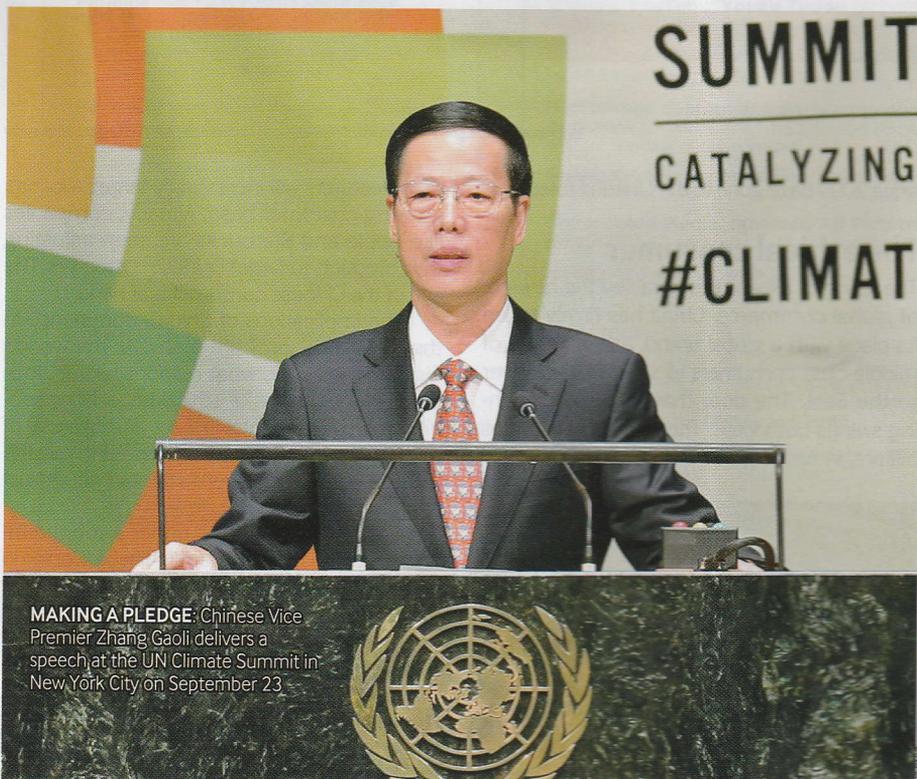


Creating a Climate of Change

China pledges to reduce carbon emissions despite economic growth pressures

By Bai Shi



MAKING A PLEDGE: Chinese Vice Premier Zhang Gaoli delivers a speech at the UN Climate Summit in New York City on September 23.

Climate change is happening, and every country must do their part to address the global issue. This sentiment received a consensus amongst all leaders and representatives attending the 2014 UN Climate Summit in New York City on September 23.

Convened by UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon, the one-day summit, themed "Catalyzing Action," set the stage for a crucial conference in Paris in December 2015 aimed at finalizing a new global climate change pact for post-2020.

During the meeting, delegates from over 200 countries and international organizations, including more than 120 heads of state or government, announced their commitment and plans to reduce emissions and enhance financ-

ing and technological cooperation for climate change.

However, the grim reality of global warming has shown that hollow slogans and proposals cannot save the world. Every country must take practical measures immediately.

On September 9, the World Meteorological Organization said in the 2014 Greenhouse Gas Bulletin that the amount of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere reached a new high in the last year, continuing an upward and accelerating trend that is driving climate change and will shape the future of our planet for hundreds or even thousands of years. The annual report is based on global observations through 2013.

Gailius Draugelis, World Bank lead energy specialist for China and Mongolia, told *Beijing Review* that among the three major factors contributing to the increase in greenhouse gases, the primary one is a soaring energy demand, driven by aspirations around the world for a better quality of life. Despite the world's tremendous efforts to reduce energy consumption and increase energy efficiency, the demand is still growing.

The second factor is the combustion of fossil fuels, especially the increased use of coal, which has high carbon content, Draugelis said. He added that in some regions, coal accounts for a big part of energy consumption due to its abundant supply, relatively low prices and the market's failure to take into account the negative social and environmental consequences.

And finally, Draugelis noted that the capacity of carbon sink, particularly the ocean's ability to absorb excess carbon dioxide from the atmosphere, seems to have come to a point of increasing saturation. "So, clearly, as the capacity of carbon sink decreases, the efforts to reduce emissions growth must accelerate if we are to avoid the predicted global climate change," he said.

China's contribution

China, as the largest emerging economy in the world, has been increasingly aware of the importance of cutting emissions to fight against climate change together with other countries. Chinese President Xi Jinping pointed out that the nation must respond to climate change in order to achieve sustainable development at home and to fulfill its international obligations as a responsible major country.

As Xi's special envoy, Vice Premier Zhang Gaoli delivered a speech at the UN Climate Summit. Zhang said that China will announce post-2020 actions on climate change as soon as possible, including measures to reduce carbon intensity and bring about the peak of the country's total carbon dioxide emissions.

Zhang said that China was the first developing country to formulate and implement a national program for climate change. Prior to the UN Climate Summit, the National Action Plan for Climate Change (2014-20) was approved by the State Council, China's cabinet, on September 19. In the document, the Chinese Government commits to cutting carbon intensity, namely emissions per 10,000 yuan (\$1,630) of GDP, by 40-45 percent by 2020 from the 2005 level.

Over the past several years, China has made remarkable strides in cutting emissions. For example, in 2013, the carbon intensity in China dropped by 28.5 percent from the 2005 level, which was equivalent to a reduction of 2.5 billion tons of CO₂ emissions, Zhang said.

"This happened not because of others' requests but on our own initiative," Zhang stressed.

New growth path

China's efforts to cut emissions and increase energy efficiency are not only to cope with climate change, but also for the purpose of curbing environmental pollution and improving air quality, said Qin Dahe, an academician with the Chinese Academy of Sciences.

The Chinese Government has been taking serious measures to curb air pollution since many cities suffered heavy smog last winter. Clean air for the first time in years has become a top priority over GDP in the eyes of most Chinese people.

Unlike developed countries, China must undertake the tough task of helping a large population live better through economic growth while at the same time improving the environment.

Low-carbon growth is key for China to realize its development goals in the following decades. The resource-based growth model is unsustainable for a developing country like China with a population of 1.3 billion, said Zhou Dadi, an energy researcher at the

National Development and Reform Commission, China's top economic planner.

According to Zhou, China must transform to a more suitable development path, change its energy mix and promote the use of clean and renewable energy.

The Medium-Term Renewable Energy Market Report 2014, issued by the International Energy Agency, said that China has become a major market of renewable energy. In 2013, newly installed renewable energy capacity in China accounted for 40 percent of global growth. This figure could be 60 percent for new capacity in non-member countries of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development. The report concluded that factors including huge power demand, pollution reduction targets and stimulus policies would continue to contribute to the growth of China's renewable energy sector.

China is experiencing unprecedented scale in its efforts to increase the use of renewable energy, according to Draugelis.

"Now we see China as a major leader in renewable energy in the world," Draugelis said. "We are pleased that we are continuing this partnership with China. Not only through investment, but also for major policy engagement with the Central Government on how we can continue to unlock greater use of renewable energy."

China as a developing country has rich experience in introducing and increasing a larger share of renewable energy, producing many key studies and lessons to learn policy application for technological innovation, Draugelis said. "Its experience is very valuable for other developing countries," he added.

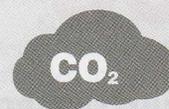
In addition, China is speeding up the establishment of a carbon trading market.

China has already become the second largest market in the world, and has begun testing carbon pricing and trading regimes.

China is in talks with other countries and international organizations including the World Bank to establish a carbon pricing system around the globe.

Moreover, China attaches great importance

China's Commitments



Carbon emissions per 10,000 yuan of GDP will be cut by 40-45 percent from the 2005 level by 2020



Forest coverage will increase 40 million hectares from the 2005 level by 2020



Non-fossil fuels will account for 15 percent of the primary energy consumption by 2020



The country will build 150 pilot low-carbon industrial parks by 2020

A \$6-million aid package will be offered to UN-sponsored South-South cooperation in coping with global warming



(Compiled by Beijing Review)

to the development of energy-saving products and technology. It has become one of the largest exporters of solar panels as well as one of the largest exporters of LED products.

The industry of energy saving and environmental protection in China has seen rapid growth in recent years. By 2015, its annual output may reach 4.5 trillion yuan (\$734 billion), creating over 30 million job opportunities, predicted Liu Yanhua, a counselor of the State Council. ■

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