

## Speech at the Opening Ceremony

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### **Respected Vice Premier Li, Minister Zhou, colleagues and friends,**

We are meeting at a particularly interesting and important moment as the Chinese Government is finalizing the details of the twelfth Five Year Plan. The Plan outline suggests that the environment has been elevated to a new level of significance in China's development.

For this year the China Council has chosen the theme of Ecosystem Management and Green Development. We believe this to be relevant to the priorities your government has signaled for the coming Five Year Plan.

China has made substantial progress in some areas, on the extent of lands designated as nature reserves, on reforestation, and on eco-compensation.

But the problems of ecological sustainability remain acute, and require a fundamental re-thinking of the relationship between economy and ecology. This will require us to think creatively about cross-sectoral, integrated approaches to manage ecosystem issues from the mountains to the seas.

We will be examining two subjects this year never before considered by the China Council. The first is the sustainable use of China's ocean and coastal zone. This task force will report on a framework for improvements, taking into account the intense development pressures on China's marine areas. Secondly, we will review recommendations from a special study on soil pollution. This is a topic of great practical significance—as other nations that have faced expensive clean-ups can attest.

Building on some of the Council's earlier work, our meeting will push further on how the quality of ecological services, such as those provided by forests, grasslands and wetlands, can be protected and improved through effective ecosystem management.

Through our discussions over the next few days, there are several considerations that could guide the Council's final recommendations.



The first is the interconnectedness of ecosystems. Good forests and grasslands protect water supplies, which in turn help to maintain the health of coastal ecosystems.

The second is the link between the ecosystem and economic growth. A healthy ecosystem is key to sustained economic growth. Markets for ecological goods and services can help make the economy and ecosystems mutually supportive.

The third consideration is inclusive development. The outcomes we are seeking will support livelihoods, and the health and quality of life of the Chinese people, especially those in rural areas. Their role as informed, engaged participants will be essential as this work goes forward.

Finally, we will need to identify models of institutional innovation, mechanisms and tool kits to achieve needed changes.

The CCICED is a unique mechanism to draw upon the experience of the international community and on the knowledge available within China. All of us learn in the process. Those of us from other countries know very well how difficult these challenges can be.

We have a deep appreciation of the tasks faced by China, and how important it will be to help China to achieve its vision of becoming an inclusive and environmentally friendly society.