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China's Green Policies and Their Global Climate Impact



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Overview:

China, as the most populous country and the second-largest economy, is a central player in global climate issues. The nation's rapid industrial growth has significantly influenced worldwide greenhouse gas emissions, making its environmental strategies vital for addressing global climate



change. This article delves into the progression of China's environmental policies, their current strategies, and their global implications.

Historical Development and Policy Transformation:

China's approach to environmental regulation has significantly evolved. Initially, during the economic reform era in the late 20th century, environmental issues were often sidelined in favor of economic development. However, as environmental problems became more apparent, China began to prioritize environmental protection.

In the early 2000s, China started incorporating environmental considerations into its economic plans. The 11th Five-Year Plan (2006-2010) marked the beginning of this shift with objectives to reduce energy consumption per unit of GDP and lower pollution levels. This set the stage for more rigorous environmental policies in subsequent plans.

The 12th Five-Year Plan (2011-2015) built on this foundation with an emphasis on tackling air and water pollution, enhancing energy efficiency, and fostering renewable energy use. The focus was on integrating green development principles into the economy.

The 13th Five-Year Plan (2016-2020) advanced these policies with stricter regulations and a shift towards sustainable development. It introduced measures aimed at reducing carbon emissions and boosting clean energy usage.

The 14th Five-Year Plan (2021-2025) represents a significant evolution, highlighting the concept of “ecological civilization.” It sets ambitious targets for peak carbon emissions and achieving carbon neutrality,



reflecting China’s enhanced commitment to climate action.

Core Environmental Strategies:

1: Targets for Carbon Emission Reductions:

China aims to cut its carbon intensity by 60-65% by 2030 relative to 2005 levels as part of its Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) under the Paris Agreement. This involves substantial investments in clean energy, energy efficiency improvements, and the adoption of green technologies across various sectors.



2: Investment in Renewable Energy:

China leads globally in renewable energy investments and production. It has invested heavily in solar and wind energy, becoming the largest producer of solar panels and wind turbines. The 14th Five-Year Plan focuses on expanding renewable energy infrastructure and exploring new energy sources like hydrogen, crucial for reducing global reliance on fossil fuels.

3: Improving Air Quality:

Addressing air pollution has been a major focus for China, particularly in urban centers. Policies such as the Air Pollution Prevention and Control Action Plan (2013) and the Clean Air Action Plan (2018) target reductions in emissions from industries and vehicles. These plans include measures for stricter pollution standards and the promotion of cleaner technologies.

4: Development of Carbon Trading Markets:

In 2021, China launched its national carbon market, initially targeting the power sector. This cap-and-trade system allows for the trading of carbon allowances, providing economic incentives for emission reductions. Future expansion to other sectors is anticipated, playing a key role in China's carbon neutrality strategy.

5: Conservation and Biodiversity Efforts:

China is also advancing in biodiversity and conservation. The establishment of numerous nature reserves and protected areas is aimed at preserving ecosystems and wildlife.

Initiatives include reforestation projects to counteract deforestation and desertification, reflecting a commitment to maintaining ecological balance.

Global Implications of China's Environmental Policies:

China's environmental strategies have significant global ramifications:

1: Impact on Global Emissions:

China's efforts to reduce carbon intensity and invest in renewable



energy contribute to a global decrease in greenhouse gas emissions. As the top emitter of CO₂, China's policies are pivotal in shaping global emission trends. By setting high targets and investing in clean technology, China aids in mitigating global warming.

2: Influence on Global Climate Agreements:

China's dedication to climate action strengthens the effectiveness of international climate agreements. Its role in the Paris Agreement helps drive global climate negotiations and encourages other nations to adopt more ambitious climate targets, enhancing global cooperation.

3: Technological Advancements and Global Adoption:

China's progress in renewable energy technologies has global implications. Its leadership in solar and wind energy has lowered costs and accelerated the adoption of these technologies worldwide, facilitating a global transition to cleaner energy sources.



Future Directions and Recommendations:

Looking forward, China's environmental policies need to address emerging challenges and opportunities. Key areas for future focus include:

1: Enhancing Policy Implementation:

China must strengthen enforcement mechanisms to ensure the effectiveness of its environmental policies. This involves improving monitoring systems, increasing transparency, and holding violators accountable.

2: Sustainable Urban Development:

As urbanization continues, sustainable urban planning must be prioritized. This includes developing green infrastructure, promoting energy-efficient buildings, and enhancing public transport to reduce urban carbon emissions.

3: Strengthening Global Cooperation:

China should continue to engage in international climate initiatives and share its experiences with other countries. Global collaboration is essential for effectively addressing climate change and achieving collective climate goals.

4: Investing in Innovative Technologies:

Ongoing investment in research and development is crucial for achieving long-term climate objectives. China should support innovation in clean energy, carbon capture, and other technologies that can drive progress toward a sustainable future.



Conclusion:

China's environmental policies are a vital component of global climate action. Through ambitious goals, substantial investments in clean energy, and innovative market mechanisms, China is making significant contributions to reducing global greenhouse gas emissions. However, addressing ongoing challenges and refining policies are essential for balancing economic growth with environmental sustainability. China's evolving strategies will continue to play a critical role in shaping the future of global climate stability.