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Pan Yue Urges to Grasp Opportunity and Accelerate Building of Ecological Civilization at the News Release of 2009 Top 10 Environment News

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China Environment News released top 10 environment news of China and the world on Jan. 15 under the approval of Ministry of Environmental Protection. Vice Chair of CPPCC Zhang Huaixi attended the news briefing. MEP Vice Minister Pan Yue addressed the meeting. He noted that the financial crisis and climate change has presented a great opportunity to accelerate the building of ecological civilization. Environmental departments should take up the historic mission and promote strategic adjustment of economic structure and transformation of economic growth pattern, making contributions to implementation of Scientific Outlook on Development and cultivation of ecological civilization.

The top ten environment news of China is as follows. President Hu Jintao made four proposals on combating climate change and China announced action plan for CO₂ reduction; total discharges of major pollutants declined and the SO₂ reduction target was expected to be achieved ahead of schedule; Li Keqiang stressed environmental protection as a major issue concerning people's well being and MEP opened tip-off hotline for environmental problems; Law on Promotion of Circular Economy was put into effect and development of low carbon industry set the trends; 1 billion environmental funds from the central government were allocated to improve rural environment and benefit 9 million people and MEP held a on-site meeting to promote reward-based pollution control; Regulations on Environmental Impact Assessment of Plans was put into effect, marking a new phase of environmental protection in its involvement of comprehensive decision making; tentative measures were introduced to evaluate local official performance which promoted implementation of water pollution control in key river basins; frequent occurrence of heavy metal pollution accidents led to development of comprehensive plan for prevention and control of heavy metal pollution; hydropower development project in Jinsha River was suspended and projects of two major power groups were kept under restricted approval of environmental impact assessment; local courts introduced charges against hazardous waste dumping to clamp down on environmental crimes.

The top ten international environment news in 2009 included the following. Copenhagen Accord, which did not come by easily, was an important step forward to GHG emission reduction; the Green New Deal outline issued by UN made low carbon economy a commanding ground for competition; China, Japan and Korea announced a joint declaration on sustainable development to strengthen cooperation in green economy; the consensus reached at the Conference of the Parties to POPs Convention added nine more toxic chemicals to the list of POPs to be phased out; International Renewable Energy Agency was founded with 75 countries signing the treaty; 17 countries made commitments to notification of 86 pollutants in a written agreement; lake protection took center stage at the World Lake Conference from where the idea of rehabilitation of lakes was disseminated to the world; IUCN report showed increasing number of extinguished species; El Nino led to severe drought and Mexico and Indonesia suffered from huge losses; US EPA announced that GHGs did harm to public health and would control GHGs by its Clean Air Act.

Pan Yue stated, "We can see the clear imprint of international financial crisis and global climate change in the top ten domestic and international environment news in 2009. Both events revealed deep contradictions between

man and nature under the extensive economic development pattern and luxurious consumption behavior. However, it also brings about opportunities for ecological civilization to take the place of traditional industrial civilization. This will surely exert profound impact on China's economic and social development. The strategic thought on ecological civilization put forward at the 17th CPC Conference has charted a course for us to address financial crisis and climate change. That means, we must accelerate the transformation of economic restructuring and development mode, promote a production mode and life style that minds resources and environment, and eventually shape up a social system and form of civilization featuring harmony between man and nature. The ethic value of ecological civilization has to be embodied through our perception of development, official performance, operation of social systems and individual life style."

Pan said we should resolutely implement Scientific Outlook on Development when approaching the issue of development. Scientific Outlook on Development stresses a comprehensive, balanced and sustainable development and requires coordination between man and nature. Thus, we should always maintain environmental protection while seeking development and keep environment a priority when making overall decisions. The ethic value of ecological civilization should become the core social value. Sound interaction with the public will help them realize the significance of environmental protection in guaranteeing human survival, promoting social development and cultivating cultures. There is a need to understand the organic connections between environmental protection and justice and social progress. The two big challenges of financial crisis and climate change taking place last year allowed us to thoroughly understand that high-carbon mode will seriously restrict future development. To make a change from being an exporter of low-end resources and labor force in global economic pattern and grab the commanding ground for future development, we must proceed from developing a low carbon economy and building ecological civilization.

Finally, Pan once again highlighted the building of ecological civilization as a historic mission of environmental departments and common responsibility of all citizens. It is even an inevitable option for China to achieve scientific and sustainable development. Environmental departments should take up the mission and grasp this rare opportunity, speeding up the transformation of economic structure and growth pattern and making contributions to implementation of Scientific Outlook on Development and building ecological civilization.

Chair of the 10th Environmental Protection and Resources Conservation Committee, National People's Congress, Mao Rubai and Vice Chair of the Committee of Population, Resources and Environment, CPPCC, Jiang Zehui, also attended the meeting.

(This English version is for your reference only. In case any discrepancy exists between the Chinese and English context, the Chinese version shall prevail.)

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