

Scott Vaughan Discusses CCICED and Global Climate Governance

By Lin Min & Xia Ouyang

Scott Vaughan



On September 22, 2020, President Xi Jinping announced at the 75th Session of the U.N. General Assembly that China aims to have carbon dioxide emissions peak before 2030 and achieve carbon neutrality before 2060. It was the first time that China put forward the goal of carbon peaking and carbon neutrality, which attracted significant attention from the international community. In the report delivered by Xi to the 20th National Congress of the Communist Party of China (CPC), he also noted “working actively and prudently toward the goals of reaching peak carbon emissions and carbon neutrality.” It was the first time that “dual carbon” goals were included in the report to the CPC National Congress, which is of great significance. Regarding the topic, *China News Release* recently interviewed Scott Vaughan, international chief advisor of the China Council for International

Cooperation on Environment and Development (CCICED).

CCICED and China’s ‘dual carbon’ blueprint

“The CCICED was among the first policy think tanks to recommend that China adopt carbon peaking and carbon neutrality targets,” Vaughan told *China News Release*.

Founded in 1992, the CCICED is one of the oldest, most successful and impactful institutions for high-level dialogue and cooperation between China and foreign countries on environment and development. Over the past 30 years, the CCICED has invited high-level experts and scholars from around the world to carry out in-depth research, and, on this basis, given advice to the Chinese government on major issues in the field of environmental development. It has thus made extraordinary contributions

to the Chinese sustainable development cause.

“We have drawn together Chinese and international lessons in key enablers of the low-carbon transition, notably the role of green finance in scaling up low-carbon renewable energy, and the role of green technologies in accelerating the green shift to high-quality green development,” Vaughan said.

Since President Xi made the international commitment in September 2020, China has been working hard to promote synergy in pollution reduction and carbon reduction, achieve all-around green transformation of economic and social development, and turn the improvement of ecological environment from quantitative to qualitative. At this historical turning point in China’s sustainable development, the CCICED took

advantage of its platform resources to propose suggestions in areas such as environment and development planning, pollution prevention and treatment, and ecosystem and biodiversity protection. Many of those invaluable suggestions were referenced and adopted by the Chinese government, and have pushed forward the progress of China’s sustainable development.

According to Vaughan, climate change has been a priority research theme of the CCICED for over a decade. Among the key areas of the CCICED’s climate mitigation work has been the design of China’s national carbon markets — the world’s largest — and its supporting systems, he said.

“The CCICED has combined international and Chinese experiences in carbon pricing, and has made detailed recommendations on an

effective and efficient emissions trading system, as well as the role and design of supporting policies, opinions and guidance. The CCICED also recommended the use of pilot carbon pricing markets, which were instrumental in the evolution of the current national market,” Vaughan told the magazine.

On July 16, 2021, China’s national carbon emission trading market started online trading. The market in its first compliance period includes 2,162 key emitters in the power generation industry, covering about 4.5 billion tonnes of carbon dioxide

The national carbon emission trading market starts operation at the Shanghai Environment and Energy Exchange in Shanghai on July 16, 2021. [Photo by Wang Gang/China News Service]

emissions. As of October 21, 2022, the country’s total trading volume of carbon emission quota had amounted to around 196 million tonnes, with a cumulative turnover of 8.58 billion yuan. The smooth-running carbon trading market has effectively raised Chinese enterprises’ green awareness and propelled them to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and accelerate green, low-carbon transformation.

CCICED contributes to global sustainable development

Over the past decade, China has actively participated in, contributed to and led the fight against climate change. By the end of June 2022, China’s installed renewable energy power generation capacity had reached 1.12 billion kilowatts. The installed capacity of hydropower totaled 400 million kilowatts, while both the wind



and solar power capacity were 340 million kilowatts, all ranking first in the world. The national forest coverage has exceeded 24%, with more than 19.5 billion cubic meters of forest stock, making China the country with the largest increase in forest resources worldwide. Registered new energy vehicles in China exceeded 10 million, accounting for more than half of the total globally. The unique path that China has embarked on for green and low-carbon sustainable development has proven suitable to the national conditions. The country has made remarkable contributions to global climate governance through its practical and effective actions.

In Vaughan's view, China has been a key global leader in promoting green, low-carbon climate, nature and pollution abatement solutions in at least four ways. "The first is through the green development of Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). China is among the largest sources of development finance for many developing countries. The CCICED has for several years examined win-win opportunities to scale up the financing of renewable energy and cleaner and more efficient industrial and other systems, in cooperation with

partners in developing countries. An important opportunity is aligning the green BRI development with the U.N. Sustainable Development Goals," he said.

"The second is China's role in improving sustainability in global supply chains such as palm oil, to help protect key forest and other ecological systems," Vaughan continued.

More than 85% of China's palm oil and derivatives imported from Indonesia meet the NDPE criteria (No Deforestation, No Peat, No Exploitation).

"A third example is the importance of China in supporting sustainable oceans management cooperation in such areas as low-carbon shipping, green ports, marine protected areas and sustainable fisheries," said Vaughan.

On June 5, 2017, China formally

The photo shows a parallel open forum themed "Blue Economy and Global Ocean Governance," during the China Council for International Cooperation on Environment and Development 2019 Annual General Meeting held in Hangzhou, Zhejiang Province, in June 2019. [Photo/VCG]

proposed to "build a blue partnership" at the first U.N. Ocean Conference. During the 2022 U.N. Ocean Conference held in Lisbon, capital of Portugal, in June 2022, the Chinese delegation announced the 16 Blue Partnership Principles, including conserving the marine ecosystems, tackling climate change, reducing marine pollution, sustainable use of marine resources, and thriving blue economy.

"A final example of China's global role is its current role as chair of the U.N. Convention on Biological Diversity negotiations towards the completion of a new biodiversity and nature protection global framework in 2022. The Kunming Declaration, signed in 2021, marks an important foundation for establishing a new global biodiversity framework based on multilateral cooperation," Vaughan added.

When asked how China will deploy the next steps in international cooperation around low-carbon transformation and development, he reiterated China's role in ensuring the adoption of a new global biodiversity framework in 2022, and went on to say, "Lessons from the past make clear that global targets mean little unless there is special support for developing countries, and China's role in South-South cooperation and the BRI will hold the key to achieving low-carbon and global development outcomes."

Working hard in response to climate change

In 2021, apart from climate mitigation, the CCICED began focusing on another important pillar of climate governance: climate adaptation, said Vaughan.

"Record heat-waves, drought and extreme floods linked to climate change are posing challenges in all countries,



including China," he remarked.

The CCICED's work continues to focus on increasing climate resilience with large-scale spatial planning, notably in wider river basins like the Yangtze and Yellow Rivers Basins, he said.

Integrating climate resilience into a comprehensive river basins management system is one of the 11 specialized policy studies of the CCICED in 2022. At a parallel open forum during the CCICED 2022 Annual General Meeting, under the theme of "Linking River Basins Management with Nature Resilience," Chinese and international experts examined climate risks, and proposed comprehensive river basin management, and further research and tool development to be carried out in combination with China's "dual carbon" goals.

Talking about China's target to achieve carbon neutrality before 2060,

Xie Zhenhua addressing the 27th session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, in Sharm El-Sheikh, Egypt, Nov. 8, 2022. [Photo/visual.people.cn]

Xie Zhenhua said on November 12, 2012 during the 27th session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change held in Sharm El-Sheikh, Egypt, "China has the faith and we will strive to do better." Xie is the special representative for Chinese President Xi Jinping, China's special envoy for climate change, and vice chair of the CCICED.

Regarding the next research direction of the CCICED, Vaughan said that China has been at the forefront of many leading-edge solutions to achieve carbon neutrality, particularly in clean energy, green

finance and tapping into the role of technology in accelerating innovation, and that the CCICED will remain very much focused on identifying concrete, practical pathways to translate low-carbon, sustainable development goals into action in ways that support well-being, good jobs and strong communities.

After three decades of development, the CCICED is making further strides in an ever-changing world. As an international cooperation platform for two-way exchanges, the CCICED will continue to summarize and share China's unique experience in sustainable development, especially the country's exploration and achievements under the framework of ecological civilization, and contribute Chinese wisdom and solutions to jointly building a clean and beautiful world. [CNR](#)

