THE ENVIRONMENT SITUATION IN 2009 AND THE OUTLOOK FOR ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION IN 2010

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In 2009, in order to address the complex situation caused by the international financial crisis, environmental protection authorities at all levels have carefully implemented the strategic measures of the CPC Central Committee and the State Council, established “firewalls” to counter high-pollution, high energy consumption, and resource dependent projects, overcapacity and redundant construction, provided “green channels” for projects which conform to industrial policy and environmental requirements; as increasing efforts have been made with regard to environmental protection, discharge amounts of sulphur dioxide and chemical oxygen demand continued their downward trend in the first half of the year, while reductions in pollutant emissions promoted an improvement in environmental quality, thus enabling environmental protection initiatives to make considerable progress. 2010 will be a marathon year for achieving pollutant emission reduction targets. This will require the continued implementation of policies and measures as well as the completion of the tasks determined in the environmental protection program of the 11th Five-Year Plan.

I. Environmental Protection Initiatives Made Some Achievements in 2009

2009 marked the 60th anniversary of the People’s Republic of China, and this was also a crucial year during which China dealt with the international financial crisis, sustained stable, rapid economic development, and promoted social harmony as well as stabilisation and the smooth operation of the 11th Five-year Plan. The CPC Central Committee and the State Council proposed a definite philosophy for environmental protection. General Secretary Hu Jintao, Premier Wen Jiabao, Vice Premier Li Keqiang and other central government leaders issued a series of major instructions governing environmental protection, the elimination of all redundant construction, as well as of projects characterised by their high energy consumption, high pollution, and resource
dependence, or any project saddled with overcapacity in the process of dealing with the financial crisis; they proposed managing the crisis as an opportunity to implement economic restructuring and alter the pattern of economic development, as well as push forward environmental protection, and they also emphasised that sustaining economic growth should not be at the cost of the environment. They put forth definite proposals for the development and revitalisation of the environmental protection industry as a significant measure to overcome the impact of the financial crisis, and a focus on the development of the ecological environment as a new hub for economic growth. In the process of dealing with the financial crisis, all measures, whether these include expanding domestic demand, sustaining economic growth or protecting the environment, should faithfully adhere to the major decisions and significant deployments of the CPC Central Committee and the State Council.

The right-headed leadership of the CPC Central Committee and the State Council has ensured the implementation of the Scientific Outlook on Development across all regions and sectors of China. A series of measures have been taken to enhance pollution prevention and ecological protection. As a result, the deteriorating trend of environmental pollution and ecological damage has slowed, and environmental quality has improved in certain regions and cities, while the economy has maintained rapid growth. Reducing pollutant emissions has become a central task in current environmental protection, and major efforts are being made to push forward a structural reduction in pollutant emissions. There have been a number of achievements in environmental protection as the prevention and treatment of pollution has become a positive act instead of a negative one, and significant changes have occurred in the awareness and practice of energy conservation, emissions reductions and environmental protection.

First, in terms of reduction of pollutant emissions, the gross discharge amount of chemical oxygen was 13.207 million tonnes in 2008, a drop of 4.42 percent over 2007; the discharge amount of sulphur dioxide was 23.212 million tonnes, a drop of 5.95 percent over 2007. Compared with 2005, the gross discharge amounts of chemical oxygen demand and sulphur dioxide dropped by 6.61 percent and 8.95 percent respectively, thus continuing their effective downtrends and meeting the reduction goals as scheduled for the first time. In the first half of 2009, the gross discharge amount of chemical oxygen was 6.576 million tonnes, and that of sulphur dioxide was 11.478 million tonnes,