

Translation



CSET CENTER *for* SECURITY *and*
EMERGING TECHNOLOGY

The following PRC official document offers guidelines for the protection of biodiversity in China. It sets specific targets for the years 2025 and 2035 for environmental indicators such as forest cover and wetland protection. The document calls for more severe punishments for individuals and businesses that damage ecosystems, and recommends the inclusion of biodiversity protection language in Chinese officials' performance evaluations.

Title

Opinions on Further Strengthening Biodiversity Protection
《关于进一步加强生物多样性保护的意见》

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Biodiversity is the basis for the survival and development of humankind. It is the bloodline and root of the community of all life on Earth. It provides humanity with a rich variety of necessities for productive life, a healthy and safe ecological environment, and unique cultural scenery. China is one of the most biodiversity-rich countries in the world. Conservation of biodiversity has achieved significant results, but it still faces many challenges. In order to implement the relevant decisions and arrangements of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) Central Committee and the State Council and effectively promote the protection of biodiversity, the following opinions are proposed.

I. Overall Requirements

(i) Guiding ideology. Take Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era as the guide, and fully implement the spirit of the 19th Party Congress and of the Second, Third, Fourth, and Fifth Plenums of the 19th Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). Implement Xi Jinping Thought on Ecological Civilization (习近平生态文明思想) in an in-depth way. We must ground ourselves in the new stage of development (新发展阶段); fully, accurately, and correctly implement the new development concept (新发展理念); and construct the new development pattern (新发展格局). We must persist in putting ecology first and persist in green development. Our ultimate goal is to effectively respond to the challenges facing biodiversity and to effectively and comprehensively improve the level of biodiversity conservation. We must firmly advance major biodiversity conservation projects, continuously enhance supervision and law enforcement, and further improve

our protection abilities and our level of management. This will ensure the comprehensive protection of important ecosystems, biological species, and biological genetic resources. We must integrate the concept of biodiversity conservation into the whole process of ecological civilization building, as well as promote active participation in global biodiversity governance, and jointly construct a beautiful home where all living things coexist in harmony.

(ii) Work principles:

— Respect nature, prioritize protection. An ecological civilization concept of respecting, complying with, and protecting nature will be firmly established. We will persist in giving priority to protection and take restoring nature as our main task. We must obey the laws of natural ecosystem replacement and belt-based distribution, maximize the ability of ecosystems to repair themselves, avoid excessive human interference in ecosystems, effectively protect important ecosystems, biological species, and biological genetic resources, and ensure ecological security.

— Improve the overall system and promote overall planning. Under the leadership of the CCP Central Committee and the State Council, the coordinating role of the China National Commission on Biodiversity Protection (中国生物多样性保护国家委员会) will be maximized to improve the annual work scheduling mechanism. All members should focus on the enhancement of the functions of ecosystem services, focusing on key regions, domains, and issues, and promote the protection of biodiversity in an orderly manner through coordination and close cooperation among departments.

— Hierarchical implementation, vertical linkage. Clarify the division of authority between the central and local levels for the protection and management of biodiversity, and consolidate responsibilities in a hierarchical fashion. At the central level, competent work in planning, legislating, and other such top-level design must be conducted to formulate and promulgate policies and measures, plans, and technical specifications, and to strengthen guidance and support for local work. Local Party committees and governments at all levels will implement the responsibility to protect biodiversity, to create vertical linkages and form synergy.

— The government leads, and all sectors participate. Maximizing the leading role of governments at all levels in the protection of biodiversity. Management, investment, and supervision will be enhanced, and the long-term mechanism for enterprises, public institutions,¹ social organizations, and the public to participate in the protection of biodiversity will be established and improved. Awareness and participation of all sectors of society in the protection of biodiversity must be improved

¹ Translator's note: "Public institutions" (事业单位) are organizations created and led by PRC government departments that provide social services. Unlike state-owned enterprises (SOEs), public institutions do not create material products and do not generate income. Public institutions are not considered government agencies, and their employees are not civil servants. Most public institutions are fully or partially government-funded, but some fully privately funded (but still government-led) public institutions exist. Public institutions typically provide services in areas such as education, science and technology, culture, health, and sanitation.

to create a positive atmosphere for the whole society to participate in the protection of biodiversity.

(iii) Overall objectives

By 2025, China will continue to push forward with background surveys and assessments of priority areas for biodiversity conservation and national strategic areas, and establish a national biodiversity monitoring network and a relatively stable spatial pattern for biodiversity conservation. With national parks as the main natural reserves accounting for about 18% of the country's land area, the forest coverage rate will increase to 24.1%, grassland comprehensive vegetation cover will reach approximately 57%, and protection of wetlands is projected to reach 55%. Additionally, the natural coastline will be no less than 35% preserved, and the protection rate of wildlife species under national key protection will reach 77%. 92% of terrestrial ecosystem types will be effectively protected, improving the Yangtze River aquatic index of biological integrity (IBI). The amount of biological genetic resources collected and preserved will remain among the highest in the world, and an initial mechanism for the sustainable use of biodiversity will be formed, fundamentally establishing policies, regulations, systems, standards, and monitoring systems related to the protection of biodiversity.

By 2035, biodiversity protection policies, regulations, systems, standards and monitoring systems will be comprehensively established, forming a unified and orderly national spatial pattern for the protection of biodiversity, and achieving a fundamental improvement in the state of natural ecosystems such as forests, grasslands, deserts, rivers and lakes, wetlands, and oceans nationwide, with a forest coverage of 26%, a comprehensive grassland vegetation cover of 60%, and approximately 60% of wetlands protected. With national parks as the main natural reserves accounting for more than 18% of the country's land area, typical ecosystems, national key protected wildlife species, endangered wildlife and plant species, and their habitats will be comprehensively protected, and the Yangtze River aquatic IBI will be significantly improved. Mechanisms for access to benefit-sharing and sustainable use of biological genetic resources will be fully established. Protecting biodiversity will become a voluntary action by citizens, forming a beneficial situation of biodiversity conservation, promoting green development and harmonious coexistence between people and nature, and striving to build a beautiful China.

II. Accelerating the Improvement of Biodiversity Conservation Policies and Regulations

(iv) Accelerating the development of the rule of law for the protection of biodiversity. The system for protecting and regulating biodiversity will be improved, the enactment and revision of laws and regulations in the fields of wild animal protection, fisheries, wetland protection, nature reserves, forests, wild plant protection, as well as access to and benefit-sharing of biological genetic resources, will be studied and promoted. The drafting of regulations on the protection of traditional knowledge related to biodiversity will be studied, and we will formulate and improve the

management of the Catalog of Invasive Species. Local governments may, according to local conditions, issue local regulations for the protection of biodiversity.

(v) Incorporate the protection of biodiversity into medium- and long-term plans in all regions in all relevant fields. A national strategy and plan of action for the protection of biodiversity in the new era will be formulated, and a ten-year plan including major engineering projects for the protection of biodiversity will be drawn up. When formulating their five-year plans for national economic and social development, the provinces, autonomous regions, and province-level municipalities will propose goals and main tasks for the protection of biodiversity. Biodiversity protection will be integrated into industrial development planning to enhance sustainable management and reduce negative impacts on ecosystem functions and biodiversity. All localities can formulate and revise their own regional action plans and programs for the protection of biodiversity, clarifying the division of objectives and responsibilities for the protection of biodiversity between provinces, cities, and counties. Businesses and social organizations are encouraged to voluntarily develop action plans for the protection of biodiversity.

(vi) Formulate and improve policies and systems for the protection of biodiversity. The compensation system for ecological protection of nature reserves, the compensation system for ecological and environmental damage, the methods and working mechanisms for the identification and assessment of biodiversity damage, and the system for combating illegal trade in wildlife will all be improved. The recuperation of grasslands, forests, rivers, lakes, and bays will be implemented, the Yangtze River will be closed to fishing for 10 years, and the system of letting arable land lie fallow periodically will be improved. Fiscal policy will be implemented for individuals or enterprises engaging in imports of seeds and other sources (种源).

III. Continuously Optimize the Spatial Pattern for the Conservation of Biodiversity

(vii) Implement onsite protection systems. In territorial spatial planning, the red line for ecological protection will be drawn up in an integrated manner, natural protection sites will be optimized and adjusted, the protection and supervision of priority areas for the protection of biodiversity will be strengthened, and the policies for the protection, management, and control of biodiversity in key ecological functional areas will be clarified. According to local conditions, ecological corridors for the migration of species and the exchange of genes will be built, with a focus on solving outstanding problems such as the fragmentation of natural landscapes, the isolation of protected areas, and the reduction of ecological connectivity. A spatial system for the protection of species will be rationally developed, focusing on strengthening the protection and management of rare and endangered animals and plants, flagship species and indicator species, clarifying key protection targets and their threat levels, and implementing different protection measures for their habitats. Protection points for selected important rare and endangered species with very small populations and fragmented distribution points for genetic resources will be constructed. The regulation

and standardization of protected spaces such as nature reserves and urban green spaces at all levels will be continuously promoted.

(viii) Promote the protection and restoration of important ecosystems. The integrity of ecosystems, the continuity of natural and geographical units, and the sustainability of economic and social development will be comprehensively considered to promote the integrated protection and restoration of mountains, rivers, forests, fields, lakes, grasslands, deserts, and frozen areas. The *National Master Plan for the Major Project for the Protection and Restoration of Important Ecosystems (2021-2035)* will be implemented to carry out the construction of major ecological projects in a scientifically standardized manner, and accelerate the restoration of species habitats. Protection of key ecological functional areas, important natural ecosystems, natural sites, natural landscapes, and rare and endangered species with very small populations will be strengthened to improve the stability and resilience of ecosystems.

(ix) Improve the system for the protection of biodiversity relocated to new areas (迁地). The construction of rescue and relocation protection facilities at all levels will be optimized, such as zoos and botanical gardens, centers for the protection of endangered plant propagation and relocation, wildlife shelter and rescue centers, nursing rescue stations, germplasm resource banks (sites, districts, and nurseries), and microorganism species collection centers, to fill in gaps in the protection of important areas and species, and to improve the breeding system for biological resources relocated to new areas. Protective communities for the relocation of rare and endangered animals and plants, flagship species, and indicative species will be scientifically built, and research on and trial construction of alternative habitats for key species whose habitat environment has been severely damaged will be strengthened to promote the artificial breeding and wildlife release of special species. Carry out the construction, monitoring, and management of archives for the protection of animal and plant populations relocated to new areas.

IV. Establish a Complete Monitoring System for the Protection of Biodiversity

(x) Continue to promote the investigation and monitoring of biodiversity. The system of technical standards for the investigation and monitoring of biodiversity will be improved to better coordinate the investigation and monitoring of all types of resources, comprehensively promoting the investigation of biodiversity protection in priority areas and key ecological areas of the Yellow River, key ecological areas of the Yangtze River, the Beijing-Tianjin-Hebei region, and offshore areas, as well as key biological species and important biological genetic resources. Ecological positioning stations (生态定位站) and other monitoring networks will be established with the full support of existing monitoring stations and monitoring sample sites (lines) (检测样地(线)) at all levels. A list of indicator species must be established to reflect the quality of the ecological environment, long-term monitoring will be conducted, and periodic surveys will be encouraged in areas where conditions permit. The investigation, cataloging, and database construction for biological genetic resources and germplasm resources such as crops, livestock and poultry, aquatic products, forest and grassland plants, medicinal plants, and microorganism species will be continuously promoted.

The Red List of China's Biodiversity (《中国生物多样性红色名录》) will be updated every five years.

(xi) Improve the information cloud platform for the protection and monitoring of biodiversity. The development of equipment and the construction of facilities for monitoring ecosystems and key biota will be intensified. We will accelerate the application of satellite remote sensing and aerial remote sensing technologies for unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs), explore the application of artificial intelligence (AI), and promote the modernization of biodiversity monitoring. Relying on the national Ecological Protection Red Line Supervision Platform (国家生态保护红线监管平台), effectively connect to the National Territorial Basic Spatial Information Platform (国土空间基础信息平台), apply cloud computing, the Internet of Things (IoT), and other informatized (信息化) measures, and utilize various biological species and genetic resource databases and information systems of all levels, and achieve data sharing under the premise of ensuring the safety of biological genetic resource information. Research and development (R&D) of biodiversity prediction and early warning models will be performed, and early warning technology systems and emergency response mechanisms will be established to realize long-term dynamic monitoring.

(xii) Improving the biodiversity assessment system. A sound system of evaluation criteria for the protection and restoration of biodiversity, the functions of ecosystem services, and the economic value of species and resources will be established. In conjunction with the National Ecological Status Survey and Assessment, release a comprehensive biodiversity assessment report every five years. Biodiversity impact assessments will be conducted on large-scale project construction, resource development and utilization, invasive species, biotechnology applications, climate change, environmental pollution, natural disasters, etc., and evaluation methods, content, and procedures will be clarified for the proposal of response strategies.

V. Strive to Improve the Level of Biosecurity (生物安全) Management

(xiii) Strengthen the monitoring and administration of environmental security in biotechnology according to law. Strict implementation of the Biosecurity Law will establish and improve the biotechnology environmental security assessment and supervision technical support system, fully integrating the existing monitoring foundation to rationally deploy monitoring stations and quickly recognize and perceive biotechnology security risks. The monitoring and information reporting system will be improved, and a system for biosecurity training, follow-up inspections, and regular reports will be established. Risk prevention and control plans and emergency plans for biosecurity incidents will be formulated and process management will be strengthened to ensure biosecurity.

(xiv) Establish and improve the regulatory system for access to and benefit-sharing of biological genetic resources. The investigation and registration of biological genetic resources and related traditional knowledge will be carried out, the catalogue of biological genetic resources will be developed and improved, and an information platform for biological genetic resources will be established.

Cross-departmental communication and sharing of regulatory information on the acquisition, development, and utilization of biological genetic resources, entry and exit, intellectual property (IP) protection, benefit-sharing, and other regulatory information will also be promoted. The responsibility and accountability system for obtaining, utilizing, and approving entries and exits will be improved, strengthening the supervision and management of the external supply as well as cooperative research and utilization of biological genetic resources.

(xv) Continuously improve the management of the prevention and control of invasive species. The inter-ministerial coordination mechanism for the prevention and control of invasive species will be improved, and major issues related to the prevention and control of invasive species will be solved through coordination. A census of invasive species will be conducted to strengthen investigation, monitoring, early warning, control, assessment, removal, and ecological restoration related to invasive species in key areas such as croplands, fishery waters, forests, grasslands, wetlands, coastal waters, and offshore islands. The intrusion prevention system for exotic species will be improved, the management of the introduction of exotic species and prevention and control at the ports of entry of invasive species will be strengthened, and the supervision of ballast water for ocean transportation will also be strengthened. The layout of the monitoring and early warning platform for non-native communicable diseases among wild animals will be promoted, and a risk assessment and supervision technology support system for exotic species will be established, and research and demonstration of early warning snipers, emergency control, interdiction and extermination, sustainable comprehensive defense and control (可持续综合防御控制), and other technologies will be further strengthened.

VI. Innovative Mechanisms for the Sustainable Use of Biodiversity

(xvi) Strengthen research on technologies for the development and sustainable use of biological resources. New crops, new varieties, new strains, new genetic materials, and new developments in crop pests and diseases will be investigated, and the protection and sustainable use of flora and fauna germplasm resources will be strengthened to ensure food security and ecological security. The level of biotechnology for germplasm resource varieties will be improved to promote R&D on alternative resources in brewing, fuel, the environment, pharmaceuticals, and other fields, and to promote the conversion of biological resource-related scientific and technological (S&T) achievements in fields such as environmental protection, agriculture, healthcare, the military, and industry into practical applications.

(xvii) Regulating biodiversity-friendly business activities. Guide the standardized use of biological resources to develop green industries such as artificial breeding, cultivation, and utilization of wildlife resources; biomass transformation and utilization; and green protection and control of agricultural crops and grassland pests and diseases. The scope of application of demonstration technologies and innovative mechanisms working in synergy with the protection of biodiversity and the revitalization of the countryside will be further expanded. Measures for franchising operational projects in areas under the control of nature reserves will be formulated to

encourage indigenous residents to participate in such franchise activities. Carry out activities such as nature education, ecotourism, and healthy cultivation (康养) in suitable areas to build a high-quality, diversified ecological product system.

VII. Strengthening Law Enforcement, Supervision, and Inspection

(xviii) Comprehensively carry out law enforcement, supervision and inspection. A regular remote sensing monitoring mechanism for ecological damage to the habitats of important protected species will be established, incorporating the actions for rectification of any harmful conditions for wildlife and their habitats under key state protection into the Central Ecological and Environmental Protection Inspectorate (中央生态环境保护督察), "Green Shield" nature reserve strengthening and monitoring, and other special actions. Special law enforcement operations will be regularly organized during the summer off season when fishing is suspended (or banned) on the ocean and during the period when fishing is prohibited on large rivers (or lakes), to clean up and suppress all illegal exploitation and destruction of aquatic living resources, their ecology, and habitats. Joint law enforcement mechanisms will be enhanced to crack down on illegal hunting, gathering, transporting, and trading of wildlife and its products, and a high-pressure posture of strict prevention and control will be adopted. The linkage mechanism between administrative law enforcement and criminal justice will be improved, and mechanisms for hierarchical management of cases, emergency handling, and supervision of business openings will be established. Criminal charges for serious damage to important biological species and biological genetic resources will be prosecuted in accordance with the law. In combination with the ecological red line pilot project for monitoring and control of environmental damage, acts endangering biodiversity will be investigated and severely punished.

(xiv) Strictly implement an accountability system. A system of evaluation indicators for the effectiveness of the protection of biodiversity will be established, and the effectiveness of the protection of biodiversity will be used as an important reference for the comprehensive assessment and evaluation of Party and government leadership teams and leading cadres. A system containing provisions for investigation and accountability, exit audits, and lifelong accountability for the serious damage caused to the ecological environment and resources will also be implemented.

VIII. Deepening International Cooperation and Exchanges

(xx) Actively participate in global biodiversity governance. Upholding the concept of a community of common destiny for humanity (人类命运共同体), China will actively participate in global multilateral environmental governance, intensify exchanges and consultations on key issues, and promote the development of the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework. China will also conscientiously implement biodiversity-related international treaties such as the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), the Convention on Wetlands, the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), and will actively participate in the formulation of biodiversity-related international standards.

(xxi) Strengthen partnerships for the protection of biodiversity. With the help of all parties to the CBD, the Convention on Wetlands, and other conventions, as well as the “Belt and Road”² International Green Development Coalition and similar opportunities and platforms, China will strengthen bilateral and multilateral dialogue and cooperation in the fields of biodiversity protection and green development. In addition, China will enhance recognition of partnerships, promoting the exchange of knowledge and S&T information and the sharing of achievements to further enhance our international influence. Our active participation in international special joint law enforcement operations to combat cross-border trade in biological resources will continue.

IX. Promoting Public Participation in the Protection of Biodiversity in all Aspects

(xxii) Strengthen propaganda and education. The widespread popularization and promotion of relevant laws and regulations, scientific knowledge, typical cases, major projects, and other fruits of research related to the protection of biodiversity will be intensified to promote public-service propaganda for the protection of biodiversity by news media and online platforms. Biodiversity museums will be constructed and a number of exhibitions with clear significance as an educational warning and motivational function will be launched. In addition, education and training for local Party and government cadres at all levels will be enhanced to guide the Party committees and governments at all levels, businesses, public institutions, social organizations, and the public to actively participate in the protection of biodiversity.

(xxiii) Improve mechanisms for societal participation. Businesses, public institutions, and social organizations are encouraged to carry out activities such as propaganda, education, advisory services, and legal aid for the protection of biodiversity through government procurement of services. The mechanism for reporting illegal activities and reporting channels will be improved, and citizens and social organizations will be encouraged to actively report illegal acts that cause damage to biodiversity, such as indiscriminate logging, illegal trade, and environmental pollution, and will also be encouraged to support the news media in monitoring public opinion. Mechanisms for information disclosure will be strengthened, and related hot topics of public concern will be promptly addressed. A sound public interest litigation mechanism for biodiversity will be established, and the judicial safeguards for public participation in the protection of biodiversity will be enhanced.

X. Improving Measures to Protect and Safeguard Biodiversity

(xxiv) Strengthen organizational leadership. Local Party committees and governments at all levels must strictly implement responsibilities for both the Party and the government relevant to ecological and environmental protection, in the context

² Translator's note: The "Belt and Road" (“一带一路”) refers to the Silk Road Economic Belt (丝绸之路经济带) and the 21st Century Maritime Silk Road (21世纪海上丝绸之路).

of “one post, dual responsibility,”³ to further strengthen the building of relevant organizations, teams, and systems, to earnestly accept responsibility for biodiversity protection, and to promote the prevention and control of environmental pollution and synergy in biodiversity protection. All relevant departments must conscientiously perform their functions related to the protection of biodiversity, and must include work related to the protection of biodiversity in performance evaluations to implement the target responsibility system (目标责任制) to strengthen coordination and cooperation and promote implementation work.

(xxv) Improve the funding assurance system. Coordination between financial resources at all levels will be enhanced and the protection of biodiversity will receive continuous support through existing funding channels. The establishment of marketized and social (社会化) investment and financing mechanisms will be studied, and protection funds will be solicited via multiple channels and fields.

(xxvi) Enhance support for S&T and talent. The basic scientific and applied technological research in the field of biodiversity protection and restoration will be strengthened to promote the conversion of S&T achievements into practical applications. The advantages of scientific research institutes in professional education will be fully maximized, enhancing the training of biodiversity talents and enhancing academic exchanges. The selection mechanism and management rules for talent will be improved to build a pool of high-quality, professional personnel, and to enhance our capacity for dialogue and cooperation in the protection and implementation of biodiversity.

³ Translator's note: Under the "one post, dual responsibility" (一岗双责) system, Chinese Communist Party officials are responsible for the regular duties of the posts they hold, and are also responsible for ensuring Party discipline and anti-corruption among themselves and their subordinates.