

EMERGENCY RESPONSE AND RELIEF EFFORTS OF THE GOVERNMENT OF CHINA IN 1998 FLOODS

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Mr. Chairperson, Fellow Deputies,

I would like to take this opportunity to give a brief presentation about emergency response and relief efforts of the Chinese Government to the Flood in 1998.

Flood Situation

Because of abnormal climate in the summer of 1998, most parts of China recorded excessive rainfall. Some areas successively experienced exceptionally heavy rainfall, causing the greatest floods in the valley of the Yangtze River since 1954. The Songhua River and Nen River saw catastrophic floods never recorded in history. The floods affected 1.8 million people, of whom, 18,393,000 in the flooded areas were most severely affected. The floods caused the death of 4,150 people, destroyed 6.85 million houses and damaged 13.3 million houses. As many as 22.3 million hectares of crops were flooded, out of which 13.8 million ha were flooded, and 5.3 million ha of crops were completely lost. The direct economic losses amounted to 255 billion RMB yuan. Among the 29 provinces/autonomous regions and municipalities directly under the central government, 11 were badly flooded, including the major cities of Jiangxi, Hunan and Hubei.

Flood Management System

In 1998, the Central Government directly commanded and made unified arrangements for the flood situation, and local governments shared management responsibility. All departments concerned had separate duties. The military took an active part in relief operations. The local governments bore the major responsibility and the Central government gave necessary support.

Disaster Preparedness

(1) Operational Mechanisms Relevant to Disaster Management

(2) Emergency Response before the 1998 Flood

In February 1998, experts from China Academy of Sciences, China Meteorological Administration, China Academy of Water Conservancy, State Seismological Bureau, and the Committee for Natural Disaster Prediction under the China Geophysics Association were organized by the Office of the China National Committee for IDNDR to predict floods in 1998. They concluded that the middle and lower reaches of the Yangtze River were probable to be flooded.

Based on the experts' proposal, the central and local governments made the following arrangements:

1. Revised the existing plan for the flood control for major rivers and lakes.
2. Formulated various mitigation plans for flood control.
3. Improved the early warning system for natural disasters.
4. Worked out preparedness plans for the immediate transfer and displacement of people affected by floods.
5. Initiated the *National Communication Network for Natural Disaster Relief*.
6. Organized Rescue contingents.
7. Heightened and strengthened the dykes.
8. Prepared materials for flood control and rescue.
9. Prepare relief materials including tents, food, medicine and lifesaving appliances.

- 10 Strengthened the training of people involved in natural disaster management in the forefront of disaster manage.

Emergency Response

Emergency Response Measures

1 Immediate transfer of the flood affected population

- 1.1 After the early warning was given, the county governments informed people who would be endangered by the flood through different means such as radio and television. The movement arrangements, routes and relocation places were detailed in the announcements.
- 1.2 People from grass-roots organizations at township and village level as well as local Civil Affairs Departments went to the probable flood damage areas to explain explicitly to the local people about the emergency plans and organized the local people to evacuate in an organized and orderly way
- 1.3 Rescue teams were established: Boat medical teams, victim settlement teams, patrol police teams and water obstacle clearance teams, so as to save people who would be trapped on hilltops, housing roofs, in trees, and in water.

Statistics reveal that in 1998, 18.4 million people affected by floods were immediately transferred and relocated, keeping casualties to a minimum. Floods caused the death of 4,150 persons, slightly more than that in a normal year and less than that in 1931 when 145,000 people lost their lives, in 1954 when 30,000 lost their lives, and in 1991 when 7,300 people lost their lives.

2. Disaster assessment teams organized by government at various levels hurried to the disaster-hit areas to make a thorough evaluation of the disaster situation and local requirements

3. Appropriate arrangements were made for the relocation of the transferred population through different ways

- 3.1 Encouragement of flooded people to go and seek refuge with their relatives and friends.
- 3.2 With the help of organizations and co-ordination by the local governments, people affected by floods were settled in nearby non-flooded areas.
- 3.3 Houses owned by the local governments were requisitioned.
- 3.4 Shelters and tents on the dykes were built.

4. Provisions of food and clothing

- 4.1 For food provisions, different arrangements were made in accordance with specific conditions. People temporarily moved to the dykes were mainly provided with instant food such as bread, steamed bread, instant noodles, biscuits, drinking water, water purification supplies, and medicines. Flooded people were also organized to dig wells for temporary purposes. People temporarily settled received money on a daily basis, they were provided with food and accommodations by the families with whom they stayed with. People who sought refuge with their relatives and friends received a lump-sum grant for travel and food.
- 4.2 For clothing provisions, social donations were mainly mobilized. The Ministry of Civil Affairs organized 13 provinces/municipalities including Beijing and Tianjin to collect clothes and quilts to give support to the flooded provinces. Within 20 days, more than 1 hundred million pieces of clothing were donated and fully distributed to the victims before the winter approached

5 Provisions for Medical Care

Groups of medical teams were sent to the flooded areas to carry out mobile medical treatment. These medical teams:

- 5.1 Set up designated medical stations in areas where disaster victims were concentrated and distributed medicine for preventing and for curing diseases.
- 5.2 Organized the victims to maintain a sanitary living environment to reduce the occurrence of diseases

- 5.3 Gave publicity on disease prevention and cures utilizing mass media such as broadcast, television, newspaper, and publicity materials to raise people's awareness in preventing and curing diseases in the flooded areas.
- 5.4 Organized counterpart assistance among provinces
- 5.5 Established a system of reporting and monitoring of epidemic diseases.

6. Organized and mobilized disaster relief donations

With increasing severity of the flood, the disaster victim difficulty increased, arousing the concern of people of all nationalities in China, in the Hong Kong Administrative Region, compatriots in Macao and Taiwan, as well as overseas Chinese and foreigners of Chinese origin. They were anxious to give donations in cash and in kind to support the flooded areas. Therefore, the central government decided to mobilize a disaster relief campaign across the nation. On August 23, the Ministry of Civil Affairs was authorized by the State Council to perform a unified organization for the nationwide donations. For this purpose, a steering group was immediately established by MOCA to launch a powerful and dynamic donation campaign throughout the country:

- 6.1 MOCA, China Charity Federations, and the Red Cross Society of China made public their financial numbers on disaster relief donations.
- 6.2 MOCA and its Civil Affairs Departments at various levels set up special groups to accept, manage, and distribute donations in cash and in kind within 24 hours
- 6.3 In close cooperation with relevant departments in charge of railways, transportation, civil aviation, and customs, MOCA facilitated the formalities for the completion of custom declarations and transportation of relief donations within 24 hours.
- 6.4 MOCA and the Ministry of Culture together organized a large-scale charity show called *Build the Great Wall Hands in Hands*. The China Charity Federation, Red Cross Society of China, and China Central Television (CCTV) also sponsored a show *All People with One Heart*. All these shows started a new round of donations.
- 6.5 The Chinese Government informed the UN system of China's flood situation through the Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations, who launched an appeal for international assistance.

Post-flood Relief

After the floods, full-scale reconstruction was required. In accordance with the principles of overall planning (with due consideration to all concerned), treating the problems by looking into both root causes and symptoms and seeking comprehensive harnessing of resources, the Central government worked out a post-flood reconstruction policy of 1) improving reforestation by prohibiting hunting and grazing on mountains and returning farmland to forests; 2) removing some embankments to discharge floodwater and return some farmland reclaimed from lakes back to their original state; 3) worked for relief and to build new towns for the displaced people; 4) strengthened dikes and dredged silted rivers and lakes. While making long-term planning for the post-flood reconstruction, the Central government also made appropriate arrangements for the flood-affected people.

1. Help to flood-affected people to rebuild houses for the winter

- 1.1 **Unified plan.** Following the principles of suiting measures to local conditions, building affordable and practical houses, as well as designing rational layouts, the Departments of Civil Affairs, Construction and Land Resources made a unified plan for the reconstruction of new villages. In this way, the old looks were maintained.
- 1.2 **Raised housing standards in preventing and fighting against natural disasters.** Efforts were made to avoid building new houses in areas of floodwater storage and discharge; and areas prone to mountainous disasters. When conditions permitted, houses made of steel and cement, bricks and wood, were built instead of homes made with earth.
- 1.3 **Raised housing funding through various channels.** Funds were raised by means of governmental relief benefits, mutual help, neighbor's contribution in labor and building materials, work for relief, loans and the formulation of preferential policies. Governmental relief benefits were mainly provided to the families most seriously affected by the floods.

1.4. **Formulated preferential policies.** In the less severely flooded areas, relevant department was organized to give support to the worst flooded areas. Victims received assistance in building new houses in terms of funding, technology, and goods. Simplified procedures, reduced taxes, charges, and fees were implemented. Stable commodity prices were maintained.

1.5 Coordinated relevant departments to ensure timely production and transportation of rehabilitation supplies.

2 Various steps were taken to provide food grain to flood-affected people

2.1 Those who could provide for and help themselves, but temporarily had no money to buy food grain, could borrow food grain.

2.2 Those who had sources of income but no money to buy food grain, could buy on credit.

2.3 Those without money and food grain were provided with donated grain from non-flooded parts of the province.

2.4 Those most needy families without food grain and money received relief from the government.

According to statistics, in the fight against the 1998 Flood, the Central government allocated 8.33 billion yuan of relief funds and a great quantity of relief goods to the flooded areas. 4.11 billion yuan was utilized to provide for livelihood. Governments at various levels input 2.79 billion yuan for the flooded people. Relief donations amounted to 7.26 billion yuan. A total of 14.15 billion yuan of funds and materials were used to make arrangements for food, clothing, housing and medical care in the flooded areas, laying a solid material foundation to help victims tide themselves over their difficulties.

With the concerted efforts of all sides, appropriate arrangements were made for the relocation of people threatened by floods; the basic needs of these people, such as food, clothing, housing and medical care were met.

Summary and Conclusions

Great achievements were scored in the recovery and rehabilitation of the flooded areas. To sum up the flood fighting and relief operations in 1998, we concluded the following experience.

A coordination mechanism was undertaken by the Central government:

- Establishing an early-warning and forecasting system to make scientific forecasts.
- Acquiring information relating to rainstorms and floods.
- Sharing information among various departments.
- Formulating plans for flood fighting and relief operations as well as Emergency response.
- Mobilizing the armed forces
- Coordinating different departments to arrange for relief funds and materials.
- Coordinating efforts to engage in flood relief operations.
- Providing technical support to the flooded areas through coordination among various technical departments.

Intensified responsibility was undertaken by local governments in carrying out relief operations:

- Making clear that local governments bear major responsibilities in disaster relief, and the Central government gives necessary support.
- Establishing responsibility of leading officials.
- Organizing people affected by floods to be immediately relocated.
- Relocation of flood affected people.
- Coordinating relevant departments to arrange for emergency assistance
- Dispatching scientific manpower, material, and financial resources
- Organizing victims to provide for themselves by engaging in production.
- Making post-flood rehabilitation plans.

Organizing of the entire population was made to help in the disaster relief operations:

- Mobilizing disaster victims to participate in relief operations.
- Mobilizing armed forces to carry out relief operations.
- Managing government functions to give support to the fight against floods and to perform relief operations
- Active participation of NGOs in the relief efforts.
- Participation of volunteers in the relief efforts.
- Organizing relief donations.

An Emergency Response Operational Mechanism is needed:

- Network of Meteorological Monitoring and Forecast
- Hydrologic Monitoring Network
- Disaster situation Survey Network

Rainstorms and the flood situation needs to be understood:

- Flood situation
- Disaster Situation

Annex 1

Annex 2

Annex 3

Annex 4

Annex I

Coordination of the State Headquarters for Flood Control and Drought Relief

The following government functions are needed during severe flooding:

Ministry of Water Resources:

To acquire information and inform on the flooding situation. To dispatch flood scientific information. Allocate budget and materials for flood control.

Ministry of Civil Affairs:

To acquire, assess and make public the disaster situation. Coordinate assistance provided by different departments to the disaster-hit areas. Allocate relief funds and materials, and organize relief donation activities.

State Development Planning Commission:

To organize post-disaster recovery and rehabilitation.

Ministry of Public Health:

To acquire information about epidemic diseases. Sending medical teams and arranging for funds relating to the prevention of epidemic diseases.

Ministry of Finance:

To dispatch funds for disaster fighting and relief.

Meteorological Departments:

To make all efforts to do a good job of weather forecasting.

Departments of Transportation, Railways, and Civil Aviation:

To make preferential arrangements for the immediate transportation of relief goods.

Departments of Commodity Inspection and Testing:

To test sanitation and quarantine. To make preferential arrangements for the testing and custom clearance of relief goods.

Ministry of Land and Resources, Ministry of Information Industry:

To formulate various preferential policies.

Procuratorial, Judicial, and Public Security Organs:

To ensuring social stability in the disaster areas.

Supervisory and Auditing Organs:

To strengthen the utilization of disaster relief materials and funds.

Propaganda Department:

To prepare news reports and give publicity to flood fighting and relief operations.

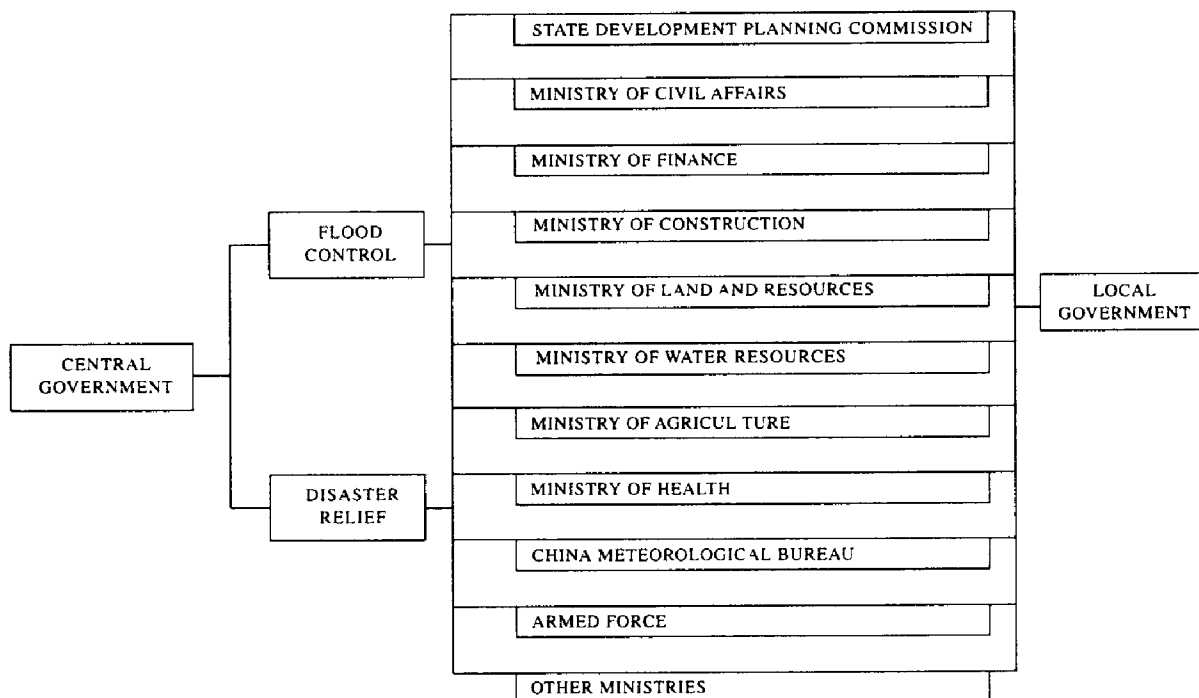
The Armed Forces:

To dispatch armed forces to engaged in flood control and relief.

1. Giving out early warning
2. Organizing the fight against floods and relief operations.
3. Immediately relocating people affected by floods.
4. Making arrangement for basic livelihood of disaster victims, including food, clothing, housing and medical care

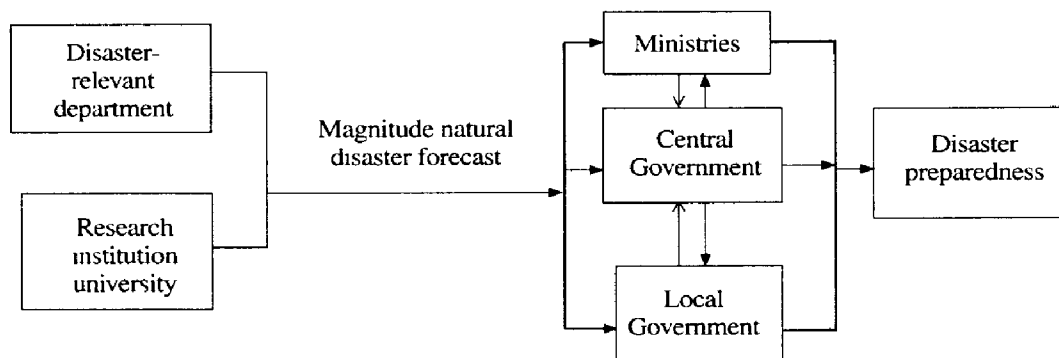
Annex 2

Government Central Organization for Flood Control and Disaster Relief in China



Annex 3

Operational Mechanism for Disaster Prediction in China



Emergency Response Operational Mechanism in China

