

China's view on future climate change negotiation and measures to address climate change

Feng Gao

Deputy director, Dept. of Treaty and Law, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, P. R. China

May 16-17, 2005

Dear Co-Chairs, ladies and gentlemen, good morning!

First of all, on behalf of the Chinese delegation, let me express our appreciation to the secretariat for its effort in organizing this meeting. The Kyoto Protocol entered into force on 16 February 2005. This is very encouraging. This also reminds us of the issue of how the Annex I Parties will meet their emission reduction targets under the Protocol.

Until now, although the overall emission from Annex I Parties has decreased, it is mainly due to the economic decline in EIT countries. The overall trend of increase in GHG emissions in developed countries is not effectively curbed. This makes us concerned about whether the Protocol targets can be met. We hope that countries with high emissions can adopt effective measures so as to lower the high per capita emissions and fulfill their commitments under the Protocol. Compliance with the Protocol by developed countries will have great influence on the future of climate change actions.

Now I will briefly introduce the impacts of climate change on China and policies and measures taken by the Chinese government in response.

Climate change is a common challenge faced by the whole world. It is particularly true for China given its fragile eco-system, which is highly vulnerable to adverse impacts of climate change. The economic development level of China is still low. In 2002, the per capita GDP in China was 1090 USD, only about 19% of the world average. The rural population accounts for about 60% in China. The population growth and increasing urbanization will unavoidably increase the overall demand for energy.

In China, 67% of the total primary energy consumption is coal. Due to constraints in the availability of resources and market scale, China will still have to use large amount of coal for energy supply for a long time. This will keep the energy intensity of China's economy relatively high, making it harder for us to slow down the increase in GHG emissions.

China is in the middle stage of industrialization. The process of urbanization will continue for many years to come. Constrained by its economic development level and difficulties in upgrading technology as well as the influence of the industry distribution caused by globalization, the energy efficiency in China is still quite low. The task to improve it is tremendous.

The development history and trend of many countries around the world show that lifting the current level of technology and consumption in China to that of the developed countries leads to a higher level of energy consumption per capita. There is no precedent in the world yet that a country with high GDP per capita can maintain low energy consumption per capita. China is facing the challenge of creating a new sustainable way of production and consumption.

As a developing country vulnerable to the impacts of climate change, the Chinese government has attached high importance to the climate change issue and adopted proactive measures.

China has set up the multi-ministerial national coordination committee for climate change. China has been making efforts to fulfill its commitments under the UNFCCC. China has submitted its initial national communication. The development of a national response strategy to climate change is underway which will guide the policies and measures for climate change for the next few decades. China has made the energy development strategy which gives priority to energy conservation, energy re-structuring to diversify energy supply, environmental protection and technology progress and innovation. The mid to long-term energy conservation plan has been published. Our objective is to reduce the energy intensity of China from 2.68 tce/10,000 yuan in 2003 to 2.25 tce/10,000 yuan by 2010 and to achieve energy saving rate of 2.2% per year. During 2010-20, we will try to further increase the energy saving rate to 3% /year and bring energy intensity down to 1.54 tce/10,000 yuan by 2020.

China has issued the Law of Renewable Energy, promoted renewable energy, supported utilization of new and renewable energy such as biomass, solar, hydro, wind and geothermal in particularly remote and rural areas. By 2020, renewable energy will contribute to 10% of the total energy consumption.

China has adjusted the policy for developing nuclear power and planned to speed up its development so as to improve the energy structure and reduce the growing demand for coal for electricity generation.

China has greatly promoted the policy of reclaiming farmland back to woodland, large -scale afforestation and reforestation which enhanced the removal of CO₂ by sinks.

Co-Chairs,

Facing the global challenge of climate change, international cooperation is indispensable. Priority areas of international cooperation for China are energy efficiency, renewable energy and nuclear power. In particular renewable energy and energy efficiency will be the long-term priorities. We are positive toward cooperation on R&D, introduction and deployment of energy efficiency technology, on related policy drive and capacity building. In renewable energy, we welcome developed countries' effort to promote technology transfer to China and localize the equipment production. Nuclear power is a clean energy. China is perhaps one of the most promising markets for nuclear power plants around the world in the next 20 years. We hope, through the introduction of Gw-scaled pressurized water reactor nuclear power technology, China can realize self-sufficiency in nuclear power.

Co-Chairs,

The above mentioned are the major action plans of China in energy sector in the next 20-30 years. These will safeguard China's energy supply security, be of strategic importance for sustainable development as well as addressing climate change. It is estimated that China needs to invest in energy sector at least 1200 billion USD in the next 20-30 years. Among which China needs to import key technology and equipment such as high efficient clean coal power generation, new generation of nuclear power technology, new automobile and electrical motor technology.

China is undergoing one of the biggest scale of energy construction in the world. In order to prevent it from being locked in the old technology, we urgently need a new mechanism for technology transfer. We need to carry out the rapid diffusion and deployment of existing technology, and accelerate the R&D and commercialization of future technology. The current systems dominating technology transfer and international investment present a lot of barriers to technology transfer and rapid dissemination of new energy technology. Whether we can break through these bottlenecks should constitute one of the criteria of judging the success in the future response actions to climate change.

Co-Chairs,

With the economic growth in China, the total GHG emissions have seen some increase. However, this is mainly the consequence of a huge population. In fact, the emissions from China is just emissions for survival, for meeting the basic needs of people. The per capita emission is still lower than the world average, far lower than that of the developed countries. China as a developing country will continue to adopt measures to address climate change according to its sustainable development strategies. We are willing to work together with the international community to actively pursue an effective solution, which suits each country's national circumstances and in the meantime can ensure energy security, economic growth and improving people's living standard under the framework of sustainable development. We will make our best effort, based on our national circumstances and capacity, to contribute to alleviating climate change.