Modernization Characterized by Harmonious Coexistence between Man and Nature

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The Proposals of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China for Formulating the 14th Five-Year Plan for National Economic and Social Development and Long-Range Objectives through the Year 2035 (hereinafter referred to as the Proposals), which were proposed by the Fifth Plenary Session of the 19th Central Committee of the Communist Party of China (CPC) in 2020, suggested promoting green development and ensuring harmony between man and nature. The Proposals have illuminated the direction and path for making new progress in achieving ecological civilization and seeking a form of modernization that promotes the harmonious coexistence between man and nature.

The scientific connotations of modernization characterized by harmonious coexistence between man and nature

General Secretary Xi Jinping pointed out in the report delivered at the 19th National Congress of the CPC on October 18, 2017 that “The modernization that we pursue is one characterized by harmonious coexistence between man and nature. In addition to creating more material and cultural wealth to meet people’s ever-increasing needs for a better life, we need also to provide more quality ecological goods to meet people’s ever-growing demands for a beautiful environment.” This dichotomy illustrates the harmonious coexistence between man and nature in theory and practice and further enriches and expands the connotation and extension of modernization.

To carry out modernization characterized by harmonious coexistence between man and nature based on Marx’s ecological philosophy that man and nature form a community of life, people must abandon the concept of despising, dominating, and destroying nature, which has been prominent since the First Industrial Revolution, and instead respect nature, follow its ways, and protect it. When utilizing natural resources and the

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ecological environment, it is necessary to consciously understand and observe the laws of nature, including not only the laws of nature’s physical movement and the development of the ecosystem but also the laws of the interaction between people and nature and between society and nature. To promote socialist modernization in the new era, China should actively adapt to the changes in the major social contradictions. Namely, it should not only strive to create more material and spiritual wealth to meet people’s growing needs for better lives but should also strive to provide more high-quality ecological products to meet people’s growing needs for beautiful ecological environments.

The Proposals reflect the spirit of the 19th National Congress of the CPC and further discuss and explain the modernization with the harmonious coexistence between man and nature. At a conceptual level, the Proposals emphasize the concept that “lucid waters and lush mountains are invaluable assets” and proposes maintaining natural boundaries for ecological security. In other words, it suggests recognizing that human economic and social development form an insurmountable boundary in nature. This boundary lays a solid theoretical foundation for accurately understanding the relationship between man and nature and building a harmonious modern coexistence between them. In practice, the Proposals suggest modernizing the harmonious coexistence between man and nature, implementing a detailed sustainable development strategy, improving the overall coordination mechanism for ecological civilization, establishing an ecological civilization system, and promoting the comprehensive green transformation of economic and social development. These ideas are taken as the guiding principles for the construction of the ecological civilization during and after the 14th Five-Year Plan period (2021–2025). The Proposals also discuss the current and future promotion of green development and clarify the necessary tasks for promoting the harmonious coexistence between man and nature and how to carry them out. Thus, they provide direction for new progress in ecological civilization construction.

The value of modernization characterized by harmonious coexistence between man and nature in the new era

Adhering to the guidance of Xi Jinping Thought on Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era to develop a system for building an ecological civilization (hereinafter referred to as Xi Jinping Thought on Ecological Civilization), China will modernize the harmonious coexistence between man and nature, which is in line with China’s development needs.
Xi Jinping Thought on Ecological Civilization has clearly defined directions for promoting green low-carbon development, developing a wide range of types of green production and lifestyles, and promoting the comprehensive green transformation of economic and social development. China will strongly promote the construction of an ecological civilization to achieve new progress.

Practicing Xi Jinping Thought on Ecological Civilization is a requirement of the current era. Since the 18th National Congress of the CPC in 2012, Xi Jinping, General Secretary of the CPC Central Committee, has put forth a series of concepts, such as “lucid waters and lush mountains are invaluable assets,” from a historical and overall perspective. He has proposed respecting, complying with, and protecting nature and promoting the harmonious coexistence between man and nature. He suggests that protecting the ecological environment is to protect productivity, improving the ecological environment is to develop productivity, and a good ecological environment is the fairest public product and the most inclusive people’s livelihood. He also emphasizes that the rise or fall of a civilization is closely tied to its relationship with nature. These innovative and strategic thoughts have profoundly answered a set of major theoretical and practical questions, such as why an ecological civilization should be built, what kind of ecological civilization should be built, and how to build an ecological civilization. Together, these questions form Xi Jinping Thought on Ecological Civilization. This concept provides fundamental guidance for promoting the construction of a beautiful China and realizing the modernization characterized by harmonious coexistence between man and nature. The in-depth study and implementation of this important thought illuminates the need to achieve this goal. The Proposals suggest accelerating the promotion of green and low-carbon development, continuously improving environmental quality, enhancing the quality and stability of the ecosystem, and comprehensively increasing resource utilization efficiency. Together, they form a practical path for implementing Xi Jinping Thought on Ecological Civilization and promoting the modernization of the harmonious coexistence between man and nature.

It is necessary to carry out a comprehensive green transformation of economic and social development, as the Proposals suggest. China will accelerate the efforts to develop eco-friendly growth models and ways of life and will constantly promote the modernization of the harmonious coexistence between man and nature so as to better meet people’s growing need for a beautiful ecological environment.
Mans and nature form a community of life; the exploitation of and even damage to nature will eventually lead to nature’s unrelenting revenge. To build a new development paradigm, promote high-quality development, and realize the sustainable development of the Chinese nation, it is imperative to solve environmental issues by upgrading and completely changing mass production, consumption, and emissions; match resources, production and consumption; and promote the comprehensive green transformation of China’s economic and social development. China will coordinate, unify, and mutually promote economic and social development, protect the ecological environment, and, thus, modernize the harmonious coexistence between man and nature. In essence, the comprehensive green transformation of economic and social development is an important component of modernizing the harmonious coexistence between man and nature, and the continuous advancement of this modernization, in turn, will further promote the comprehensive green transformation of economic and social development.

The goal of building a beautiful China will be achieved. According to the report “Secure a Decisive Victory in Building a Moderately Prosperous Society in All Respects and Strive for the Great Success of Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era,” delivered at the 19th National Congress of the CPC on October 18, 2017, socialist modernization will be realized when the environment has been fundamentally improved and the goal of building a beautiful China has essentially been attained. The Proposals set forth more detailed strategic deployment for the construction of a beautiful China and list more specific requirements. It regards broadly establishing green production and lifestyles, achieving stable and declining carbon emissions after it reaching a peak, fundamentally improving the ecological environment, and realizing the goal of constructing a beautiful China as components of the long-term aim of achieving socialist modernization by 2035. During the 14th Five-Year Plan period (2021–2025), China must get off to a good start in building a great modern socialist country in all respects; make progress in the construction of an ecological civilization; and build a great modern socialist country that is prosperous, strong, culturally advanced, harmonious, and beautiful. To do so, it is necessary to modernize the harmonious coexistence between man and nature as an important starting point. Then, China must unswervingly apply its new vision of development and firmly adhere to its ecological priorities and green development goals. China will consistently follow a civilized development path including
production, well-being, and the environment and will strive toward the goal of building a beautiful China.

**Developing a new model of modernization where man and nature develop in harmony**

A green development system that conserves resources and is environmentally friendly should be developed, to achieve green, circular and low-carbon development and harmonious coexistence between man and nature, to firmly establish and practice the concept that lucid waters and lush mountains are invaluable assets, and to bring into being a new model of modernization where man and nature develop in harmony. China should establish a new model of modernization in which man and nature develop in harmony and make new progress in achieving ecological civilization. To do so, it is necessary to accelerate the promotion of green and low-carbon development, continuously improve environmental quality, improve the ecosystem’s quality and stability, and comprehensively improve resource utilization efficiency by implementing the Proposals.

China should accelerate its green and low-carbon development. To do so, China must promote green and low-carbon development, strengthen its control of land and space planning and use, and reduce the occupation of natural space by human activities during the 14th Five-Year Plan period. China will carry out activities to create green lifestyles; promote the green transformation of production; ensure the clean, low-carbon, safe, and efficient use of energy; reduce carbon emissions intensity; strive to reach the peak of carbon dioxide emissions before 2030, and achieve carbon neutrality by 2060. To reach this goal, China needs to vigorously promote the green transformation of key industries and important fields; further strengthen the innovative development of clean production, the environmental protection industry, and green technology; actively develop green finance; accelerate the construction of market-oriented green technology innovation systems; and provide strong legal and policy guarantees for green development.

China will continuously improve its environmental quality. To do so, the Proposals suggest eliminating heavily polluted air, eliminating black and odorous waters in urban areas, strengthening white pollution control, improving the collection and treatment of hazardous medical waste, and relocating and transforming hazardous chemical production enterprises in key areas. The Proposals also put forward formulating and implementing some important institutional mechanisms, such as the establishment of above-ground and underground, land and sea integrated ecological and
environmental management systems. Finally, China should fully implement a sewage discharge permit system. These institutional measures can ensure the continuous improvement of China’s environmental quality and can strongly promote high-quality development.

China needs to improve the quality and stability of its ecosystems. New progress has been made in the construction of an ecological civilization, which is reflected in the steady improvement of its ecosystems’ quality and stability. The government should promote the comprehensive management of mountains, rivers, forests, farmland, lakes, and grass and should build a natural reserve system with national parks as the main body. China will implement major projects to protect biodiversity by strengthening its control of alien species. It will improve the system of river chiefs and lake chiefs, strengthen the ecological protection and governance of large rivers and important lakes and wetlands, and implement a ten-year fishing ban in key areas of the Yangtze River to protect biodiversity. China will systematically promote the comprehensive control of desertification, rocky desertification, and soil erosion; continue to launch large land greening programs; protect the marine environment; and protect and restore other ecosystems. China will implement a nationwide “forest chief” scheme. It will improve systems for regeneration of croplands, grasslands, forests, rivers, and lakes and will take effective measures to protect and utilize its high-yield black soil. China should rigorously protect farmland and expand trials in crop rotation and keep land fallow. China will better measure the impact of global warming on vulnerable areas, improve the regulatory system for natural reserves and “ecological red lines,” and monitor and assess the effectiveness of ecosystem protections. Implementing these important decisions and arrangements will provide more high-quality ecological products for the whole society, continuously increasing people’s sense of benefit, happiness, and security.

China should comprehensively improve its resource utilization efficiency. The efficient use of resources is a significant component of the modernization of the harmonious coexistence between man and nature. During the 14th Five-Year Plan period, China will work toward this goal by continuously improving its administrative management and scientific applications of economic policy tools; vigorously enhancing the property rights system and laws and regulations for natural resources in accordance with the decisions and implementation of the Proposals; strengthening the investigation, evaluation, monitoring, and registration of natural resources; establishing a
mechanism for realizing the value of ecological products; and improving marketization. China will diversify ecological compensation and promote the management, scientific allocation, comprehensive conservation, and recycling of all resources. It will implement national water conservation actions and establish a rigid water resource restraint system. China will improve development and protection of marine and mineral resources and the resource price formation mechanism. It will improve the sorting of solid waste and urban garbage and work toward the reduction, recycling, and safe disposal of this waste. Finally, China will accelerate the construction of a recycling system for waste materials and strive to achieve coordinated and unified economic and social development and ecological and environmental protection.

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