

Ministry of Ecology and Environment
of the People's Republic of China

2019 Press
Conference
Records of Ministry
of Ecology and
Environment,
the People's Republic
of China



 Springer

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Preface

The Ministry of Ecology and Environment (MEE) further emphasized the important role of press releases in 2019. Over the past year, it has made great efforts to promote Xi Jinping's Thought on Ecological Civilization and the guidelines of the National Working Conference on Environmental Protection, provided the general public with timely and authoritative information concerning environmental policies, measures and latest developments, and made prompt responses to matters of public concern. In this way, it boosted the public's and the media's understanding and support of environmental protection.

On the eve of the 2019 National Day, Minister Li Ganjie and Vice Ministers Huang Runqiu and Zhai Qing attended the press conference in celebration of the 70th anniversary of the founding of the People's Republic of China, summarizing what China had achieved in environmental protection and taking questions from the press. During the Two Sessions, annual meetings of China's top legislature and its top political advisory body, Minister Li Ganjie attended the press conference and received interviews at the Ministers' Corridor, introducing the progress China has made in the battle against pollution. Vice Minister Zhai Qing attended the State Council Information Office (SCIO) briefing on *Regulations on Central Inspection Work of Ecological and Environmental Protection*. Vice Minister Zhao Yingmin was present at the SCIO briefing on the report entitled "China's Policies and Actions for Addressing Climate Change (2019)." Vice Minister Liu Hua was present at the SCIO briefing on the white paper dealing with nuclear safety in China. Vice Minister Zhuang Guotai was present at SCIO routine briefing on follow-ups to proposals from the National People's Congress (NPC) deputies and Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC) members.

The MEE held 12 routine press conferences in 2019, on air pollution control, water pollution control, solid waste and chemicals management, supervision and law enforcement, environment monitoring, pushing forward with reforms that delegate power, improve regulation and upgrade services, law and standards on environment, climate change, conservation of natural ecology, marine ecology protection, soil pollution control, and high-quality development. These press conferences better informed the public of national policies and measures, raised their awareness of ecological conservation, and encouraged greater public participation in the cause.

The book consists of four parts. The first part is about the press conference held in celebration of the country's 70th anniversary, at which Minister Li Ganjie and Vice Ministers Huang Runqiu and Zhai Qing were present. The second part records how Minister Li answered the questions from journalists at the Ministers' Corridor and at a press conference for the Two Sessions. The third part is a record of several SCIO briefings: the press conference on *Regulations on Central Inspection Work of Ecological and Environmental Protection* (attended by Vice Minister Zhai Qing), on *China's Policies and Actions for Addressing Climate Change (2019)* (attended by Vice Minister Zhao Yingmin), on *Nuclear Safety in China* (attended by Vice Minister Liu Hua), and SCIO routine policy briefing on proposals from the NPC deputies and CPPCC members (attended by Vice Minister Zhuang Guotai). The last part consists of MEE's 12 routine press conferences held in 2019. We hope this book could be of help to environmental protection professionals, journalists, and all those who care about and support the work of environmental protection.

We apologize for any possible mistake that might occur in the book. Suggestions for improvement will be gratefully received.

Beijing, China
January 2020

The Editorial Team

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Records of the Press Conference on the 70th Anniversary of the Founding of the People's Republic of China



Records of the Press Conference on Advancing Ecological Civilization to Build a Beautiful China

September 29, 2019



Photo taken at the press conference



Li Ganjie, Minister of Ecology and Environment

The Press Center for the Celebration of the 70th Anniversary of the Founding of the People's Republic of China held its fourth press conference on the afternoon of September 29 in Beijing's Media Center. Li Ganjie, Minister of Ecology and Environment and Vice Ministers Huang Runqiu and Zhai Qing briefed journalists on the country's efforts to advance environmental protection and build a beautiful China, and took questions from the press.

Tian Yuhong, Director of the Press Center for the Celebration of the 70th Anniversary of the Founding of the People's Republic of China.

Ladies and gentlemen, friends from the press, good afternoon! Welcome to our fourth press conference.

Advancing ecological civilization is vital to the sustainable development of the Chinese nation, and it is also an important part of the efforts to implement the five-sphere integrated plan and the four-pronged comprehensive strategy. In the past seven decades, China has achieved substantially in building an ecological civilization. We are honored to have with us today Mr. Li Ganjie, Minister of Ecology and Environment, and Vice Ministers Mr. Huang Runqiu and Mr. Zhai Qing. They'll brief us on how we've advanced the ecological civilization to build a beautiful China.

First, I'll give the floor to Mr. Li.

Li Ganjie, Minister of Ecology and Environment:

Thank you very much. Friends from the press, good afternoon! My two colleagues, Vice Ministers Huang Runqiu and Zhai Qing, and I are very happy to be here today, speaking on how we can advance the ecological civilization and make China a more

beautiful country. Over the years, you have given understanding and tremendous support to our work. On behalf of the Ministry, I wish to say thank you to all of you.

Over the past seven decades, environmental protection in China has grown vigorously and achieved results never seen before. Especially since the 18th National Congress of the Party, the CPC Central Committee with General Secretary Xi Jinping as its core, has mapped out pioneering work which is in the fundamental and long-term interest of the country, and brought about historical, momentous and comprehensive changes in our knowledge and practice concerning environmental protection and ecological civilization in China.

Our achievements can be summarized as follows.

First, we have enhanced our strategic planning. In different periods during the past seven decades, China has proposed and pursued the fundamental policy of environmental protection, the national strategy of sustainable development, and the building of a resource-saving and environment-friendly society. Ecological and environmental protection has taken on an ever-increasing strategic significance. Especially since the 18th CPC National Congress, as Xi Jinping Thought on Ecological Civilization was formed and established, ecological civilization has been included in the Constitution of the country and of the Party. Ecological and environmental protection had never been as important as it is today.

Second, we have stepped up efforts on pollution control. In the past seven decades, pollution control in China has been conducted rigorously in a growing number of sectors using innovative methods. The 18th CPC National Congress declared a resolute fight against pollution. And three action plans on air, water, and soil pollution control were released, each of which is also known as the “Ten Chapters.” Environment has thus improved, and people feel better fulfilled, happier and more secured.

Third, steady progresses have been made in ecological conservation. In the past seven decades, pollution control has been intensified alongside ecological conservation. Virgin forests have been protected and grain-for-green projects launched. Since the 18th CPC National Congress, efforts have been made to preserve and restore ecosystems in mountains, rivers, forests, farmland, lakes, and grassland, to build the nature reserves system centering on national parks, and to demarcate the red lines for ecological conservation. All these have made our home a better place.

Fourth, policy support has been strengthened. Over the past seven decades, a series of policies and guidelines have been developed, including the 32-character guidance, the eight rules for environmental protection, and obligatory environment targets in the process of social and economic development. Since the 18th CPC National Congress, top-level design and institutional building have been intensified to advance ecological civilization. Measures have been taken to enhance pollution control, with an ecological damage accountability system established, pollutant discharge permits issued, river and lake chiefs designated, and imported waste banned.

Fifth, institutional reform has been advanced. The Leading Group for Environmental Protection was set up under the State Council in 1974. The Environmental Protection Bureau was created under the Ministry of Urban-Rural Development and Environmental Protection in 1982. The National Environmental Protection Agency

was established directly under the State Council in 1988 and upgraded to the State Environmental Protection Administration in 1998. In 2008, the Ministry of Environmental Protection came into being as a department of the State Council. Since the 18th CPC National Congress, reform of vertical administration has been intensified in environmental agencies below the provincial level. The Ministry of Ecology and Environment was established in March 2018 as the government authorities responsible for environment-related affairs, pollutant discharge control in urban and rural areas, and administrative law enforcement. Enforcement teams have been formed for ecological conservation. Environmental responsibilities have been assigned in a better and more rigorous way.

Sixth, law enforcement oversight has grown ever stricter. We have put in place over the past seven decades a sound legal framework with the *Environmental Protection Law* at the center. Since the 18th CPC National Congress, legislation, law enforcement and observance of law have all been performed in an unprecedented way. Nine pieces of law and over 20 administrative regulations have been formulated and amended, among which the new *Environmental Protection Law* (amended in 2014) was described as the strictest in history and entered into effect in 2015. In addition, the government conducted the first round of special inspections and follow-up tours during which over 150,000 pieces of complaints from the people have been addressed. And a new round of inspection dealt with around 19,000 pieces of complaints. And we believe this will encourage local governments to take up the responsibility of environmental protection.

Seventh, we have advanced international cooperation in more areas. In the past seven decades, China has ratified and put into effect over 30 multilateral environment conventions and protocols. Since the 18th CPC National Congress, China has played an increasingly active role in global environmental governance. We were among the first to release a national plan on implementation of the *2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*. We have played an active and constructive role in international climate negotiations, and have proved ourselves to be an important participant, contributor and leader in improving global ecological system.

Going forward, we will act according to Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era, implement his thought on ecological civilization, remain true to our original aspiration, keep our mission firmly in mind, stay committed to improving the environment, carry forward the fine revolutionary traditions of the Party, and pursue green development nationwide. We aim to bring our people blue skies, clear water and pollution-free soil, so that the whole country can enjoy a better environment. Together, we can make our shared homeland a better place.

And now, Mr. Huang, Mr. Zhai and I would be here to take your questions.

Tian Yuhong:

Thank you very much, Mr. Li. Now we are ready to take the questions. Please identify yourselves before raising your questions.

CCTV:

From CCTV. There is a question for Mr. Li. You just briefed us on what we have achieved in environmental protection over the past seven decades. We're truly impressed. We know that you've been in the field for years and a witness to the progress over the decades. What are the experience and lessons we can draw from the past 70 years of work? Thank you.

Li Ganjie:

Thank you for your question. As I said in the opening remarks, over the past seven decades since the founding of the P.R. China, especially since the 18th Party Congress, under the strong leadership of the CPC Central Committee with Comrade Xi Jinping as the core, and with the concerted efforts of all Chinese people, indeed, there has been remarkable progress in China's ecological and environmental protection.

During this process, we do have accumulated a lot of good practices that have been proved effective. Let me say a few words about six points. As you just said, I've been spending the whole of my career in environmental protection, so I've been participating in and witnessing all the remarkable changes.

First is the commitment to the guidance of Xi Jinping Thought on Ecological Civilization. This is extensive and profound theory. I believe there're eight highlights in it. First, the history of civilizations shows that the rise or fall of a civilization is closely tied to the quality of the environment. Second, we must ensure harmony of man and nature. Third, lucid waters and lush mountains are invaluable assets. Fourth, a good environment is the fairest public product and the most accessible welfare for the people. Fifth, man and nature form a community of life. Sixth, we must have the strictest possible law and regulation in place for ecological protection. Seventh, the public participation is encouraged and required to advance ecological civilization and build a beautiful China. And eighth, we are pursuing global ecological governance. I believe those eight points are highly important. Xi Jinping Thought on Ecological Civilization is both an important theory and a methodology. It helps us advance our progress in environment.

Second is to be people-centered. It is not a slogan. Instead, it has substantive content. On the one hand, we must be for the people and serve the people. We need to tackle the prominent problems that prompt the strongest public reaction by improving the environment and providing the people with high-quality eco-products, to satisfy the people's growing demand for good ecology. On the other hand, we should also rely on the people as our strong ally. We must take their complaints seriously, from which we can find environment-related problems and address them timely. The people and their complaints are like a treasure for addressing ecological issues. The people actually help us in our supervision and regulation work. Together, we vow to win a battle against pollution.

Third is to ensure the accountability of the Party and government organs. Under the Party's leadership, the Party committees and governments on all levels should take

their responsibilities for the local ecological and environmental quality. Competent authorities must observe their duties. Departments of production and development of specific sectors must be in charge of environmental protection. Environmental protection used to be confined to a single department. But now, it calls for wider participation of the Party, government organs, and the public. Concerted efforts will produce good outcomes.

Fourth, we need to focus on the ecological and environmental quality. In the past, we focused more on quantitative indicators. But now we prioritize qualitative ones. It's very important and helps to motivate local governments to address the prominent environmental issues. Also, it produces more direct outcomes that people can enjoy in person. We have been improving mechanisms for monitoring, early warning, information disclosure, and ranking, to press competent authorities in their work.

Fifth, we need to focus our efforts on six areas. Previously, I touched upon those six areas. Briefly, they are our basic position, principles and methods.

First, we must make steady progress. It's a long-lasting and tough battle and requires from us strong will, confidence, patience and persistence. Second, we need to take a holistic approach, to focus on both environmental gains and economic and social benefits. Third, we need to take multi-pronged measures, both legal and administrative ones. We should follow the rule of law, in particular. All the authorities should advance their work by observing the law. Also, both market and technology shall play in a full swing. Fourth, our work must be done from the macro level down to the micro one. Good top-design is required for the general plan. In the meantime, the plan must be materialized in every detail. Each competent authority shall be pressed to take its due responsibility. Fifth, we need to focus on holistic approaches and take targeted measures in specific areas. Sixth, we need to seek for truth and be practical. We need to properly address reserved issues, but also to create better conditions for our future work. No matter how difficult the situation is, we must get rid of slogan-chanting, numerical figure-focused and vanity-pursuing projects. We must eradicate malpractices. I believe those six points as our principles and methods are really good practices and experiences.

The final point I want to make is to strengthen capacity building. We've strengthened the buildup of our administrative and technical teams for ecological and environmental protection. We have spared no efforts to advance eco-governance and its modernization. Those points that I made are the outstanding parts of our good experience. We will carry them forward and keep improving our work. I believe these practices will play a stronger part in our future battle against pollution and in advancing ecological civilization. Thank you.

China Daily:

The Ministry of Ecology and Environment and competent authorities launched the "Green Shield" campaign and dealt with a number of malpractices in nature reserves. Next year, the 15th meeting of the Conferences of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity will be held in Kunming. What are the challenges for China's ecological protection? What will be the future measures? Thank you.

Li Ganjie:

Thank you for your question. I would invite Vice Minister Huang to answer this question, because it falls within his portfolio.



Huang Runqiu, Vice Minister of Ecology and Environment

Huang Runqiu:

Thank you very much. Over the past seven decades, we have been committed to improving the environment for the benefit of the people. We've stepped up our efforts on environmental protection and restoration, and achieved remarkable results, as the following goes.

First, we have realized a historic leap-forward in our concept of environmental protection. Just like Minister Li mentioned before, guided by Xi Jinping Thought on Ecological Civilization since the 18th Party Congress, we have put into practice Xi's guidelines by focusing on the relationship between ecology and civilization, on harmony of man and nature, on the importance of waters and mountains, on environment's role for the people's wellbeing, and on the community of life shared by man and nature. We set it our goal to provide more and better eco-products and services for the people. Ecology is prioritized. And we've been pursuing a green development. Those concepts and ideas are our creation and contribution to the global efforts in ecological development. In the past, we learnt from and followed others. But now we're making our own contributions. We believe this is something quite remarkable.

Next year we will hold the 15th meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity. We have reached an agreement with the Secretariat as well as all the Parties and identified the theme of the conference as “Ecological Civilization: Building a Shared Future for All Life on Earth.” This highlights the universal significance of Xi Jinping Thought on Ecological Civilization and reflects the international community’s recognition of China’s ecological progress.

Second, we have made historical changes in our ecological governance, which has turned from being extensive to well-structured. Over the past seven decades, we have realized huge development in the institutional setting of relevant agencies looking after environmental protection. In the past, we had separated departments, and they belonged to different ministries. But in 2018, we established the Ministry of Ecology and Environment and the regulatory system adapting to China’s ecological circumstances. For example, ecological civilization is included in the constitution of the country and of the Party. Redlines for protecting ecosystems were set in the amended *Environmental Protection Law* in 2014. Ecological security is now part of our national security system. The CPC Central Committee released the Guiding Opinions on Establishing the Nature Reserves System Composed Mainly of National Parks. We have very strict rules in terms of eco-damage accountability system for the Party and government leaders, eco-damage indemnity mechanism, and ecological compensation mechanism. We have been improving the legal framework for ecological and environmental protection.

Third, we have had ever stronger protection of natural ecology over the past seven decades. Now we have 2,750 nature reserves, including 474 national ones. The nature reserves total 1,470,000 square kilometers, accounting for 15% of China’s land territory. With the other types of protected natural areas counted in, China has 11,029 protected natural areas, or 18% of our land territory. That is, China has reached the target set in the Convention that by 2020, the protected areas would be at least 17% of a country’s national territory, ahead of schedule.

Fourth, we have made specific and overall improvements concerning ecological situations. We have put in place ecological projects for protecting natural forests and turning more marginal farmland into forests. Especially since the 18th Party Congress, we have promoted afforestation and improved the system of shields for ecological security, to substantially strengthen ecosystems. Over the past seven decades, China’s forest coverage has increased from roughly 8% to 22.96%. According to monitoring data, over the past 20 years, China’s new afforestation has been about 25% of the global total, ranking first in the area.

However, we are still facing huge challenges. Natural ecospace like forests, shrubs, grassland and wetland are mercilessly occupied. Ecosystems in some areas are deteriorating. Ecosystems are susceptible to ecological risks. And people’s demand for quality eco-resources is far from being satisfied. Also, our per capita area of forest and wetland is only one fifth of the world’s average.

Going forward, we will continue to implement Xi Jinping Thought on Ecological Civilization. We will improve our regulatory system for ecological protection and observe redlines for protecting ecosystems, to safeguard the national eco-security. We will intensify the supervision on nature reserves and the protection of biodiversity.

We will vigorously develop demonstration and pilot ecological projects and enhance the regulatory capacity. In this way, we will fight the battle against pollution and build China a better place. Thank you.

Xinhua News Agency:

Recently, we have seen wide media coverage on the central inspection on environmental protection. What's your take on the role of the central inspection? Sometimes, the local authorities may relax their efforts after the inspection team left. So what's your comment on that? Thank you.

Li Ganjie:

Thank you. We'll invite Vice Minister Zhai to answer this question. He is in charge of the supervision and inspection.



Zhai Qing, Vice Minister of Ecology and Environment

Zhai Qing:

Thank you for your question. The supervision mechanism was started and advanced under General Secretary Xi's proposal. It's a major reform measure. And it is also an important institutional arrangement and instrument for us to advance ecological and environmental protection and ecological civilization. Starting at the end of 2015 with pilot projects, the mechanism has been in operation in all provincial-level administrative regions in China since 2017. Follow-up tours were made to 20 provinces

in 2018 on their rectification efforts in the field. In the first half of this year, a new round of inspections was carried out in six provinces and two centrally administered SOEs.

Over the years, our work has been effective.

First, localities and departments have had fundamental change in their awareness. Xi Jinping Thought on Ecological Civilization has taken deep root in people's mind. Xi's instructions and ideas in the field have been materialized. It is widely accepted that lucid waters and lush mountains are invaluable assets. A high-quality green development is being pursued. Concerted efforts are put in the field, whereas excessive exploitation projects prohibited. Also, efforts are coordinated for multi-player ecological governance. The Party and government organs have focused on both development and ecological protection. Sector-specific regulations on environmental protection have been established. And an accountability system has been in place. A number of officials have been recognized because of their efforts in ecological protection. There has been a fundamental change in the mindset of our people. This has laid a solid foundation for our work.

Second, the style of work has been changed. The style of work and conduct in the field has been rectified thanks to inspections. We rooted out superficial and gloss-over efforts, and even faked ones. In this way, we have guaranteed concrete efforts and outcomes in ecological and environmental protection. As Minister Li just said, we have now authentic and accurate data. The projects are launched down to details. And our regulatory team performs their duty regardless of difficulties. In the inspections, we have firmly followed Xi Jinping Thought on Ecological Civilization and instructions on seeing full and vigorous governance over the Party, to ensure inspections play a concrete role in advancing ecological civilization.

Third, a large number of issues have been addressed. In the first round of the central inspections, about 150,000 environment-related problems were solved. In addition, local authorities were urged to solve over 2,100 prominent ecology-related problems thanks to inspection reports and special inspections from the central level. In fact, central inspections gave impetus and backing to local authorities in solving those thorny problems. The inspections have been thus highly thought of and warmly received by the people.

Next, we will continue to prioritize Xi Jinping Thought on Ecological Civilization in our inspections and energetically put it into practice. This means that the new round of inspections will go deeper into issues in the field. We will go down to specific problems and be ready to solve them regardless of difficulties. We will firmly serve the people by addressing prominent issues the people are concerned most. We will make sure information disclosure is full and thorough, to guarantee people's right to know, participate and supervise in environment-related issues. In this way, we will see more new ecological progress. Thank you.

Li Ganjie:

Let me add a few words on that question. Like the lady who raised this question, the media and general public are following closely on our ecological inspection work. And it is a question raised on our regular press conferences. Thank you for your

attention on this issue. Inspections have proved an effective measure for intensifying ecological and environmental protection. The first round of central inspections started at the end of 2015 and was concluded at the end of 2018. The first two years saw routine inspections. The year of 2018 was the concluding year. We made follow-up inspections. The second round started in 2019. The first three years will see routine inspections and the fourth follow-ups. Half of this year's inspections have been completed in the first six months. We will update you on new developments. And please keep following this mechanism. Thank you.

L'Express from Mauritius:

China's carbon dioxide emission is relatively low considering your economic growth, around 2%, I think. However, China is still building coal-fired power plants in countries that are members of the Belt and Road Initiative. So how do you identify this disparity considering your commitment globally to climate change? Thank you.

Li Ganjie:

Thank you for your question. And first of all, I wish to thank you for following the green development of the Belt and Road Initiative. The Chinese government has regarded green development an indispensable part of the Initiative. President Xi Jinping has emphasized on different occasions that the Belt and Road shall be a green one and we need to pursue an open, green and clean cooperation. Green development is the foundation and ultimate goal. We may launch green infrastructure projects, make green investment and provide green financing.

It took more than five years to get the Belt and Road Initiative conceived and materialized. During the period, the Initiative has seen remarkable progress and outcomes. Our Ministry has been working hard to pursue green development of the Belt and Road Initiative. We have provided all possible services and support for it, as described in the following five aspects.

First, we work on the top-level design. Together with concerned departments, we formulated and released the Guidance on Promoting Green Belt and Road and the Belt and Road Ecological and Environmental Cooperation Plan. These documents clarify the overall framework, objectives and tasks.

Second, we keep improving cooperation mechanism. The Ministry of Ecology and Environment, competent authorities of the countries along the Belt and Road and related international organizations have signed over 50 agreements on cooperation. Also, the Belt and Road Initiative International Green Development Coalition (BRIGC) was established. The Coalition is inclusive and gains wide media coverage. We now have over 130 members, including government institutions, companies, think tanks and international organizations. It is playing its role in boosting green development of the BRI.

Third, we create cooperation platforms. We put into operation the green supply chain platform and set up Lancang-Mekong Environmental Cooperation Center. China and Cambodia co-established an environmental cooperation center. And we and African countries are working on a China-Africa edition. Also, the Belt and Road Initiative Big Data Analysis Platform is in operation.

Fourth, we advance international talks. The Second Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation was held in April this year. During the Forum, the Ministry and related departments, including the National Development and Reform Commission, co-sponsored a Green Road Forum. We received a lot of participants for over 20 seminars and exchange events in a single year. Green Road Forum has been widely recognized.

Fifth, we have buildup of capacity. Efforts are stepped up for both our own capacity building. Also, we help the participating countries of the Initiative with their capacity building in ecological and environmental protection and green development. We organize training sessions for professionals from the BRI participating countries, more than 300 persons a year. The Belt and Road Environmental Technology Exchange and Transfer Center (Shenzhen) is in operation now.

This has played a positive role in promoting the Belt and Road Initiative green development. We believe the Belt and Road is not only for the economic prosperity of the relevant countries but also for the green development of all. Only when we integrate environmental protection with the Initiative can it go steady and far. This is proved to be correct in theory and in practice. We uphold the theory and we put it into practice. It proves to be effective. Naturally, we see problems. And we address them without any delay.

Going forward, we will rely on the BRIGC and the big data platform to do a better job. We will also strengthen our policy talks, align our law, regulations and standards with international ones, establish lists of prohibited, restricted and encouraged investment projects, and together with competent authorities conduct environmental performance assessments on such projects. In addition, we will continue our training sessions and capacity building, to contribute to the Belt and Road Initiative, particularly its green development. Thank you.

China News Service:

In the large-scale exhibition on the achievements of the PRC in the past seven decades, we see China's first *Environmental Protection Law* of 1979. Over the years, there have been regulations promulgated. What are the works we've been doing in this regard? Thank you.

Li Ganjie:

Thank you. Let's invite Vice Minister Huang to answer this question.

Huang Runqiu:

I'd like to take this opportunity to have a review of our legislative work in the field over the past seven decades. The CPC Central Committee and the State Council have always attached great importance to the rule of law for ecological conservation. Forty-one years ago, that is when we began to adopt reform and opening-up policy, we added in our Constitution that "the State will protect environment and natural resources and prevent pollution and other public hazards." In 1979, the 11th meeting of the Standing Committee of the Fifth National People's Congress proved the trial version of the *Environmental Protection Law*. And ten years later, in 1989, at the 11th

meeting of the Standing Committee of the Seventh National People's Congress, the *Environmental Protection Law* was passed. With that, we have put the environmental protection onto the track of the rule of law.

After over forty years' efforts, we have formed a legal system with the *Environmental Protection Law* (amended in 2014) as the core and covering the protection of air, water, soil, ecosystems and nuclear safety. Particularly after the 18th CPC National Congress, we have followed General Secretary Xi Jinping's instructions on using the strictest law to protect our ecosystems. We have made earnest legislative efforts to properly deal with laws and regulations in the field and improve the legal framework for environmental protection. We have formulated and amended nine laws on ecology and environment, including the *Environmental Protection Law* (amended in 2014), the *Law on the Prevention and Control of Atmospheric Pollution* (amended in 2018), the *Law on the Prevention and Control of Water Pollution* (amended in 2017), *Law on the Prevention and Control of Environmental Pollution by Solid Waste* (amended in 2016), the *Law on the Prevention and Control of Soil Pollution*, *Marine Environment Protection Law* (amended in 2017), the *Law on Environmental Impact Assessment* (amended in 2018), the *Nuclear Safety Law*, and the *Environmental Protection Tax Law* (amended in 2018). That is, we have amended all major laws on ecology and environment since the Party's 18th National Congress. The *Law on the Prevention and Control of Soil Pollution* and the *Nuclear Safety Law* were new members of the legal framework. In addition, we have formulated and amended over 20 administrative regulations in the regard, including the *Regulations on the Prevention and Control of Pollution from Large-scale Breeding of Livestock and Poultry* and the *Regulations on the Administration of Construction Project Environmental Protection*.

In 2014, we amended *Environmental Protection Law*, which has been reputed the strictest in history. In this revision, new measures are introduced, including consecutive fine on a daily basis, facilities and equipment seal-up and detaining, production restriction or suspension, administrative detention, and public litigation. After the new *Environmental Protection Law* came into effect in 2015, there has been notable progress in combating illegal activities in this area. In 2018, we handled 186,000 cases of administrative penalties, increasing by 124%, compared with the 83,000 cases handled in 2014. The fines totaled RMB 15.28 billion in 2018, an enormous increase of 382% compared with the RMB 3.17 billion in 2014.

We must rely on the sound institutional setting and the rule of law to fight the battle against pollution and advance ecological civilization. Our Ministry focuses on system restructuring and exploring new horizons, to adapt the legal framework to our goal of building a beautiful China for all sectors concerned.

Going forward, we will focus on two courses. First, we will strengthen legislation in key areas. We will work with the legislative body to formulate or amend laws and regulations, including the *Law on the Prevention and Control of Pollution by Solid Waste*, the *Law on the Protection of the Yangtze River*, the *Regulations on the Waste Discharge Permit*, and the *Regulations on Environmental Monitoring*. Thus, we will create a robust legal framework for fighting the battle against pollution. Second, we will advance the legal process of institutional restructuring in the field. Legislative

efforts will be made for ecological and environmental damage indemnity, nature reserves, and redlines for protecting ecosystems. In this way, we will create a robust legal framework for institutional restructuring in the field. In addition, we will ensure reform is conducted according to law and effective. Thank you.

China National Radio (CNR):

Recently, General Secretary Xi Jinping made specific requirements for the protection of the Yellow River, the Mother River of the Chinese nation. We know that the ecosystems in the area are fragile. Some of the affluents have been heavily polluted. What measures can be taken in this regard? Thank you.

Li Ganjie:

Thank you for your question. The Yellow River is the Mother River of the Chinese nation and the cradle of the Chinese civilization. On September 18, 2019, General Secretary Xi chaired and addressed a symposium on the ecological protection and high-quality development of the Yellow River in Zhengzhou, central China's Henan Province. He stressed, "The protection of the Yellow River is critical to the great rejuvenation and sustainable development of the Chinese nation." The ecological conservation of the Yellow River and high-quality development is a major national strategy. President Xi called for concerted efforts to achieve the goal and guarantee the people's well-to-do life along the river. I myself had the honor to attend that symposium. Indeed, I learnt a lot and was deeply impressed by Xi's speech. We will earnestly put the meeting's spirit and Xi's instruction into practice.

The Yellow River is one of the seven major rivers in China. Over the past years, our Ministry has worked with the competent authorities of the nine provinces and autonomous regions along the river on ecological conservation.

First, we have consolidated the accountability system in the regard. The Yellow River has always been prioritized in the central inspection of ecological protection. Back in 2016 and 2017, we conducted inspections in all the nine provinces and autonomous regions. And last year, we had follow-ups in seven of the nine. This year, we made the first inspection of the second round. Through these inspections, we ensure that the Party and government officials both assume their responsibilities, and that equal emphasis is put on economic and ecological benefits of a same issue.

Second, we have worked on protection and restoration of ecosystems. We have the "Green Shield" supervision program designed for nature reserves, with the Yellow River Basin as a prioritized area. A large number of problems were found and solved thanks to the program. The Ministry also worked with departments concerned on advancing pilot projects of eco-restoration in mountains, rivers, forests, farmlands, lakes and grasslands. Both the source of the three rivers and the Qilian Mountains were included. We have drawn redlines for ecosystem protection in the nine provinces and autonomous regions. As Mr. Huang said, nature reserves account for 15% of China's land territory. With other types of protected natural areas included, the total area is 18% of our land territory. That is, China has reached the target set in the Convention that by 2020, the protected areas would be at least 17% of a country's national territory. What's more, the areas within the boundary of the newly drawn