within the region.

2. Transform China's urban areas into resource-saving cities and towns.

- Saving and recycling of resources should be promoted by establishing a comprehensive pricing system which will lead to major improvements in the efficiency of water and energy use. As a first step, environmentally harmful subsidies should be eliminated. Fuel taxes and water pricing reflecting full cost recovery should be introduced. Water and energy pricing will need to include measures to ensure that poorer and disadvantaged people have adequate access. This system should be incorporated into the 11^{th} Five Year Plan.
- The development and promotion of building standards for saving energy and water should be accelerated. This requires the adoption of mandatory building codes including conserving technologies in building design and construction. Existing buildings should be upgraded, for example through making conservation technologies available to households (low water use toilets and showerheads). Environmentally friendly design and procurement for governmental buildings and infrastructure should be promoted
- As main drivers for achieving a circular economy pollution should be avoided at source wherever possible, and waste discharges per unit of output reduced. Sustainable consumption and production in cities should be promoted. For this purpose campaigns that advocate a lifestyle consistent with Chinese ideals should be carried out, directed towards improved understanding of ecological footprints and the local environmental carrying capacity.
- Closer cooperation with the business community on clean production should be encouraged and the phase-out of old, polluting technologies accelerated. Small and medium-sized enterprises in highly polluting sectors should be supported in their efforts to implement the circular economy. Strengthening of China's environmental technology

sector should be continued through mechanisms such as urban green procurement funds, on the part of local and national government, and through sustainable development innovation funds for R&D. Greater access to innovative urban pollution prevention and control technology should be sought, through foreign direct investment and partnerships with international business.

- First priority should be granted to the development and implementation of public urban transport systems in order to meet the mobility demands and needs of the majority of the population, to reduce the oil dependence and minimize emissions. Traffic congestion taxes and other traffic management tools should be adopted to control and discourage the utilization of private cars within cities.

3. Significantly accelerate efforts to control the environmental impacts of cities and towns and continuously improve urban environment.

- Enforcement of environmental laws and regulations should be stepped up and environmental protection departments strengthened through governmental reform. They should be equipped with integral powers and more effective enforcement instruments for comprehensive environmental management. Administrative and technical capacity of the environmental protection department should be enhanced at all three levels (state, regional and local). More deterrent penalties are needed for serious violators of existing environmental laws and regulations. Reasonable but strictly enforceable environmental control systems for air and water pollution should be set in place.
- Municipal authorities and mayors should be provided with targets and performance indicators as tools to assist with their obligation in regard of sustainable resource use and total emission control. Specific indicators and incentives should be developed to motivate local officials to take proper account of environmental and social performance.

4. Public information and participation for sustainable urbanization

- Public participation in policy decision making for urban planning, as well as transportation infrastructures should be promoted.
- The further development of functional local community services should be supported, and access to basic education for all citizens promoted.
- Public consultation, information release and public hearing mechanisms should be established, so that potential social and environmental impacts are discovered and addressed in time. Communication channels on important development strategies should be built.

Training, education for sustainable development and publicity should be promoted as means to increase general public awareness, understanding and support for the Circular Economy. The valuable roles that non-governmental organizations can play in sustainable urban development should be recognized and enhanced.