

**Speech by Premier Zhu Rongji while Meeting with Chinese and International
Representatives at the 1st meeting of the 3rd phase of CCICED
25 November, 2002**

I am very glad to meet with representatives from the CCICED (China Council for International Cooperation on Environment and Development). China attaches great importance to the role of the Council. I used to have talks with the Chinese and international representatives attending the 2nd, 3rd and 4th meetings of the 2nd phase of CCICED. I asked Chairman Li Peng to meet with the Chinese and international attendants to the 5th meeting of the 2nd phase of the CCICED when I was on a trip abroad. The Council has provided very good recommendations to the Chinese government, which are of great assistance to China's environmental protection and sustainable development. Now, on behalf of the State Council, I would like to extend my sincere welcome to you and listen to your valuable proposals personally.

(International vice-chair Mr. Good and Mr. Lönnroth, members Mr. Tickell, Ms. Tubiana, Mr. Töpfer, Mr. Willoch and Mr. Lees delivered their speech respectively on the 1st meeting of the 3rd phase of CCICED and put forward recommendations to the Chinese government and issues of their concerns. Premier Zhu commended afterwards.)

I am very pleased to hear your comments personally. All of your presentations have been very good. It takes a historical process and big price for China to get to know environmental protection and sustainable development. China has a large population that is now reaching 1.3 billion. In order to survive, China used to have a problem of developing economy and industrialization at the expense of environment. It was a historical process that is hard to avoid. China has come to realize the importance of environmental protection and sustainable development in its process of industrialization. Particularly after the Rio United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) held 10 years ago, China began to pay more attention to environmental protection and sustainable development. The environment could easily be destroyed, say with one year only, but it will be extremely difficult to restore and perhaps ten years are not enough. While at the same time, there are some aspects in environmental protection and sustainable development that command certain conditions. For instance, as food supply fell short of demand before 1995, farmers had to climb up the mountains to plant for a living. While after 1996, instead of importing food we exported a lot since we had food surplus each year. We were then in a position to carry out large-scale project of returning farmlands to forests and we persuaded our farmers not to go up the hills to plant. With the policy of returning farmlands to grasslands, plateaus in the northern part of the country were no longer used as farmlands and the livestock was stopped from eating grass on the

plateaus by encircled feedings. I have made reports on the above-mentioned aspects at the Johannesburg WSSD. In the past few years, we have carried out projects of “returning farmlands to forests, grasslands and lakes” on thousands of millions of hectares of land and we will continue to do so in the next few years. Our policies of “returning farmlands to forests” are: the farmers are provided with food and fees for planting trees as long as they stop farming on hills and slopes. The reason for us doing this is we have more foods now.

We must keep sand storms under permanent control. Some of the sand storms come from Inner Mongolia within our country, while some originate from Mongolia and Siberia of Russia. They have brought about impact not only to South Korea and Japan but also to the United States as reported. We share the international responsibilities on this issue, though this is not a problem only for China. At present, with a view to prevent sand storms from expanding, we are now carrying out some plans to manage sand storms, by conducting large-scale afforestation and resuming grasslands in the northern part of Beijing and in some areas of Inner Mongolia. Such a project could not be fulfilled within one or two years, rather it will take a long time to complete. Though some preliminary achievements have been made, we still need support from the international community. Currently, we are cooperating with Japan and South Korea on this issue. Nevertheless, Mongolia and Russia are still beyond our control.

Just now, Mr. Willoch mentioned that, as more and more cars running in Beijing, the air quality there was not so good. In order to prepare for the 2008 Olympic Games, Beijing has formulated and begun to carry out grand plans on air pollution controls. At present, if buses with green color running at your sight in Beijing, that means they are environmentally sound buses by using natural gas. In the meantime, we have raised the emission standard for automobile’s pollutants and this standard meets the pace of the current standard in Europe. The Chinese government has taken active measures to prevent air pollution and has formally acceded to the “Kyoto Protocol”. Although China does not have any obligation of GHG mitigation, China has reduced pollutants that are equivalent to 1 billion tons of burning gas emissions. China is abundant in its coal resources, the production of which was 1.3 billion tons per year in the past and has been reduced to the current 1 billion tons per year. For this reason, we have to spend US\$20 to 25 billion each year on importing natural oil. 160 million tons of oil is cultivated each year while over 100 million tons of oil is imported. At present, the annual import of oil is still increasing. The only purpose of such a great expenditure is to reduce pollution.

We are still facing some problems in the process of improving environment and sustainable development. China is a country with vast territory. The phenomenon of environment being destroyed and polluted still exists as law system in China is yet to be perfect. Nevertheless, we will continue with our efforts to improve our environment and fulfill sustainable development.

I would like to thank once again for the comments by representatives present today. And I hope you would continue to pay your attention to environmental protection and

sustainable development in China. The CCICED will have an ever lasting existence.
Thanks.

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