

Lucid Waters and Lush Mountains for Beautiful China and World

——China's Ecological Civilization Concept and
Practice, and How They Inspire the World

Xinhua Institute
The Research Center for Xi Jinping Thought on Ecological Civilization

Table of Contents

Foreword2

Chapter 1

The Concept of "Lucid Waters and Lush Mountains Are Invaluable Assets" —A Theoretical Innovation4

 1.1 Historical Background of the Concept's Formation and Development4

 1.2 Core Views and Profound Implications6

 1.3 Great Relevance and Contemporary Value.....9

Chapter 2

China's Practice in Implementing the Concept of "Lucid Waters and Lush Mountains Are Invaluable Assets"12

 2.1 Spearheading the Comprehensive Building of a Beautiful China12

 2.2 High-level protection underpins high-quality development15

 2.3 Promoting diversified conversion of ecological values19

Chapter 3

The Global Value of the Concept of "Lucid Waters and Lush Mountains Are Invaluable Assets"23

 3.1 Solidifying Global Green Consensus23

 3.2 Stimulating the Vitality of Green Transition25

 3.3 Leading Global Environmental Governance26

 3.4 Jointly Building a Green Belt and Road28

Conclusion30

Note on Compilation31

We want to have not only mountains of gold, but also mountains of green. If we must choose between the two, we would rather have the green than the gold. And in any case, green mountains are themselves gold mountains.^①

— Xi Jinping

^① *Selected Works of Xi Jinping on Ecological Civilization, Volume I*, Central Party Literature Press, 2025, p. 16.

Foreword

The pursuit of happiness is shared by humanity. There exists no country whose populace does not cherish beautiful Nature nor yearn for an idyllic life amid lucid waters, lush mountains, resonant birdsongs, and flower fragrances.

Yet, grave challenges such as climate change, loss of biodiversity, and environmental pollution are plunging the whole world into an unprecedented plight on the sustainable development front. Faced with the escalating ecological crises, China has resolutely chosen to tackle these challenges head-on. Through its dynamic implementation of the concept that "lucid waters and lush mountains are invaluable assets", China has resolved the development-conservation dilemma and built a greener future in response—a feat that commands global attention.

On August 15, 2005, during an inspection of Yucun Village, Anji, Xi Jinping, then Secretary of the Zhejiang Provincial Committee of the Communist Party of China (CPC), proposed for the first time with visionary and strategic foresight the concept that "lucid waters and lush mountains are invaluable assets", starting a new chapter in China's ecological prioritization and green development. Since the 18th National Congress of the Communist Party of China, eco-civilizational advancement has been incorporated into the Five-Sphere Integrated Plan. The concept that "lucid waters and lush mountains are invaluable assets" has become the core philosophy and action framework for eco-civilization construction, opening a new chapter in China's ecological progress. Guided by this concept, China embarked on the path of systematic ecological governance with a firm determination for eco-environmental advancement. As a result, smog-choked skies regained "azure hues", "mosquito-and-fly-infested waterways" witnessed crystalline flows restored, yellow earth donned verdant garments, and the lands once sterile have become fertile for green and clean energy. Dilemmas once deemed irreconcilable have been transformed into a scroll of win-win synergy.

In a short span of two decades, the spark of thought ignited in Yu Village, Zhejiang has burgeoned into a large-scale practice across the great land of China. Lucid waters and lush mountains are at once natural and ecological assets as well as a source of social and economic wealth. By persisting in formulating development strategies from the vantage point of harmony between humanity and nature, China has blazed a new trail of civilization advancement characterized by production-based development, affluent living, and sound ecology. This green path of development has benefited both China and the rest of the world. From the builders of Saihanba Forest Farm to Zhejiang's Green Rural Revival Program, from Alipay's "Ant Forest" initiative to Zhejiang's "Blue Recycling" marine plastic waste management model, and further to Chinese scientists researching on desertification prevention and control awarded the Science and Innovation Award" China has repeatedly received the United Nations Environment Programme's "Champions of the Earth" award, underscoring its major transition from a participant to a leader in global environmental governance.

At this moment, vibrant ecological scrolls are unfolding across the divine land of China. They not only represent China's green pledge to the future, but also instill robust confidence and strength into global efforts to address ecological challenges. In presenting this report, we hope you will join us in feeling the green pulse of Chinese civilization and comprehending the visionary philosophy that penetrates the future and benefits humanity, illuminating with its theoretical radiance, practical potency, and far-reaching global influence.

Chapter 1

The Concept of "Lucid Waters and Lush Mountains Are Invaluable Assets" —A Theoretical Innovation

"Lucid waters and lush mountains are invaluable assets" is an original idea that represents a hallmark of China's efforts in developing its ecological civilization. It reveals the multiple value pursuits of harmony between humanity and nature, among people, and between humanity and socio-economic development. It reflects the unique philosophical thinking, cultural depths, and linguistic charm of the Chinese nation. Originating in a small village, this concept has seen its application extended across the country and won broad international recognition. It provides Chinese wisdom and a Chinese solution for building a clean and beautiful world and a community with a shared future for humanity.

1.1 Historical Background of the Concept's Formation and Development

In the late 1970s, China embarked on a great journey of reform and opening-up. It is an essential path to national prosperity and guides China's economic development toward historic achievements. Amid its fast development, a host of ever-prominent problems, such as environmental pollution, increasing resource constraints, and ecosystem degradation also occurred. The relationships between the economy and ecology, and between humanity and nature became increasingly tense and irreconcilable. In some production activities, the excessive taking of and interference with the natural system went beyond its carrying and restorative capacities. At the national level, the industrial mix developed over the years was characterized by high inputs, high consumption, and high emissions; energy and resource issues were bottlenecks that had become major constraints to the sustainable and sound development of China's economy.

At the local level, the rush in all localities to shake off poverty led to a proliferation of township enterprises across villages and households, only to be followed by increasingly outstanding environmental problems. The traditional development model proved unsustainable, making it a pressing imperative of our times to find a balance between development and conservation.

As a pioneer of the reform and opening up, Zhejiang Province was among the first to experience the excruciating pains of environmental pollution as it was facing "growing pains". Yucun Village in Anji County, is a typical microcosm: The villagers made short-term gains by quarrying at the cost of mountain destruction, stream pollution,

and dusty air. During a visit to Yucun in August 2005, Xi Jinping, then Party Secretary of Zhejiang Province, asserted for the first time that "lucid waters and lush mountains are invaluable assets". He noted: "In the past, we said we wanted both lush rivers and green mountains as well as gold mountains. In reality, lucid rivers and lush mountains are precisely gold mountains."^① After that, he later systematically expounded on this assertion in multiple settings and set out the "three stages"^② in understanding the relationship between the lucid waters and lush mountains, on the one hand, and gold mountains, on the other.

After starting its transformation, Yucun Village actively put this concept into practice and, through ecological restoration and eco-industry development, blazed a new trail of sustainable development marked by environmental beauty, industrial vitality, and public prosperity. Practice has proven that the concept -- lucid waters and lush mountains are gold mountains -- is a sound one: economic growth and eco-environmental protection are not an "either-or" choice; rather, they go hand in hand as parts of a harmonious, interdependent whole.

There is no end to practice. Neither is there an end to theoretical exploration. Since the 18th CPC National Congress, President Xi has consistently upheld and enriched this concept. He made important statements, including "ecology itself is the economy,"^③ "places covered with ice and snow are also invaluable assets,"^④ and "high-quality development and high-standard environmental protection complement and reinforce each other."^⑤ These expositions have further enriched and developed both the core message and practice requirements of the concept. It has been written into the Constitution of the Communist Party of China and integrated into the Party's governance philosophy, and has thus become an important concept that guides economic development and eco-environmental protection, an intrinsic requirement for sustainable development, and a fundamental principle for China's modernization drive. In 2018, Xi Jinping Thought on Ecological Civilization was formally introduced, with the idea that lucid waters and lush mountains are invaluable assets set out as its central concept, offering the theoretical foundation and practical guidance for building China's independent knowledge system of ecological civilization.

① *Striving to Realize a Modernization that Features Humanity and Nature—A Documentary Record of General Secretary Xi Jinping's Leadership in Advancing Ecological Civilization*, *People's Daily*, July 17, 2023.

② The "Three-Stage Theory" on the relationship between lucid waters and lush mountains, on the one hand, and gold and silver mountains, on the other: The first stage involves exchanging lucid waters and lush mountains for gold and silver mountains and an excessive exploitation of resources with little or no regard for the environment-carrying capacity. At the second stage, one wants preservation of lucid waters and lush mountains while pursuing gold and silver mountains. At this point, the contradiction between economic development and resource scarcity/environmental degradation becomes evident. People begin to realize that the environment is the foundation of survival and development and that the mountains need to be kept so that logwood remains. At the third stage, one realizes that lucid waters and lush mountains can continuously generate gold and silver mountains—that they are gold and silver mountains themselves, that the ever-green trees we grow are none other than money trees. Ecological advantages can be transformed into economic strengths, forming an integrated and harmonious whole in their relationship.

③ Xi Jinping, *Selected Works of Xi Jinping on Ecological Civilization*, Volume I, Central Party Literature Press, 2025, p. 94.

④ Xi Jinping, *Selected Works of Xi Jinping on Ecological Civilization*, Volume I, Central Party Literature Press, 2025, p. 97.

⑤ Xi Jinping, *Selected Works of Xi Jinping on Ecological Civilization*, Volume I, Central Party Literature Press, 2025, p. 279.

1.2 Core Views and Profound Implications

The concept that "lucid waters and lush mountains are invaluable assets" (also known in short as "green is gold") embodies a deep theoretical accumulation and rich practical foundation. It reflects an in-depth understanding of the laws of nature and the general laws governing sustainable socio-economic development and serves as an important original and defining component of Xi Jinping Thought on Ecological Civilization.

— Lucid waters and lush mountains are vital to people's happy lives

Lucid waters, lush mountains, clear skies, white clouds, pristine rivers, chirping birds, and fragrant flowers mirror a universal aspiration for a better life. This concept conforms to people's new expectations for a beautiful ecological environment and quality ecological products. It emphasizes that "the environment is crucial to people's well-being as lush mountains stand for beauty while blue skies, for happiness." Ecological advantages are priceless. While economic gains do matter for human survival and people's lives, the health benefits and aesthetic pleasures bestowed by nature cannot be substituted or bought with money.

China's development is people-centered. The people's aspiration for lucid waters and lush mountains is one of the goals that the ruling party is striving to achieve. With a Beautiful China as one of the important goals in building China into a great modern country, we have been engaged, for many years in a row, in a tough battle of pollution prevention and control to improve the quality of our ecological environment. The Chinese people truly feel the fulfillment, happiness, and security brought by a beautiful ecological environment. In the annual "Happiest Cities" assessment and selection activities run by China for consecutive years, the ecological environment has consistently remained a very important criterion. Both practice and action show that lucid waters and lush mountains form the foundation of a better life, protecting the ecological environment is improving people's well-being, and safeguarding people's rights to a sound ecological environment enables them to feel fairness, justice, and social stability.

— The dialectical unity between development and protection

A proper handling of the relationship between development and protection is a global challenge as well as a timeless issue facing the development of human society. Conventional views hold that economic development and environmental protection are two sides of a dilemma or dichotomy that are at odds with each other: the developmental approach in pursuit of capital and profit maximization is bound to damage natural resources and the ecological environment; protecting the eco-environment is sure to stall economic growth due to high cost. In contrast, the "green is gold" principle emphasizes, "We want to have not only gold mountains, but also green mountains. If we must choose between the two, we would rather have the green than the gold. And in any case, green mountains are themselves gold mountains."

Economic development and ecological conservation form a dialectical unity. By changing the development-related philosophy, methods, and path, lucid waters and lush mountains can be turned into mountains of gold and silver so that we can achieve sound coordination between socio-economic development, on the one hand, and population, resources, and the environment, on the other.

Protecting the ecological environment is itself a form of development and an indispensable element of human civilization. Without a sound eco-environment, development as such is not sustainable. Besides, development remains the dominant theme of the world; it is the foundation and key to addressing all difficulties and challenges. Ecological and environmental problems arise during development and will certainly be resolved through development. A development model that is more scientifically and technologically advanced, resource-efficient, and less-polluting can solve eco-environmental problems at their root and help achieve a higher level of protection. For this reason, economic development should not drain resources or destroy the environment while ecological conservation should not be pursued to the neglect of the development needs. Development should be achieved amid protection and protection should be ensured through development.

— Protecting the eco-environment is protecting productive forces

Productive forces provide the material foundation for the development of human society. Without their development, social progress would be out of the question. The "green is gold" concept enshrines the principle and truth that "protecting the eco-environment is protecting productive forces; improving the eco-environment is enhancing productive forces", with greater attention given to the optimizing and leading role of the ecological environment in unleashing and developing productivity.

For a long time in conventional productivity theories, labor, capital, and land are treated as important factors of production. Along with technological advancements and the transformation of the means of production, new factors of production such as management, technology, data have been emerging and driving economic growth throughout the production process. Now that socio-economic development has an increasing reliance on the eco-environment, a better eco-environment will have a greater appeal and stronger cohesiveness to high-quality factors of production, and will be better able to propel quality development. In its turn, eco-environmental needs drive technological innovation, advanced manufacturing, and green development, turning ecological strengths into productivity strengths and forming new areas of growth for sustainable and healthy socio-economic development.

Under the guidance of the "green is gold" concept, China put forward the theory of new quality productive forces, emphasizing that these forces per se are green. The way green factors of production are born from green, low-carbon technological innovation and modular innovation further highlights the new quality and green development of these factors as their innovative allocation and integration, thereby enriching and advancing the modern theory on productive forces.

— Ecological governance and poverty alleviation promote mutual progress

Poverty is a chronic malaise of human society. In the world of today, hundreds of millions of people are living in extreme poverty; the eradication of poverty is an important task facing many developing countries. In 2021, China achieved a complete victory in the fight against poverty by lifting its 98.99 million rural population below the prevailing poverty threshold all out of poverty. Thus, China accomplished ten years ahead of schedule the poverty alleviation target laid out in the UN's 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. In this great historic process, under the "green is gold" concept, ecological governance and the fight for poverty eradication were creatively integrated and, through exploration, new modes of poverty alleviation were found through eco-agriculture, eco-tourism, eco-industrial development, etc. This blazed a new trail of ecological poverty eradication for China by harmonizing the development of ecological civilization and the economy.

Judging from China's reality, the country's rural areas are endowed with abundant ecological resources and exhibit a significant agglomeration effect for factors such as capital, technology, and talent. Once such factors as land, labor, assets, and natural landscapes are activated, resources will be turned into assets, capital into equity, farmers into shareholders, and consequently, lucid waters and lush mountains can be turned into invaluable assets. While working in Fujian Province, Xi Jinping vigorously promoted Juncao (fungus grass or mycorrhizal) technology, listing it as a key project under the Fujian-Ningxia Paired Assistance Program.

This technology not only has an important effect on saline and alkaline land management and sand control, but also can help farmers develop specialty industries and increase their income. In 1997, Juncao began to be cultivated in Ningxia. Within a mere ten years, it had benefited 17,500 rural households, each of which saw an average annual increase of over 5,000 yuan in income. Today, Juncao technology has taken root out of China in more than 100 other countries and regions, creating hundreds of thousands of local jobs. For people living in areas in China with harsh living conditions, fragile ecosystems, and frequent natural disasters, China has adopted other modes of poverty alleviation such as relocation and ecological compensation so that they can develop in areas that are more conducive to development, thus allowing the ecological environment of their original habitats to be restored and improved. Facts have proved that only by organically integrating ecological governance with the development of characteristic industries and unblocking the transformation pathway from lucid waters and lush mountains to invaluable assets can we achieve the coordinated advancement of ecological protection, poverty eradication, and rural revitalization.

— "Green is gold" is an ecological culture

Culture is a self-motivated form of cultivation and the most deep-rooted and enduring force of a country. Protecting the ecosystem with all its lucid waters and lush mountains requires not only the external constraints of laws and regulations, but also the internal drive provided by ecological culture and awareness. "Green is gold" has subver-

sively reshaped people's cognition of and attitude toward economic development and environmental protection, guiding them, in an incremental and subconscious manner, in actively practicing a green, low-carbon, and circular way of production and lifestyle. This, in itself, is a form of ecological culture and essentially a code of conduct, a set of values. In its essence, "green is gold" is an innovative expression of the relationship between humanity and nature as humans need not only material accumulation of their development, but also a sound ecological environment to improve their quality of life. This ecological culture contains the inheritance of the Chinese people's simple and pure understanding of the relationship between humanity and nature. It embodies the cultural trait of pursuing harmonious coexistence between the two.

The concept that lucid waters and lush mountains are invaluable assets is rooted in the living practice of environmental protection across the vast land of China. It embodies the Chinese nation's self-awareness, independent stance, and independent creativity with regard to its own culture. This notion highlights the subjectivity of China's ecological culture and helps build cultural confidence in eco-environmental protection in the new era. Today, the belief that lucid waters and lush mountains are invaluable assets has been deeply infused into the minds and consciousness of the Chinese people, having become part and parcel of the system of socialist core values. It provides rich cultural nutrients for transforming the efforts to build a Beautiful China into conscientious action by the entire people and helps establish the green and low-carbon way of life as a social norm.

1.3 Great Relevance and Contemporary Value

The "green is gold" concept is China's self-developed theory of eco-civilization based on the country's own national conditions and development practice. It is in keeping with the laws governing the development of human society and eco-environmental protection; it demonstrates potent truth and a unique intellectual appeal in practice. When viewed within the temporal and spatial context of building China into a strong, beautiful, and harmonious modern country that enjoys prosperity, democracy, and advanced civilization, the contemporary relevance and value held by this belief become all the more explicit and profound.

—Innovating and advancing modern environmental economics

The "green is gold" concept further unveils the relationship between nature and value with its emphasis that nature and the ecosystem possess intrinsic worth and that protecting the eco-environment means protecting nature's value and adding value to nature's capital, as well as protecting the potential and momentum of economic and social development.

From the perspective of economics, the ecosystem has such properties as its foundational nature, scarcity, and tradability. By establishing a price formation mechanism for resources-dependent products that accurately reflects the resource value and scarcity

and by introducing the trading of rights such as energy use rights, carbon emission rights, pollutant discharge rights, and water use rights, we can fully leverage the foundational role of market-based allocation of environmental and resource elements and the regulatory role of natural resources in commodity production and social income distribution, among others. These theoretical advances and practices have further enriched and expanded the crucial meanings and objective requirements of Marxism's value theories as an enrichment and development of Marxist political economics. The "green is gold" concept fully draws on the reasonable elements of modern environmental economics and global sustainable development theories. By forging the pathway for their symbiosis and coexistence through value realization, this concept facilitates the establishment of an eco-friendly economic system with Chinese characteristics.

— Advancing along and expanding the path to Chinese modernization

Realizing modernization has remained a long-cherished pursuit of the Chinese people since modern times. Based on longstanding exploration and practice since the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949, particularly since the launch of the Reform and Opening-up in 1978, the Communist Party of China has succeeded in advancing and expanding Chinese modernization thanks to the new breakthroughs made in theory and practice since its 18th National Congress. Throughout this monumental journey, China has actively practiced the "green is gold" concept, continued to respect, follow, and protect nature, and attached importance to the simultaneous advancement of material wellbeing and eco-environmental progress. Promoting the harmony between humanity and nature has become a distinctive characteristic of Chinese modernization.

Thanks to all these efforts, China has achieved a paradigm shift in modernization. China's achievements in ecological development are attracting world attention, having emerged as a country with the fastest improvement in air quality, the largest usage of renewable energy, the largest and fastest growth in forest resources, and the largest cultivated forest coverage in the world. Now, prioritizing eco-environmental conservation and pursuing green development is an international trend that reflects the general direction of progress. The "green is gold" concept benefits China and enlightens the world. While offering a viable alternative for other developing countries in choosing the right path to modernization, this concept also bolsters confidence in advancing a global modernization that features peaceful development, mutually beneficial cooperation, and common prosperity.

— Inheriting and developing fine traditional Chinese ecological culture

With a history stretching back to antiquity, Chinese civilization, proudly extensive and profound, is the sole great civilization to have endured without interruption and developed as a nation down to the present day. The Chinese nation has a long tradition of respecting and loving nature. The Chinese civilization, which spans more than 5,000 years, has nourished a highly enriched ecological culture. The concept of lucid waters and lush mountains as invaluable assets has inherited and revitalized traditional ecologi-

cal concepts, such as "unity of humanity and nature" and "Dao operates naturally", embodying distinct Chinese characteristics, style and flair. In this concept, heaven, the earth, and humanity are viewed as an indivisible whole. It further connects the natural ecological world with human civilization. While embodying respect for the laws of nature, this concept does not contain dispute of humanity's right to the rational use of nature. It is an achievement in the creative transformation and development of the fine traditional Chinese ecological culture. Deeply rooted in China's rich cultural heritage and embodying the vitality of an open and inclusive civilization, the "green is gold" concept provides people around the world with Chinese wisdom for understanding the relationship between humanity and nature. It is an important vehicle for demonstrating China's eco-environmental philosophy and disseminating the fine traditional Chinese ecological culture.

— Fostering and shaping a new form of human civilization

The best inheritance of history is the creation of new history; the greatest respect for human civilization is the creation of a new form of human civilization. The development of an ecological culture is a historical trend in the advancement of human civilization and an important integral part of the constantly evolving forms of human civilization advancement. The "green is gold" concept provides an in-depth response to these universal aspirations that transcend national borders. It advocates pursuing a path of civilization development that features improved production, affluent life, and healthy ecosystems. This not only resonates with the expectation shared by all countries for sustainable development, but also points the way forward for human civilization from the vantage point of harmony between humanity and nature.

Guided by this concept, China has deeply engaged in global environmental governance and has actively participated and led in bilateral and multilateral dialogues and cooperation in such areas as climate change, having achieved a major shift from a participant to a leader in global environmental governance. As a continuously-developing China is creating profound repercussions in the world, the concept that lucid waters and lush mountains are invaluable assets has gained wide recognition from the international community and is playing an ever-increasing role as a bond that connects the world and fosters mutual learning. It offers more intellectual inspirations, pathways, and opportunities for jointly advancing global eco-environmental progress and building a shared future for all life on earth.

Chapter 2

China's Practice in Implementing the Concept of "Lucid Waters and Lush Mountains Are Invaluable Assets"

The two decades since the proposition of the concept of "lucid waters and lush mountains are invaluable assets" represent a period in which the eco-civilization advancement gradually evolved into a cardinal governance strategy of the Communist Party of China. It was also a period in which China's eco-environmental quality transitioned from fragmented improvements to progress across the board. Guided by this scientifically grounded concept, China has taken in these two decades ecological conservation as a non-negotiable developmental imperative and worked hard to turn the ecological advantages hidden in its lucid waters and lush mountains into mountains of silver and gold, enabling its sound ecosystems to underpin sustained and healthy socio-economic development. While creating the dual miracles of rapid economic development and enduring social stability—something rarely seen in the world, China also achieved world-renowned marvels in ecological restoration and green development.

2.1 Spearheading the Comprehensive Building of a Beautiful China

Since the 18th CPC National Congress, the Party and society as a whole have resolutely embraced and implemented the concept that "lucid waters and lush mountains are invaluable assets". Eco-civilization advancement has been treated as a fundamental strategy which has a bearing on the sustainable development of the Chinese nation. Through a series of pioneering endeavors, eco-civilization development has undergone historic, transformative, and comprehensive changes, from theory to practice, propelling big strides in the effort to build a Beautiful China.

—Historic changes

Since the 18th CPC National Congress, China has exerted unprecedented efforts to advance eco-civilization, resolving numerous long-standing intractable problems that people had wanted to solve but had remained elusive and accomplishing immense tasks that were unattainable before. The advancement in ecological protection entered a historical phase characterized by the deepest understanding, strongest commitment, most substantive measures, swiftest implementation, and best possible outcomes.

Faced with the people's growing need for a fine environment, China has prioritized addressing acute ecological challenges through an integrated approach which combines targeted and comprehensive solutions and tackles the root causes as well as symptoms in an effort to win the high-standard battle against pollution. In 2024, in cities at and

above the prefectural level, the average concentration of fine particulate matter (PM_{2.5}) was 29.3 $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ and the proportion of surface water cross sections with good quality reached 90.4%, surpassing 90% for the first time. The mainstreams of the Yangtze and Yellow Rivers remained stable in Class II water quality for five and three consecutive years respectively. The good quality ratio of China's coastal waters reached 83.7%, with 24 typical marine ecosystems removed from the "unhealthy" list. China's forest coverage exceeded 25% while approximately one-quarter of the world's new greening areas are contributed by China. The eco-environmental quality has visibly improved, and blue skies, crystalline waters, green shores and river banks, resonant birdsongs, clear seas, flower fragrances and silver sands, have returned to people's daily lives.

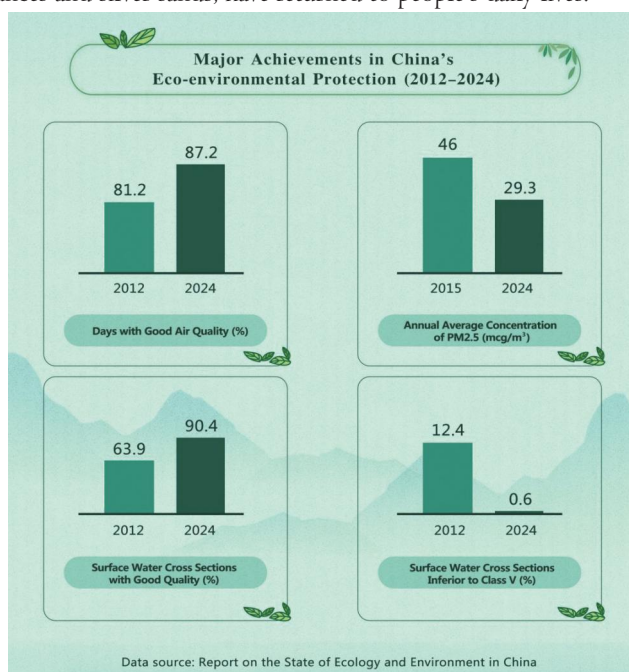


Figure I: Major Achievements in China's Eco-environmental Protection (2012 – 2024)

—Transformative Changes

Faced with the challenge of harmonizing development and conservation, China radically changed its governance paradigm—shifting from conventional development approaches to "ecological prioritization and green development", and from a reactive environmental governance model aptly described as ("treating the head for headaches and the feet for foot pains") to one led by the comprehensive green transition of economic and social development. This entailed resolute readjustments and optimization of the industrial and energy mix as well as the transportation structure while actively cultivating and developing green productivity to resolve eco-environmental problems at the root. China upholds green development as a profound revolution in developmental phi-

losophy, having reduced carbon emission intensity cumulatively by over 35% since 2012. Through intensified pollution prevention and control campaigns, we have focused on reversing the trend of ecological degradation. By 2020, the zero solid waste imports target was achieved on schedule, conclusively ending the history when developed countries treated China as a "garbage dumping ground". By formulating and implementing the Central Environmental Protection Inspection System, China has brought about a major shift in ecological governance from "sectoral responsibility" to "joint Party-government accountability". Public eco-consciousness has undergone a systematic change. The concept that "lucid waters and lush mountains are invaluable assets" (or "green is gold") has become societal consensus and action, resulting in a noticeable increase within the entire Party and nation in their initiative and proactiveness to advance eco-environmental improvement. China's ecological improvement endeavor has undergone profound changes in both theory and practice. It has not only built a solid green foundation and fine quality for Chinese modernization, but also secured the strategic initiative for building a Beautiful China.

—Holistic changes

China embarked on a systematic governance pathway in its eco-environmental development endeavor by exerting efforts across the ideological, legal, institutional, organizational, and working style dimensions and by comprehensively deploying economic, political, legal, market-based, cultural and other means to beef up ecological conservation through an all-dimensional, territory-wide, and whole-process approach. The all-dimensional approach means that it has changed the previous single-element and single-domain governance. It has coordinated industrial structure adjustment, pollution control, ecological protection, and climate change response, and jointly promoted carbon reduction, pollution reduction, green development, and economic growth. It has also comprehensively and systematically carried out integrated protection and systematic governance of mountains, rivers, forests, farmlands, lakes, grasslands, and deserts.

A territory-wide approach is designed to overcome the hitherto fragmentation such as regional disparities, river basin differentiation, and urban-rural dualism in an effort to pursue comprehensive Beautiful China development, build pilot zones for Beautiful China, and promote the development of beautiful cities, villages, rivers, lakes, bays, and more. This gigantic undertaking spans all geographical spaces—urban, rural, terrestrial, marine, plateaus, and wetlands, etc.—forging a unified governance architecture from mountaintops to deep oceans.

With a whole-process approach, we have abandoned the end-of-pipe treatment mentality of the past by persisting in embedding the green concept throughout the whole life cycle of socioeconomic development. This involves building an eco-environmental protection system featuring source prevention, process control, damage compensation, and accountability mechanisms to ensure that eco-environmental requirements are applied through the entire chain, from planning, construction, and production to consumption, waste disposal, and remediation.

2.2 High-level protection underpins high-quality development

The core of the "green is gold" concept lies in proper handling of the relationship between development and protection, and in supporting quality development with high-level protection. As China transitions into the high-quality development stage, the supporting role of the ecological environment has become increasingly prominent. Green and low-carbon high-quality development based on ecology prioritization can only be achieved through high-level protection. In its modernization drive, China has consistently adhered to the "green is gold" concept, standing firm in properly handling the dialectical unity relationship between high-quality development and high-level protection. By accelerating the optimized readjustment of the industrial mix, promoting comprehensive and green socio-economy transformation, continuously increasing the share of green and low-carbon industries in the total economic volume, and facilitating the formation of green production and lifestyles, China has found a path of quality development characterized by prioritized ecological conservation, resource efficiency, intensive utilization, and green, low-carbon growth.

—Advancing in-depth green and low-carbon transformation

Since 2012, China's annual economic growth has averaged over 6.1%, supported by an average annual increase of 3.3% in energy consumption. In the first four years of the 14th Five-Year Plan period, energy consumption per unit of GDP decreased by 11.6% in total, equivalent to a reduction of 1.1 billion tons of carbon dioxide emissions, which is close to 50% of the total carbon emissions of the European Union in 2024. Intensified efforts have been made to optimize and readjust the industrial mix with the construction of the world's largest clean power system and clean steel production system. A full-process ultra-low emission transformation or key project transformation program has been completed, accounting for a total of 930 million tons or approximately 80% of the country's total crude steel production capacity. China's comprehensive energy consumption per unit product in sectors such as steel, electrolytic aluminum, cement clinker, and flat glass has reached a world-leading level.

The world's largest carbon emission rights trading market covering greenhouse gases has been established and has been operating steadily. The national voluntary greenhouse gas emission reduction trading market has been opened. Both projects are contributing to the construction of a paid-use and trading system for pollutant discharge rights.

Energy transformation has been accelerated. As of 2024, the share of non-fossil energy in China's total energy consumption had risen to 19.7% while the proportion of coal consumption in total energy consumption had dropped to 53.2%. China has built the world's largest and fastest-growing renewable energy system. By the end of May 2025, the installed capacity of renewable energy power generation reached 2.09 billion kilowatts, more than doubling that by the end of the 13th Five-Year Plan peri-

od, with one out of every three kilowatt-hours of electricity in the country being green.

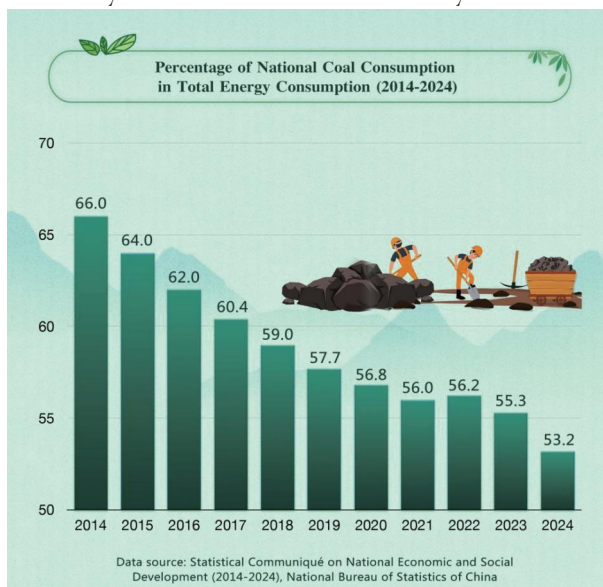


Figure 2: Percentage of National Coal Consumption in Total Energy Consumption (2014-2024)

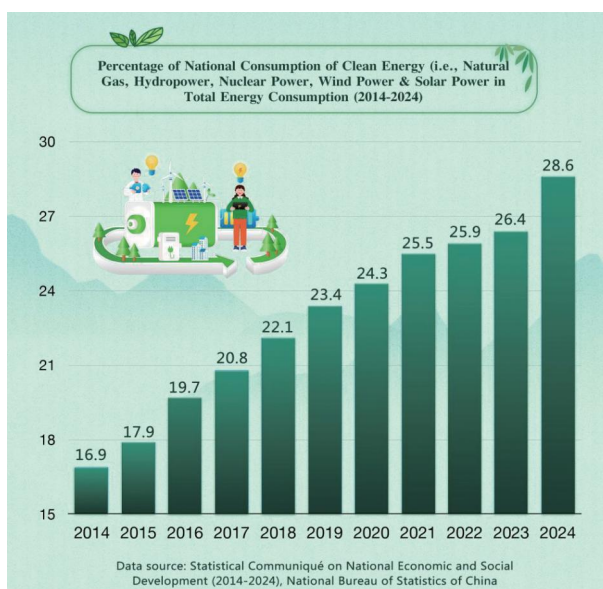


Figure 3: Percentage of National Consumption of Clean Energy (i.e., Natural Gas, Hydropower, Nuclear Power, Wind Power & Solar Power in Total Energy Consumption (2014-2024)

—Building national major strategic highlands for green development

Given China's vast territory and huge population, the remarkably uneven distribution of natural resource endowments across its regions is rarely seen in the world. Coordinating regional development has therefore always been a major challenge. In promoting coordinated regional development, the key lies in addressing the imbalance. In the regard, staying the course in ecological prioritization and green development is a key measure in implementing major regional strategies. Since 2012, China has taken coordinated regional development as a major national development strategy, adhering to the principle of "coordinating all efforts to complete key national undertakings". It has adopted measures tailored to local conditions and circumstances, implemented dedicated policies by region, and promoted the construction of green development highlands such as the coordinated development of the Beijing-Tianjin-Hebei region, development of the Yangtze River Economic Belt, construction of the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area, integrated development of the Yangtze River Delta, and ecological protection and high-quality development of the Yellow River Basin. These efforts have given a boost to coordinated regional development and helped accumulate momentum for sustained progress.

In building green development highlands, the core lies in thorough practice of the "green is gold" concept by keeping to ecological prioritization and green development, and promoting the coordinated development and conservation. Over the eleven years of coordinated development of the Beijing-Tianjin-Hebei region, PM_{2.5} concentration has dropped by more than 60% and the continuous reduction of wetlands has been reversed.

Meanwhile, the total economic output surged past six consecutive trillion-yuan milestones to reach 11.5 trillion yuan in 2024. In the Yangtze River Basin, the percentage of surface water cross sections with excellent quality reached 98.6% in 2024. The water consumption per unit GDP (per 10,000 yuan) in the Yangtze River Economic Belt has declined year by year, with the regional GDP reaching 63 trillion yuan, a year-on-year growth of 5.4%, contributing to a 50.1% share of national economic growth. The ecological quality index of the Yangtze River Delta is higher than the national average while strategic emerging industry clusters in areas such as new energy vehicles, photovoltaics, lithium batteries, and energy conservation and environmental protection are accelerating integrated development.

The Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area is vigorously advancing its construction as a Pilot Zone for Beautiful China, with its regional eco-environmental quality and green development benchmarks leading the nation. Notably, the average PM_{2.5} concentration of Guangdong reached 20.6 $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ in 2024, consistently outperforming the WHO Phase-2 Interim Target for five consecutive years. The region's new energy industrial cluster surpassed RMB 1 trillion in revenue, further burnishing the green signature of high-quality development.



—Accelerating the transition toward green lifestyles

A green lifestyle is an important element of high-quality development and an essential part of the practice of the "green is gold" concept. Since the 18th CPC National Congress, China has prioritized fostering green lifestyles, advocated green and low-carbon lifestyles, and promoted the firm establishment of the mindset and habit of thrifty and economical consumption among the general public. The ethos and consumption pattern of simple, moderate, green, low-carbon, civilized, and healthy living have taken root across Chinese. In some cities, the green concept and economic living requirements have been incorporated into social norms such as urban and rural community codes of conduct, student guidelines, and organization charters. The entire people's public awareness of economic living, environmental protection, and ecological conservation has been effectively strengthened. A social atmosphere of advocating ecological civilization has been taking shape, from saving water and electricity, opposing extravagance and waste, promoting the "Clean Plate" Initiative, establishing tranquil neighborhoods, resisting excessive packaging, and reducing the use of disposable products to prioritizing green travel methods such as public transportation, walking, and cycling.

Consumption of green products has been expanding. In 2024, the ownership of new energy vehicles in China reached 31.4 million, increasing by more than five times the 4.92 million at the end of the 13th Five-Year Plan period. The share of new energy buses has increased from less than 20% ten years ago to over 80% in 2024. A tiered pricing system for residential water, electricity, and gas use has been established, and subsidy policies for the consumption of green and energy-efficient home appliances have been implemented to encourage and guide the public to practice green consumption. The certification and labeling system for green products has been refined. The supplying capacity of green products and services has been enhanced. Over 20,000 green product certification papers and more than 400,000 environmental and energy management system certificates have been issued, ranking first in the world in terms of the

number of certificates issued. New modes of green consumption are encouraged to promote the orderly development of the sharing economy.

2.3 Promoting diversified conversion of ecological values

Over the past 20 years, all regions across China have made unswervingly efforts to protect lucid waters and lush mountains. They have accelerated the establishment and improvement of an ecological economic system centered on eco-industrialization and industry-aided ecological conservation. By continuing to create new drivers and advantages for development through high-level environmental protection, they have explored and formed different conversion paths, i.e., "protecting green in exchange for gold", "aggregating green to create gold", and "leveraging green to generate gold", thus developing a series of distinctive, replicable, and promotable practical experience and development models.

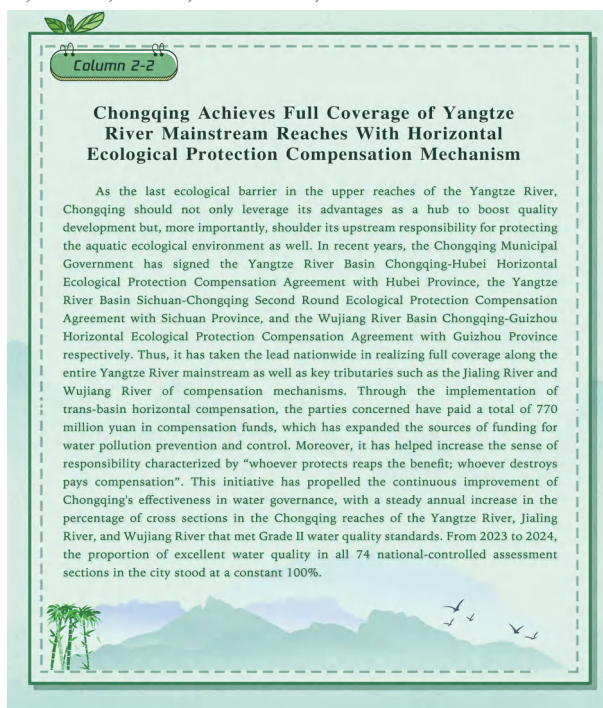
—"Protecting green in exchange for gold"

"Protecting green for gold" refers to a development path that converts the advantages of ecological resources into economic benefits through such mechanisms as protecting the ecological environment, maintaining ecological functions, and leveraging ecological compensation. Focused on the principle that "guarding and increasing greenery means creating wealth", this model is premised on ecological protection and restoration and directly provides economic returns through government-led ecological compensation, transfer payments, policy incentives, and other means, thus realizing the conversion of "lucid waters and lush mountains" into "invaluable assets".

Early on, China had started exploring ecological protection compensation. Through mechanisms such as vertical fiscal compensation, inter-regional horizontal compensation, and market-based compensation, it established an incentive system to compensate entities and individuals that carry out ecological protection measures in accordance with regulations or agreements. The central fiscal compensation scheme has continued to expand. From 2013 to 2023, the transfer payment funds for key ecological function zones increased from 42.3 billion yuan to 109.1 billion yuan, with a cumulative input of 790 billion yuan. The funds for water pollution prevention and control rose from 12.2 billion yuan for 2015 to 26.7 billion yuan for 2024.

Among these mechanisms, inter-regional horizontal compensation refers to the establishment of an ecological protection compensation mechanism by the people's governments of an ecological beneficiary region and an ecological protection region through means such as consultation for the purpose of compensation for inter-regional horizontal ecological protection. Now, more than 20 provinces across the country have signed trans-provincial river basin horizontal ecological protection compensation agreements, covering multiple trans-provincial river reaches (or sections), including those of the Yangtze River and the Yellow River. By 2027, a unified horizontal ecological protection compensation mechanism

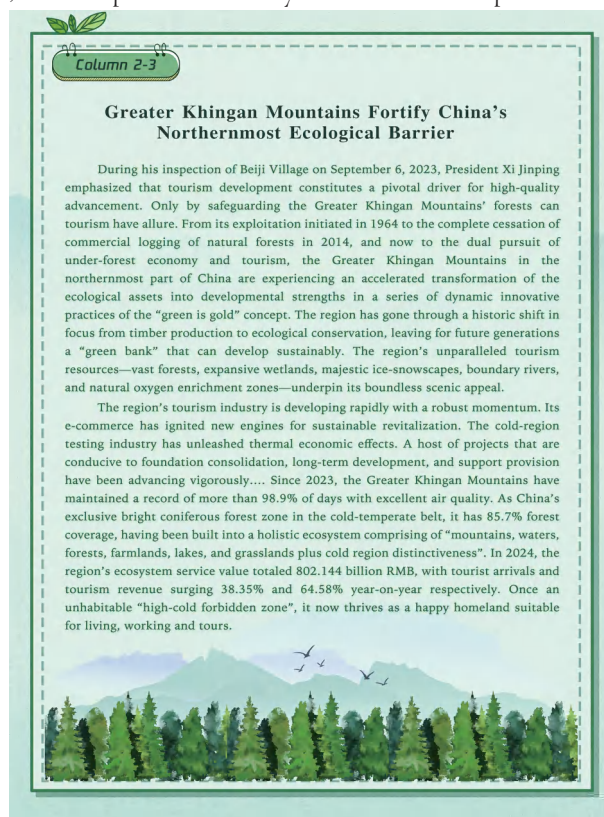
for the main streams of the Yangtze River and the Yellow River will have been established. All regions will have essentially set up trans-regional river basin horizontal ecological protection compensation mechanisms covering key rivers within their jurisdictions. The construction of horizontal ecological protection compensation mechanisms for major inter-basin water diversion projects is moving ahead steadily. Useful explorations will have been made on such mechanisms for ecological elements such as forests, grasslands, the atmosphere, wetlands, deserts, oceans, water flows, and cultivated land.



—"Aggregating green to create gold"

By "aggregating green to create gold" is meant the pathway to spur economic development by fully leveraging ecological advantages to develop eco-agriculture, eco-tourism, eco-industry, or an eco-plus model that synergizes primary, secondary, and tertiary sectors. This model has its emphasis on "developing green industries generates wealth". It is designed to establish a sustainable eco-economic paradigm through technological innovation, brand building, and industrial chain extension to amplify ecological resource advantages and propel the transition of these ecological resources from "potential value" to "realized economic gains". Regions with a strong ecological foundation and developed industries with distinct features may want to give top priority to eco-plus sectors and build eco-brands, turning ecological advantages into high-quality development assets. Examples include developing eco-agricultural and forestry products in the eco-farming and eco-livestock/poultry rearing arena and creating green brands through deep processing to achieve value-added premiums. The cultural meaning be-

hind ecological resources should be tapped through the organic integration of natural landscapes with cultural elements—regional history, folk traditions and customs, artistic expressions, etc.—to produce culturally distinctive creative products and industries.



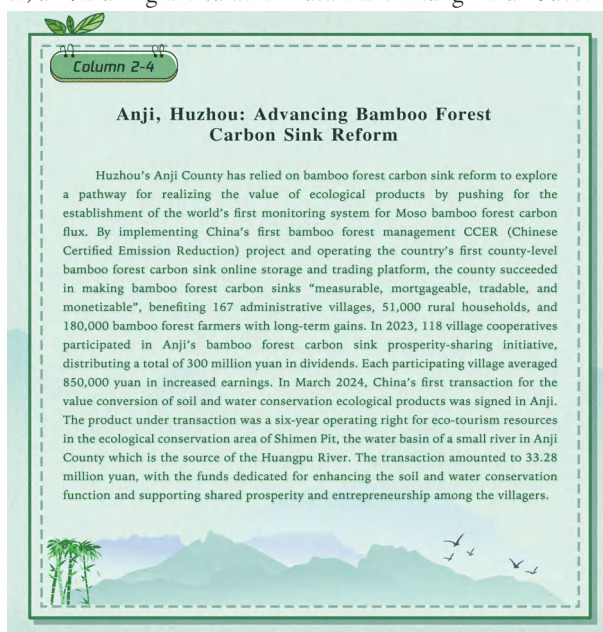
Developing eco-tourism and wellness tourism industries—transforming pristine natural environments into resources for tourism, vacations, and health preservation—constitutes an important approach to "activating green into gold". By 2024, China's tourist attractions received 6.76 billion annual visits with total revenue reaching 481.42 billion RMB. The nation boasts 78,000 certified green, organic, geographically featured, and premium specialty agricultural products alongside 1,597 major rural tourism villages and towns. Among them, 15 villages, including Yucun Village of Zhejiang Province, Xidi Village of Anhui Province, and Jingzhu Village of Chongqing Municipality, have been designated "Best Tourism Villages" by the United Nations World Tourism Organization, securing top position for China in the world.

—"Leveraging green to generate gold"

"Leveraging green to generate gold" refers to a pathway for converting ecological advantages into measurable and tradable assets or services through the improvement of the market transaction system for ecological products and the green finance system, using market-based mechanisms. This model is based on emphasizing "developing green

markets and green finance as an equivalent to creating wealth". Through policy guidance, technological support, and financial innovation, it is designed to promote the participation of ecological resources in market circulation, forming a conversion chain of "resources – assets – capital" and ultimately achieving a win-win for both ecological conservation and economic benefits. In regions of China with good ecological endowments, abundant natural resources, and fairly strong institutional innovation capabilities, China supports high-quality development with economic growth in sound interaction with environmental protection by establishing green capital markets and developing green finance. These include issuing green bonds, providing green credit, establishing green development funds, and attracting private investment into ecological conservation and green industry projects. By now, China has built a multi-tiered system of green financial products and markets. It leads the world in both green credit and green bond issuance. As of the end of 2024, China's outstanding balance of domestic and foreign currency green loans stood at RMB 36.6 trillion and its total green bond issuance exceeded RMB 4.1 trillion.

China is also exploring the development of rights-based markets for trading in forest ownership, water rights, and carbon sinks, further expanding the pathways for conversion from lucid waters and lush mountains to invaluable assets. Issued in 2024, *Opinions on Leveraging Green Finance to Support the Building of a Beautiful China* proposes enhancing green financial products and services, developing new forms and models of green finance, and making the value of nature more tangible and accessible.



Chapter 3

The Global Value of the Concept of "Lucid Waters and Lush Mountains Are Invaluable Assets"

The concept that "lucid waters and lush mountains are invaluable assets" belongs not only to China, but to the world as well. On September 7, 2013, President Xi Jinping delivered a speech at Nazarbayev University in Kazakhstan, where he elaborated on this concept abroad for the first time, further introducing to the world China's ecological vision of harmony between humanity and nature. Since the 18th CPC National Congress, China has actively promoted and shared this concept, worked vigorously to advance the building of a community of life on Earth and deeply engaged in global environmental governance. By so doing, China has contributed its wisdom, solutions, and strength to the building of a community with a shared future for humanity and the advancement of sustainable development for mankind. It has laid out a blueprint for jointly building a clean and beautiful world.

3.1 Solidifying Global Green Consensus

In today's world, humanity faces grave ecological challenges. Climate change intensifies relentlessly, environmental degradation persists unabated, and extreme weather events trigger frequent natural disasters.... While industrialization has created unprecedented material wealth, it has also inflicted irreparable ecological damage. Protecting our green mountains and clear waters, steadfastly seeking green development, and jointly charting the course for global ecological civilization have become a shared mission of the human race for sustainable development.

—A Science-based response to the question on world eco-civilization

The concept of "lucid waters and lush mountains are invaluable assets" represents an understanding of universally applicable laws. It transcends pure specialized concepts like pollution prevention and control, reduction of carbon emissions, and biodiversity conservation as it embodies the philosophical wisdom of harmonious coexistence between humanity and nature and the theoretical framework of sustainable development. This concept transcends geographical and temporal boundaries, bearing on the development and living environment of the entire human race. It offers China's solution to other countries for balancing development and conservation and sheds light on the course and direction for humanity to evolve beyond the industrial revolution's consumption patterns toward a higher stage of development featuring harmonious coexistence between humans and nature.

The China solution has a green orientation. It has attracted a lot of supporters from

the international community. Eric Solheim, former UN Under-Secretary-General and Executive Director of United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), has cited on many occasions President Xi's concept that "lucid waters and lush mountains are invaluable assets" to share with the world China's experience. He believes that the fundamental driving force behind China's achievements in green practices lies in none other than the deep integration of economic and ecological development under this philosophy. Messouda Baham Mohamed Laghdaf, Minister for Environment and Sustainable Development of Mauritania, noted his country's keen interest in China's success guided by this principle. China's efforts to drive global green transformation and equitable ecological transition and bridge the development divide have "strengthened our confidence in pursuing a green development path."

—High convergence with the global green development concept

Protecting the ecological environment is a shared challenge and responsibility for the whole world. Ecological and environmental issues are inherently complex, diverse, and transboundary. In confronting these challenges, humanity is a community with a shared future—we either survive or sink together. In the views of international visionaries, the universal applicability and progressive nature of the "lucid waters and lush mountains are invaluable assets" concept also lie in the fact that its deep insights on sustainable development transcend geographical boundaries; this philosophy has remarkable synergy with national strategies and global core agendas. The core values of the concept highly dovetail with key international frameworks such as the sustainable development guidance of the Belt and Road Initiative and the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), showing a strong potential for alignment with cross-regional and cross-civilizational strategies.

Take China-Europe cooperation as an example. The green and low-carbon development path serves as a vital pillar of dynamic China-Europe relations and a key nexus for deepening collaboration. This approach demonstrates the exemplary value of nurturing new growth areas for cooperating in green development, jointly addressing global challenges, and advancing sustainable development worldwide. The EU has actively driven Europe's economic transformation through its Green Deal, emphasizing that development must be aligned with green transition needs—a vision that resonates, in logic and understanding, with the innovative, coordinated, green, open, and shared development philosophy that China advocates. Jeremy Rifkin, President of the Foundation on Economic Trends and a socio-economist theorist who used to work as an advisor to the European Commission, noted that Europe's Green Deal and China's ecological civilization vision "share the same ultimate goal despite their different approaches".

—A deep inspiration for global ecological progress

As a concept, "lucid waters and lush mountains are invaluable assets" has not only profoundly transformed China, but also influenced the world significantly. Rooted in China's practical experience, it captures the essence of our era while maintaining its historical initiative. Containing a broad vision and long-term perspective, it has guided

China's ecological protection endeavor to historic milestones. Meanwhile, it provides important ideological references for other developing countries at large that are seeking leapfrog development and the completion of their modernization process. It provides a new pathway and alternative for global environmental governance.

John B. Cobb, Jr., the late member of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences and founding director of the Institute for Postmodern Development of China, expressed the view that China's extraordinary efforts in advancing ecological civilization have given the world hope as China is a beacon of hope for the world. "Couched in a poetic language, the concept of 'lucid waters and lush mountains are invaluable assets' conveys a positive message and boosts confidence in ecological conservation." James Thornton, President of ClientEarth and Professor at Oxford University, said, "China green" is a color of hope—a vision that belongs to the entire world more than it belongs to China." Simon Stiell, Executive Secretary of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, emphasized, in particular, that China has demonstrated its responsibility as a major country through developing new productive forces and South-South cooperation. Its remarkable achievements in renewable energy investment have made outstanding contributions to advancing the global low-carbon transition.

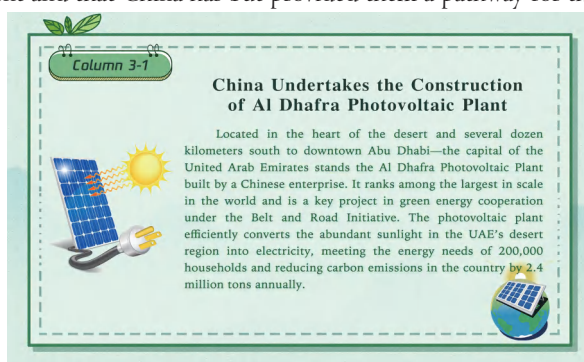
3.2 Stimulating the Vitality of Green Transition

In the global climate governance process, the policy reversal by a certain country has introduced uncertainties into green transition. Against this backdrop, China has consistently injected stability into global climate governance with a responsible attitude. No matter how the international situation may change, China will not slow down its action in active response to climate change, weaken its efforts at promoting international cooperation, or halt its practice of building a community with a shared future for humankind.

Persisting in leaders' climate diplomacy, President Xi has reaffirmed on many occasions China's steadfast support for the Paris Agreement, making landmark commitments on carbon peak and neutrality to chart the course for global climate governance. China joins hands with other countries in adhering to the principles of equity, common but differentiated responsibilities, and respective capabilities and it pushed for the conclusion, signing, coming into force, and implementation of the Paris Agreement. China actively builds a fair, equitable, and win-win global climate governance framework. It has made active efforts to establish an equitable, rational, cooperative, and win-win global climate change regime and mechanisms such as the Ministerial on Climate Action (MoCA) and multilateral cooperation frameworks on climate action. In support of other developing countries' climate adaptation capacities through just transition, China has signed climate action cooperation and assistance agreements with over 40 countries. Deeply engaged in global climate negotiations, it spearheaded major outcomes, including the UAE Consensus at the UN Climate Change Conference in Dubai

(COP28) and the Baku Climate Unity Pact reached at COP29, effectively advancing multilateral climate governance processes.

China is committed to driving the global green energy transition. On the strength of sustained technological innovation, a robust industrial chain and supply chain system, full market competition, and its super-large market advantages, China has accelerated the development of the new energy sector, enriched global supply, and alleviated global inflationary pressures. According to the International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA)'s Renewable Energy Capacity Statistics 2025, China accounted for nearly 64% of the 585 GW of newly installed global capacity in 2024, making it the largest contributor. The report points out that "the cumulative average levelized cost of electricity (LCOE) for wind and solar projects worldwide has decreased by over 60% and 80% respectively, with significant contributions from Chinese innovation, manufacturing capabilities, and engineering expertise". For ten years in a row, China has led the world in both photovoltaic and wind power installations, contributing more than 45% of the growth in global non-fossil energy consumption. By strengthening international cooperation in energy and building a first-class business environment characterized by market orientation, rule of law, and globalization, China has partnered with over 100 countries and regions in green energy projects. A large number of landmark energy initiatives and small-scale, people-benefiting projects have taken root, effectively addressing electricity shortages and high costs in the host countries. China's practices have proven that developing countries are fully capable of finding a balance between environmental protection and development and that China has but provided them a pathway for their reference.



3.3 Leading Global Environmental Governance

As a responsible major country, China has always acted in the common interest of humankind. Deeply engaged in global environmental governance, it has implemented in real earnest international conventions and voluntarily undertaken environmental governance obligations that are commensurate with its national conditions, development stage, and capabilities. In so doing, China has transformed itself from a participant in global environmental governance to a leader of the process. As Presidency, China suc-

cessfully convened the 15th Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (COP15), which issued the Kunming Declaration and other high-level political outcome documents, and promoted the adoption of the milestone Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, which sets the target of effectively protecting at least 30% of the world's land and oceans by 2030, guiding the global biodiversity effort onto a path of recovery.

China led the launch of the Initiative for the Implementation of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, which has received positive responses from the international community. It updated and released the National Biodiversity Conservation Strategy and Action Plan (2023 – 2030), becoming the first developing country to complete the update after the framework's adoption. China also took the lead by contributing 1.5 billion yuan to establish the Kunming Biodiversity Fund, which is now operational. The first batch of nine projects covering 15 developing countries is under organization for implementation, and the second round of project proposals has been collected.

In faithful implementation of the Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer, China has cumulatively eliminated more than half of the total amount of ozone-depleting substances phased out by developing countries, making a significant contribution to ozone layer protection and climate change mitigation as the largest contributor to global ozone layer protection among developing countries.

China has actively participated in intergovernmental negotiations on the international instrument on plastic pollution by putting forward Chinese proposals on key issues and contributing to and leading the development of international environmental governance rules. As the Presidency, China successfully hosted and convened the 14th Meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties to the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands (COP14), which adopted the Wuhan Declaration and the Global Strategic Framework for Wetland Conservation 2025 – 2030, making China's contribution to global efforts to curb and reverse systemic risks caused by wetland degradation.



3.4 Jointly Building a Green Belt and Road

The Green Belt and Road is an important platform for promoting the "green is gold" concept. China has actively worked with participating countries and international organizations to establish cooperation mechanisms for green and low-carbon development and continuously improve top-level design and multilateral cooperation platforms. It has signed environmental cooperation agreements with more than 30 countries and international organizations, worked with 31 countries in launching the Belt and Road Partnership for Green Development Initiative, and co-sponsored the Belt and Road Beijing Initiative for Green Development with 21 countries.

Along with more than 180 Chinese and international partners from over 40 countries, China jointly initiated and co-founded the Belt and Road Initiative International Green Development Coalition (hereinafter referred to as the "Green Coalition") — the first international civil society organization under the Green Belt and Road framework. The Coalition is designed to provide under the BRI framework a multilateral international cooperation platform for policy dialogue and communication, knowledge and information sharing, and green technology exchange and dissemination, and to foster international consensus, cooperation, sharing, and joint action for green development along the Belt and Road. The Green Coalition has actively leveraged its advantages in the field of environmental and climate dialogue by organizing nearly 100 thematic events, including the BRI green innovation conference, green development roundtable, and green finance and low-carbon development forum. In collaboration with Chinese and international partners, it has released over 30 policy studies such as the BRI Green Development Outlook, and China's Actions on South-South Cooperation in Addressing Climate Change, with the relevant research-based recommendations furnishing technical support for China's announcement to the international community about its provision and mobilization of climate finance for other developing countries.

Building on the Green Coalition, China has launched the Green Investment and Finance Partnership (GIFP), established a BRI green and low-carbon expert network, and developed the BRI Big Data Service Platform on Ecological and Environmental Protection. In addition, it has implemented the Green Silk Road Envoy Program and the South-South cooperation for climate adaptation under the BRI, providing training opportunities for over 10,000 people of more than 120 developing countries to help partner countries enhance environmental management and talent development in climate action.



China attaches great importance to cooperation in eco-environmental protection within the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO), having hosted the SCO Countries Green Development Forum and established the China-SCO's Ecological and Environmental Protection Innovation Base. Relying on multi-dimensional cooperation frameworks such as China-ASEAN environmental cooperation, green cooperation among Lancang-Mekong countries, and China-Africa environmental cooperation, China promotes the establishment of a new type of relations for South-South environmental cooperation. Through multiple actions such as launching joint conservation projects, building transboundary ecological corridors, and developing environmental industry and technology cooperation, China promotes international cooperation aimed at systematically addressing sustainable development bottlenecks. More than 80 countries have benefited from China's active support for biodiversity conservation in other developing countries.

Conclusion

Nature will never fail us if we don't fail nature. Guided by Xi Jinping Thought on Ecological Civilization, China has created miracles in ecological protection and green development that allow for harmonious coexistence between humanity and nature; it is contributing to global sustainable development through rich practices. Upholding the spirit of genuine multilateralism, China is committed to building bridges for open cooperation and advancing the joint creation of a prosperous, clean, and beautiful world. A melody of harmony between human and nature from the east is resonating beyond national borders, joining the symphony of sustainable development on our blue planet.

Looking to the future, China remains resolute in its vision. China will take pragmatic and responsible actions to coordinate efforts in cutting carbon emissions, reducing pollution, expanding green development, and fostering growth. China will deeply integrate into and actively lead the global green transition, working hand in hand with the international community to build a beautiful homeland with clear skies and thriving lives. As a responsible major country that is also a developing one, China will continue to share green technologies, experiences, and resources with the world, jointly implement the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, extensively carry out international cooperation on green and low-carbon development, enhance the environmental sustainability of overseas projects, and encourage the import and export of green and low-carbon products in a concerted effort to build a green Belt and Road.

Development is the engine of civilizational progress; protection is a responsibility we bear for the future. Guided by the concept of "lucid waters and lush mountains are invaluable assets", the vast land of China—reinvigorated after enduring vicissitudes in history—has accumulated far more than material strength, but more importantly, a profound reverence for our homeland and an ardent commitment to its stewardship. This enduring green force will undoubtedly flow into mighty rivers and seas, bringing lasting and gigantic momentum for humanity's collective journey toward a clean and better future.

Note on Compilation

The think tank report titled *Lucid Waters and Lush Mountains for Beautiful China and World—China's Ecological Civilization Concept and Practice, and How They Inspire the World* was prepared by a research team headed by Fu Hua, President of Xinhua News Agency and the Director of the Academic Committee of Xinhua Institute, with Lyu Yansong, Editor-in-Chief of Xinhua News Agency, serving as the deputy team leader and Ren Weidong, Deputy Editor-in-Chief of Xinhua News Agency, as the executive deputy team leader. The research team consists of members from Xinhua Institute and the Research Center for Xi Jin-ping Thought on Ecological Civilization (i.e., Policy Research Center for Environment and Economy, Ministry of Ecology and Environment). The members of the research team from the Research Center for Xi Jinping Thought on Ecological Civilization include Hu Jun, Yu Hai, Zhang Qiang, Ning Xiaowei, Wang Peng, Ma Jingyue, and Yibei Feng. Those from the Xinhua Institute research team include Liu Gang, Chen Fang, Xue Ying, Cui Feng, Yuan Zhenyu, Cheng Zheng, Gao Jing, Ge Chen, Zhang Jiawei, Zhu Han, Gu Xiaoli, Ren Qinqin, and Zheng Keyi. Copy editors are Cheng Yunjie, Shi Hao, Yuan Ye, Guo Ying, Yang Hui, Zhao Ying, Li Jianqing, Jiang Ting Ting, Luo Qi, Wang Siyuan, Wang Hongjiang, Wang Xiaopeng, Fu Shuangqi, Wang Meiqi and Wu Zi-yu. The charts and illustrations were produced by Li Quan from Xinhuanet and Wang Hongliang from Chinese Research Academy of Environment and Society. In March 2025, this report was completed after five months of writing, revision, and review.

We would like to register our sincere gratitude to the following for their generous and valuable assistance and guidance during the preparation and release of this report: Professor Zhang Yunfei at the School of Marxism, Renmin University of China; Zhuang Guiyang, Deputy Director of the Institute of Ecological Civilization, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences; Zhang Youguo, Deputy Director of the Institute of Quantitative and Technical Economics, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences; Lin Zhen, Director of the Ecological Civilization Think Tank Center, Beijing Forestry University; Hu Kanping, Chief Expert of the Chinese Society for Ecological Civilization; Professor Mi Zhifu at University College London.