



## **Opening Address of Deputy DG Song Xiaozhi at the Fifth GMS Environment Ministers' Meeting**

(The minister of each GMS country/delegation head gives his speech respectively, each with 10 minutes. According to the usual practice, order of their speeches complies with the alphabetical order of the first letter of the English name of their countries, i.e. Cambodia, China, Laos, Myanmar and Vietnam.)

Your Excellency General Surasak Karnjanarat,

Respected Mr. Ramesh Subramaniam,

Your excellencies Ministers,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good morning!

As the representative of Minister Li Ganjie of the Ministry of Environmental Protection of the People's Republic of China, I have the great honor to come to beautiful Chiang Mai attending the Fifth GMS Environment Ministers' Meeting. First of all, on behalf of the Chinese delegation and the Ministry of Environmental Protection of the People's Republic of China, I would like to express our heart-felt appreciations to ADB and the Ministry of

Natural Resources and Environment of Thailand for their thoughtful arrangements.

The 6 countries in the GMS are connected by mountains, waters and bloods. The Chinese government maintains a good friendship with the other GMS countries. We respect each other, treat each other as equals and have good communications on multilateral affairs of the region and the world. We are all developing countries and face the same opportunities and challenges when handling the relationship between economic development and environmental protection. Enhancing environmental cooperation will facilitate the implementation of the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and benefit people in all countries. Through more than one decade of environmental cooperation in the GMS, we have enhanced communication and exchanges, promoted sharing of knowledge, and improved our capacity in environmental management. Moreover, we have made remarkable progress in areas such as biodiversity conservation and climate change and significantly mainstreamed environmental policies in all GMS countries.

The Chinese government attaches great importance to environmental protection. The 19<sup>th</sup> National Congress of Communist Party of China held in October 2017 stresses particularly the importance of developing ecological civilization. It requires that we should pursue harmonious coexistence between man and nature, continue our campaign to prevent and control pollution and build a beautiful China. It puts forward a series of new requirements, objectives

and arrangements for developing ecological civilization and protecting our environment.

The development of ecological civilization and environmental protection in China made positive progress and great achievements in 2017. **First, we established and improved the systems of ecological civilization and environmental governance.** With over 40 specific reform plans released, we shift from the “environmental protection of small scale” participated only by environmental protection departments to the “environmental protection of large-scale”, which involves all government departments, each performing their own responsibilities. We changed from mainly focusing on reduction of total amount of pollutants to centering on improvement of environmental quality. We now supervise both the local governments on their responsibility of maintaining environmental quality and the industries on environmental law compliance at the same time, instead of supervising the enterprises mainly. The Chinese government also releases “Some Suggestions on Identification and Maintaining Ecological Red Lines” to ensure that ecological functions of important ecological space will not be degraded, its area will not be reduced and national ecological security is safeguarded. China has gradually improved its system of functional zoning and made big progress on developing the trial system of national parks. **Second, we made great progress on developing environmental laws and regulations.** China has developed or amended many laws such as Environmental Protection Law of the People’s Republic of China,

Law of the People's Republic of China on Prevention and Control of Atmospheric Pollution, Law of the People's Republic of China on Prevention and Control of Water Pollution, Law of the People's Republic of China on Environmental Impact Assessment, Law of the People's Republic of China on Environmental Tax and Nuclear Safety Law. Environmental law enforcement is strengthened as the central government now supervises all 31 provinces (autonomous regions, municipalities) on their performance of environmental protection. A total of 104,000 public environmental complaints are forwarded to local governments and over 80,000 environmental problems reported by the public are solved as a result. **Third, we made great achievements on controlling water, air and soil pollution and environmental quality improves continuously.** Taking air pollution treatment as an example, of 338 cities at or above prefecture level across the country, on average 78% of the days in 2017 achieved Grade II or above in terms of national air quality standard. PM<sub>2.5</sub> concentration was 43  $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$ , down by 6.5% compared with that of 2016 and about 40% reduction compared with that of 2013 when China launched the National Action Plan for Prevention and Control of Atmospheric Pollution. **Fourth, promoting prevention and control of pollution has obtained not only good environmental benefits, but also sound economic and social benefits.** In 2017, China's GDP went up by 6.9%, higher than 6.7% in 2016. The energy consumption per unit GDP went down by 3.7% compared with that of last year. Moreover, the per capita disposable income of China also grew by

7.3%. With improved environmental quality, China has facilitated green transition of economic development mode, promoted the adjustment of economic structure and improved the development quality.

Ladies and gentlemen,

While addressing its domestic problems , China also actively takes part in global environmental governance, fulfills its commitments under the international conventions and submitted to the United Nations of its document for approval of the Paris Agreement. The Ministry of Environmental Protection has been greatly promoting the development of green “Belt and Road” initiative and released the Plan for Cooperation on Ecological and Environmental Protection of the “Belt and Road” Countries. MEP has set up the Lancang – Mekong River Environmental Cooperation Center to support South-South environmental cooperation. In 2017, the Ministry of Environmental Protection won UNEP “Leadership Award for the Policy and Implementation of the Protection of Ozone Layer”. China’s Saihanba Forest Farm won 2017 Champions of the Earth award. As the host country of 2020 COP of the Convention on Biological Diversity, China is becoming an important participant, contributor and leader for developing ecological civilization of the whole world.

As the advocate of regional environmental cooperation, China will continuously support and take part in GMS environmental cooperation. Through working with GMS countries, China will combine different

environmental cooperation mechanisms together, such as the GMS the Lancang – Mekong River, the China-ASEAN cooperation and “Belt and Road” initiative. Giving full play to all these mechanisms’ advantages, China will promote synergy and complementary effects among all partners and make concerted efforts to jointly promote sustainable development and green development. With “GMS Environmental Cooperation Towards Inclusive and Sustainable growth” as the theme, this meeting is highly relevant to current progress of GMS sustainable development and meets the needs for environmental cooperation. I hope that we will discuss at this meeting how to further strengthen our cooperation and make more contributions to regional and global sustainable development.

Finally, I wish the meeting a complete success.

Thanks !