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Brief Introduction of China's Natural Disaster Control Work

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Mr. Chairman:

We feel greatly honoured to be present at the conference of the International Civil Prevention Organization as the regular member state of the organization. I, in this connection, on behalf of the Chinese delegation wish to convey to Mr. chairman, Mr. secretary general and all other member states our heartfelt thanks for your admitting China into the organization and also to you our warm congratulations for the convening of the 10th conference of the organization.

China will strictly implement the Rules of the International Civil Prevention Organization', relevant conference and council resolutions and decisions, and make unremitting efforts to safeguard the people and their properties. Mr. chairman, please allow me to introduce to you the natural disaster prevention activities in China.

1. General situation of the natural calamities in China.

Because of the vast territory, varied topography and a changeable climate, various natural disasters are frequent in different parts of the country. Disasters such as floods, droughts, typhoons, tidal

waves, hails, frosts, disastrous snows, landslides, mud-rock flows, plants diseases and insect pests, and forest fires occur almost annually in one region or another. And earthquake is also frequent. These disasters have caused severe losses in our country. In the past 40 years from 1949 to 1991, the disaster-hit crop areas in the normal year amount to 40 million hectares as well as more than 3 million houses destroyed with direct economic losses of over 50 billion yuan (about \$10 billion). Of all these disasters, the losses caused by floods, droughts and earthquakes are the greatest. The six serious floods from 1949 to 1991 affected a crop area of more than 13 million hectares. The catastrophic floods in East China in 1991 caused direct economic losses of 121.5 billion yuan. Natural disasters in China have their regional and seasonal distinctions. Floods mainly occur in the Huang-Huai-Hai Plain, the middle and lower reaches of Yangtze River, and the middle and lower reaches of Liao River. Droughts are mainly in the loess plateaus and the northern plains. Typhoons and tidal waves mainly occur in the coastal regions. Affected by Siberia winter monsoons in the winter, the climate in most parts of the country is cold and dry with frequent gales and snowstorms. In the summer, with the influence of the warm and humid wind from the tropical oceans, floods, typhoons and dry winds are frequent.

2. Tactics for China's natural disaster resistance

(1) In the disaster prevention and alleviation work, start

construction of certain projects and strengthen the forecast to lessen the occurrence of disasters.

A. Start construction of water conservancy projects for the flood control and drought relief efforts.

In those areas easily-hit by disasters along the Yangtze, Yellow, Huai and Hai rivers, large-scale waterway dredging and harnessing projects should be launched. Up to now, 220,000 kilometres of flood control dykes and weirs, 80,000 large and medium-sized reservoirs, and 490,000 irrigation and drainage pumping stations have been constructed, forming a flood control and drought relief project system broad in scale.

B. Afforestation and soil erosion control. After years of afforestation efforts, forest covering rate has increased to the present 12% from 5% in 1949 with more than 12 million hectares of cultivated land under protection. In addition, more than 7,000 kilometres of protection forests running through 12 provinces and autonomous regions in northeastern, northern and northwestern parts of China have been formed together with windbreaks along the coast.

C. Strengthen scientific and technological research to enhance forecasting levels. Now, China has set up more than 100 research institutes in the fields of meteorology, geology, seismology, drought, flood, typhoon, biology and forest fire control for the disaster prevention, alleviation and relief efforts. In addition, it has set up more than 2,000 plant diseases and

Insect pests control stations and more than 2,700 weather forecasting stations, improved radar and computer monitoring, satellite detecting, long-range communication and data forecasting systems. All these efforts have greatly improved the country's weather forecasts for disasters. Monitoring systems have also been set up in the main seismic areas in the country.

(2) For the disaster control, spare no efforts to safeguard the people and their properties to reduce the losses to the minimum.

A. Protection of dykes along rivers, lakes, seas and reservoirs. When flood season comes, local citizens are mobilized to guard by every possible means these dykes day and night against possible damages by floods, winds and waves. Whenever there is a breach in the embankment, they can rush to deal with the emergency.

B. Flood diversion and storage to reduce the losses. To avoid the damages by floods to the large and medium-sized cities as well as important facilities, flood diversion and storage areas are prepared along large rivers. When the eastern parts of China were hit by big floods in 1991, to ensure the safety of Tianjin-Shanghai railway line, coal mines in both northern and southern Anhui Province as well as the towns in the lower reaches of Huai River, the section of the dykes along Tangduo Lake inside Yingshang County of Anhui Province was exploded open for flood diversion, which not only protected the important towns in the area and vital communication lines, but also reduced property losses.

C. Organize urgent relocation, rescue victims and people's

property. Whenever there is a flood threat, governments at all levels will spare no effort to organize manpower and material resources to relocate people in disaster-stricken areas and protect their properties, and do their best to reduce losses caused by disasters to a minimum. During the big floods in 1991, more than 10 million people besieged by floods and several hundred billion yuan of property nationwide have been successfully relocated or saved, reducing the losses to the minimum.

(3) For disaster relief, organize the rehabilitation and the reconstruction of homeland and spare no effort to eliminate the aftermath of disasters.

A. Do rush repairs of lifeline facilities. Each year, many roads and railway lines as well as communication, electricity, water and oil supplying facilities are damaged by natural disasters such as floods, typhoons, earthquakes and mud-rock flows. Most of these facilities can generally be restored to the normal and be put in motion within a short period after rush repairs.

B. Well arrange the lives of disaster victims. Each year, tens of millions of people in China are affected by natural disasters. The State Civil Affairs Ministry and local civil affairs departments are responsible for ensuring their lives. The measures taken are to provide for and help themselves by engaging in production, mutual assistance, collective subsidies

and State relief to ensure that the victims of disasters have enough food, clothing, housing and timely medical treatment. In 1991 more than 100 million people suffered from flood disasters. However, because of several measures taken to well arrange their lives, no people died of hunger and frost, no people got away from their homeland and there were no epidemic diseases, a real miracle in disaster relief history.

C. Restore production and reconstruct homeland. For those damaged enterprises, villages, houses, farmlands, and water conservancy and living facilities, the State and local governments offer assistance for their restoration and reconstruction in a planned way. Damaged farmlands, water conservancy facilities and collapsed houses can usually be restored or reconstructed before the winter of the year comes, or the next spring at the latest.

3. Main experience in China's natural disaster control efforts
Chinese people have summed up valuable experience in their disaster control, alleviation and relief activities during their long-time struggle against natural disasters.

(1) Combination of disaster control with relief is the basic strategy for disaster resistance work. The principle of putting the prevention first, and the combination of prevention with relief has well integrated disaster control, prevention, alleviation and relief. This principle determines the priority

of disaster prevention and alleviation.

(2) Necessary State input is the important guarantee for disaster control work. The central government, while allocating special funds for large-scale disaster prevention and relief projects, each year also allocates 2 billion yuan of funds for the construction of medium-sized and small water conservancy works, more than 1 billion yuan of special funds for flood and drought prevention, more than 1 billion yuan of relief funds for the victims of natural calamities and provide more than 5 million tons of grain ration to the victims as well as large amount of cement, steel and wood products.

(3) Cooperation between government departments is the essential guarantee for the disaster control work. Important disaster control, alleviation and relief work is under the close coordination between the central and local governments and their unified command. For this reason, China has set up the China International Disaster Relief Committee in the Next Ten Years' to integrate the national cooperation in the disaster control, alleviation and relief work.

(4) Support from the army is indispensable to our disaster prevention work. The army units in different regions have rendered positive support and cooperation to local people in their disaster control efforts. During the time of urgency for disaster control and relief work, the army is usually the most effective shock brigade and main force. From 1983 to 1991, more than 4 million soldiers from the army and the armed police force

joined the disaster control and relief work. Many of our disaster prevention and alleviation projects have been completed with the help of the army. In the big floods in 1991, 260,000 soldiers and 1.64 million militiamen in Anhui Province alone joined the disaster control and relief work. They rescued 590,000 local victims, eliminated 4,500 dangerous locations and strengthened 2,383 kilometres of dykes, greatly reducing the losses.

(5) Mutual assistance between different regions is the effective measures to have the relief work well done. Mutual help and assistance to the poor are traditional Chinese virtues. When there is a disaster, those regions free from disasters will on their own initiatives give assistance to the disaster-stricken regions to help them restore production and reconstruct their homeland. When the floods occurred in 1991, people from all walks of life in the country, our compatriots from Hong Kong, Macao and Taiwan, overseas Chinese and friends from other countries all helped the victims generously with money and materials worth more than 2.3 billion yuan to help them conquer natural disasters. Governments and international organizations which many of you present at the conference represent have rendered valuable assistance to the disaster control and relief work in China, especially when China suffered serious floods in the eastern parts of the country in 1991. I wish to avail myself of this opportunity, in the name of the Chinese Government, to extend to them the Chinese people's heartfelt thanks.

Mr. chairman, the fight against natural calamities is the common cause of the mankind. The Chinese delegation wish to exchange experience with other delegations in the disaster control, alleviation and relief work and make joint efforts to push forward the civil protection in different countries.

Thanks you, Mr. chairman.