

## **Speech by Director Fang Li on “Prospects of Regional Environmental Cooperation of Northeast Asia”---Session I**

Respectable Chair, ladies and gentlemen,

I believe it is the common wish of all countries of Northeast Asia to promote regional environmental cooperation as environmental problems have become one of the major challenges for our present and future development. Northeast Asia is one of the regions in the world endowed with the richest natural biodiversity systems. However, affected by such factors as natural conditions and economic development, Northeast Asia has witnessed a series of environmental problems including sand storm, acid rain and destruction of biodiversity, which has intensified the conflict between economic development and environmental improvement in the region. Therefore, to strengthen environmental cooperation among all countries in the region is of vital importance for the sustainable development of the whole region, which needs our joint efforts and actions.

China highly values environmental protection and international cooperation in Northeast Asia. We also believe that an increased bilateral, multilateral and regional cooperation within this region is of practical and positive significance. With full development of cooperation in Northeast Asia, no country can ignore the necessity of the institutionalization of the coordination of regional environmental management and environmental cooperation. To achieve regional sustainable development, we need to establish a close link between environmental protection and regional economic development, observe the law of natural development in economic growth, actively make systematic and institutional innovations in order to strive for breakthroughs in international environmental cooperation.

Now I will brief you some considerations and preliminary suggestions from Chinese side:

### **1. Strengthen the linkage among various regional environmental cooperation mechanisms and identify common objectives for development**

Promotion of regional environmental cooperation with earnest effort should be safeguarded by mechanisms. As countries in Northeast Asia have different national conditions and growth mode and are at different development stages, their needs for environmental cooperation also differ from one another. Thus, environmental cooperation in this region sees multi cooperative mechanisms but lacking interaction and connection.

Therefore, we can gradually establish an integrated cooperation mechanism based on combining the existing approaches. What we are trying to achieve is the situation in which governmental mechanism coexists with non-government ones and decision-making mechanisms coexists with consulting ones. With the coordination of each mechanism, we can identify common development goals. The establishment and integration of such mechanisms will play an important role in facilitating regional environmental cooperation and achieving the ultimate goal of mutual benefits and cooperation among various mechanisms that lead to a win-win situation.

## **2. Actively promote environmental management and strengthen the development of Northeast Asian Conference on Environmental Cooperation (NEAC)**

Environmental management will produce positive influence on regional sustainable development if it is combined with political and economic cooperation in a broader sense. Currently, NEAC has bridged China, Japan, Korea, Mongolia, Russia and other neighboring countries to improve environmental management and promote sustainable development of regional environment.

The mechanism of NEAC in the future shall further encourage governments, enterprises and the public from all countries within the region to conduct extensive dialogues and environmental management practice in various forms, such as the implementation of clean production, environment-friendly technology and circular economy. Long-term planning and action plans for environmental protection of Northeast Asia should also be developed through international cooperation.

According to past experience in regional cooperation mechanism, we think it necessary to further enhance and standardize NEAC, expanding its regional implication and deepening cooperation with other neighboring countries. We can consider the establishment of a management coordinating institute responsible for the implementation of environmental cooperation projects or initiatives in order to supporting NEAC to effectively manage and continue to launch new specific projects or activities, so that the needs of all countries in this region are served.

## **3. Respect the law of regional development and adhere to the strategy of sustainable development**

All countries in Northeast Asia should actively promote cooperative projects under the framework of NEAC from the perspective of common development. To increase the rate of sustainable use of resources, equal importance should be laid to development and conservation while protecting biological resources, tourism and mineral resources as well as cultural heritages and river basins in a scientific approach by observing the laws of nature and economic development. Regional economic cooperation should be incorporated into ecological improvement and environmental protection taken as the

focus. Laws and regulations on environmental protection should be seriously implemented with more emphasis on public participation in order to step up ecological protection, contain degradation of regional ecology and promote sustainable development of Northeast Asia.

As Northeast Asia is one of the hot spots drawing global attention, we believe all governments should fulfill their commitments to World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD), actively take part in the work on Johannesburg Plan of Implementation (JPOI), carry out capacity building and formulate action plans and implementation programs for their own country as well as Northeast Asia through international cooperation.

#### **4. Pay close attention to trans-boundary environmental issues, and ensure regional eco-security and address global environmental issues**

Countries in Northeast Asia shall further their cooperation on the protection of trans-boundary ecological environment. Through project cooperation and necessary capacity building, we will provide scientific bases and specific standard for such activities as the development of trans-boundary ecology protection policy of each country in the region, plan and establishment of regional trans-boundary ecological security ensuring system.

Global environmental problems are the one of the most common concerns of the countries in Northeast Asia. It is well known that, with the development of economic globalization, global environmental problems such as climate change and the conservation of biodiversity gradually emerge. It is simply impossible to solve these problems by individual countries, therefore we must step up our cooperation. As an important component of world environment, Northeast Asia certainly cannot get rid of the sufferings or disturbance of global environmental problems. To this end, each country in Northeast Asia is in need of further strengthening cooperation in the fields of biodiversity, the control of desertification and climate change, particularly the stepping up of environmental cooperation under multi-lateral system and regional framework with the help of the international environmental conventions jointly signed by the countries in the region. In doing so, we can seek relevant solutions.

Ladies and gentlemen,

We have always advocated the “Equity, fairness and justice” principle in global and regional environmental cooperation, fully taking into account such aspects as current development, history and cultural tradition of each country. Based on this principle, we will step up dialogue, seek common ground and set aside the difference with mutual benefits in order to enhance our cooperation. As an active advocator and facilitator in regional environmental cooperation as well as an important member of

Northeast Asia, China will take maintaining sustainable development in this region as key practice for the realization of peaceful foreign policy of “Building good-neighborly relationships and partnerships with our neighbors”. Based on this idea, the Chinese Government will actively participate in regional environmental cooperation in Northeast Asia as before and is willing to play its constructive role during this process. Together with other countries of the region, China will continue its promotion of environmental cooperation of Northeast Asia and facilitate the realization of the goal of sustainable development of each country in Northeast Asia.