Celebrating Decades of Pakistan-China Friendship

on the eve of

中华人民共和国成立70周年
The 70th Anniversary of the founding of The People’s Republic of China
China's industrialization and modernization process started in the 1980s, having serious implications on environment and human health. A World Bank study estimated that the cost of pollution and environmental degradation in China is around 9 percent of GDP, which mainly includes air and water pollution, soil contamination and unsustainable exploitation of natural resources, to be few of the major challenges faced by the country.

Realizing the importance of addressing these issues, President Xi Jinping has shifted to a discourse centered on the concept of an 'ecological civilization' moving towards an ecological civilization, means China is transitioning from a high to lower greenhouse gas (GHG) economy. The concept of ecological civilization first appeared in government documents at the 17th CPC in October 2007. In his report to the CPC, President Hu Jintao proposed China 'build an ecological civilization and a model of growth and consumption, as well as industries, which use energy and resources in a frugal manner and protect the environment'. The government of China has variously described this transition as a 'new economic model' and 'ecological civilization'.

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Under the phenomenon structural changes and reforms, China formulated and adopted the 13th Five-Year Plan for the national economic and social development covering the period of 2016-2020. The Plan sets forth China's strategic actions, measures and policies in its development plans, emphasizing the need to improve the quality of the environment and resolve serious ecological problems.

Since Xi Jinping's coming to power in 2012 China's reputation in the global climate change regime has improved markedly and it
has gained accolades for a new determination to reverse environmental degradation at home. To date, economic analysis has highlighted structural shifts in China’s economy such as reduced coal usage and energy intensity of growth, then points to specific policy shifts as providing evidence of these broader shifts. China’s increasing use of emerging technologies and big data analytics - has given rise to new forms of government-business alliances. These new players and innovative approaches have injected momentum into China’s environmental governance system and suggest that, contrary to conventional wisdom, authoritarian regimes can be responsive to citizen demands under certain circumstances.

The new, more ambitious targets for non-hydro renewables will include a system of standards and penalties to reduce the burden of subsidies on government budgets and increase compliance by provincial governments and private operators. Meanwhile, the energy transition has started extending to other sectors of the economy, beginning with transport. A Chinese effort to build a strong battery industry has boosted the spread of electric vehicles (EVs) for instance.

China’s first carbon market was launched in late 2017 after extensive cooperation with the European Commission, and further coordination is expected with the European Emission Trading System in the years to come. Declining global costs for solar manufacturing and extensive coordination between the EU and China also led to the end of a long-standing trade dispute on tariffs on Chinese solar panels in 2018.

For years viewed as a major polluter and a potential commercial threat by many Western countries, China’s present determination to lead the global energy transition and promote a new ecological vision are transforming Beijing into a key partner for international action on environmental challenges.

In line with the new Government’s Green Development Agenda, it is urged to make China Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) a model for ‘Eco-civilization’, a concept to give environment and climate change a central position amid economic growth and development priorities of CPEC. The idea of ‘Ecological Civilization’ is based on ideas of frugality, environmental protection and sustainability, and takes the harmonious symbiosis between economic development and environmental protection. Specifically, the target is to make breakthroughs in building a resource saving and environment friendly society by 2020. Leading the same concept in CPEC, it could foster a social atmosphere, which applauds frugality and disparages wastefulness.

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Taking Gwadar as a pilot site for demonstration, it can enhance capacity building among international and national institutions, to promote the ideas of making a transition to green lifestyles, including energy-conserving, low-carbon, and sustainable consumption and production in societies. The major tasks could be: reinforcing the positioning of the major functional zones; optimizing land space; promoting technological innovation and structural adjustment; improving the quality and efficiency of development; pushing forward resource saving and using recycling; changing the development mode; protecting ecosystems and the environment; and instituting rules and policies of ecological civilization in guiding, regulating and constraining all human interferences with nature. The concept particularly focuses on strengthening of institutions and knowledge sharing activities to highlight the positive impact of CPEC in the line of China’s Belt and Road Initiative that will be beneficial for China and Pakistan as well as other countries.