

National Report of the People's Republic of China

by the Ministry of Civil Affairs

Brief History of Natural Disaster Reduction in China

China, a country with a vast territory and a huge population, has been plagued by nearly all kinds of natural disasters except volcanic eruptions. In a certain sense, therefore, the history of the Chinese Nation is a history of combating natural disasters. And in the course of history, China has created great water conservancy engineering projects of very long standing, such as the Dujiangyan Water Diversion and Irrigation Project of Sichuan Province and the Sea Dike of Zhejiang Province, and has accumulated rich experience in disaster reduction.

Since the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949, while going all out for economic construction, the Communist Party of China and the Chinese Government have led the Chinese people to exert their efforts in mitigating natural disasters, and have allocated huge financial and manpower resources for this purpose.

In the early period following the founding of the People's Republic, with the Ministry of Water Conservancy and Ministry of Interior as the core, the Chinese government set up the Central Commission on Natural Disaster Relief to take direct charge of the management of natural disasters. And, in the light of the prevailing conditions of frequent floods and droughts, the Commission formulated the disaster relief policy of "Self-help through production, practising economy to tide over starvation, expanding mutual help, providing work as a form of relief and supplemented by the necessary relief funds"; and gigantic projects were implemented to harness the historically flood-causing big rivers, such as the Yangtze River (Changjiang River), Yellow River (Huanghe River), Huaihe River and Haihe River.

After tiding over the economic recovery period (1950-52) during which successive severe natural disasters had occurred, the Chinese Government initiated natural disaster reduction activities across the country, including massive afforestation drive and large scale efforts to prevent and control crop and forest diseases and insect pests. In the mean time, the Government set up the Central Meteorological Administration (Currently called China Meteorological Administration) and State Seismological Bureau, to meet the demands of disaster management in China. In the 1970's, the Chinese Government further set up relevant departments and professional and research institutions to deal with the mitigation of natural disasters