

ENVIRONMENTAL CHINA

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OPINION

[Three Key Questions About China's Climate Commitments](#) (Switch Board, 12/08/2014) China's announcement that it will cap its carbon pollution by 2030 – earlier if possible----- – and increase the share of non-fossil fuel in its primary energy mix to 20% by the same year, represents a major departure from China's previous position in the international climate negotiations (now underway again in Lima, Peru), and a vital step forward for the world's largest CO2 emitter. A number of questions have arisen about whether China is serious about meeting these targets, and how it will achieve them in the face of daunting challenges.

[Listen up Beijing. This is what you can learn from Los Angeles about fighting smog](#) (CNN, 12/10/2014) For years China has been the envy of the world, hailed as the great 'economic miracle' thanks to its sustained double-digit growth. Of late, however, the Middle Kingdom has also become the poster boy for environmental degradation, a target of ridicule for Beijing's now notorious "airpocalypse."

[Coal Addiction Brings Scourge of Black Lung](#) (China Digital Times, 12/15/2014) China is by far the world's largest consumer of coal, using more of the fossil fuel than the rest of the world combined. While coal has done much to meet increasing energy demands amid China's rapid economic growth, it has brought with it substantial human and environmental costs. The joint U.S.-China commitment on carbon emission reductions last month signaled China's willingness to begin weaning away from coal power, but economic reliance on the natural resource has some in coal country worried about the cost of phasing coal out.

[China's Double-Edged Pact](#) (New York Times, 12/15/2014) Whether China is a climate hero or a climate villain is a matter of polarized debate. At one extreme, the world's biggest carbon-emitter is portrayed as a wasteful bogeyman that obstructs efforts to halt global warming and "steals" clean-tech jobs through unfair practices. At the other extreme, people see Beijing's policies as the planet's best hope: With its aggressive plans to green its economy, backed by the mighty Communist machine, China is the foremost investor in renewable energy. The truth lies in between.

[China Comes Clean on Dirty Air](#) (Bloomberg, 12/17/2014) Perhaps the biggest unanswered question hovering over each round of international climate change talks is whether China can be trusted to abide by any carbon reduction commitments it agrees to. Given Beijing's history of pushing for vague, non-binding targets -- and its reported intervention last weekend to block efforts to include a rigorous review process in the Lima Accord -- there's certainly grounds for skepticism.

[Why Is Ecuador Selling Its Economic and Environmental Future to China?](#) (The Nation, 12/18/2014) At the point where the lazy, black-water Cuyabeno runs into the faster currents of the Aguarico, carrying a chill from their Andean source, sandbars stretch out from the verdant banks. These are the Playas de Cuyabeno, and the name has attached itself to the indigenous Cofan community in this region, deep inside Ecuador's portion of the Amazon Basin. Until very recently, an assortment of thatched, wooden dwellings sat above the river.

[The amendment of Environmental Protection Law 2015](#) (Lexology, 12/19/2014) On 4 April, 2014 the Standing Committee passed China's new Environmental Protection Law which comes into force on 1 January, 2015 (2015 EPL). This momentous law is a massive update of the two and half decade old 1989 Environmental Protection Law (1989 EPL). The new law adds 23 articles including a new Chapter, number V, on "Information Disclosure and Public Participation" and creates a stronger system of environmental protection. It also potentially creates new opportunities for enterprises.

RESEARCH AND CIVIL SOCIETY

[The barbaric capture of baby elephants for zoos in China shocks the world](#) (The Guardian, 12/16/2014) In a recent article for the BBC, George Monbiot quotes the words of the pioneering conservationist Aldo Leopold: "One of the penalties of an ecological education is that one lives alone in a world of wounds." These words have a particular resonance to those of us engaged in what sometimes seems a losing battle to save the world's dwindling populations of elephants, rhinos, and other large mammals.

[Confucian thought and China's environmental dilemmas](#) (Phys, 12/18/2014) Conventional wisdom holds that China - the world's most populous country - is an inveterate polluter, that it puts economic goals above conservation in every instance. So China's recent moves toward an apparent environmentalism have raised some eyebrows. But should they? While China's leaders have historically chosen growth over sustainability, they have considered both alternatives and consequences to their actions.

[China's largest coal power plant violating air pollution levels every week](#) (The Guardian, 12/18/2014) China's largest coal-fired power plant has been violating national emission standards for chemicals that cause dangerous fine particulate matter pollution, official figures show. The Waigaoqiao coal-fired power plant located in Shanghai has been violating China's national standards for nitrogen oxides every week since new standards came into force in July, according to analysis of publicly available government data by researchers at Greenpeace East Asia.

[Two Decades Trying to Solve China's Environmental Problems: An Interview With WWF's Tao Hu](#) (News Security Beat, 12/18/2014) Despite some critics, the recent U.S.-China agreement over carbon emissions has sparked remarkable optimism in global climate negotiations. It's also opened the door to new bilateral engagement between the U.S. and Chinese environmental communities on other issues, including China's massive air pollution problems (16 of the world's 20 most polluted cities are in China).

[Asia's fragile caves face growing development risks](#) (The Guardian, 12/18/2014) Botanist Li-Bing Zhang has spent years collecting ferns in the caves and limestone formations of southwestern China and neighboring Southeast Asia. When I met him recently in a Vietnamese national park, his research vehicle, a silver van, was bursting with fern specimens. Zhang and two colleagues had found them in tropical forests and at the entrances of 10 caves.

CORPORATE SECTOR

[Is this the end of coal?](#) (Telegraph, 12/06/2014) Maybe, just maybe, we will look back on the last weeks as one of those moments when history turned. For they have witnessed increasing signs that the world is beginning, unexpectedly, to reject its dirtiest fuel. In an astonishing reversal – virtually unpublicised in Britain, and little noticed elsewhere – China, which burns more coal than the rest of the world put together, has announced it will cap its use within six years.

[Lei Answers Jack Ma Pollution Jibe With Air Purifier](#) (Bloomberg, 12/09/2014) It was a mild barb from one Chinese technology tycoon to another. At an Internet conference last month, Jack Ma asked Xiaomi Corp.'s Lei Jun how much making a good smartphone mattered when the air and water were so bad?

[CECO Environmental Acquires Jiangyin Zhongli in China - Analyst Blog](#) (Nasdaq, 12/16/2014) CECO Environmental Corp. (CECE) recently closed the acquisition of China-based Jiangyin Zhongli Industrial Technology Co., Ltd. Jiangyin Zhongli is a leading designer and manufacturer of technology solutions including power industry damper, diverter and ball mill systems. The financial terms of the deal have been kept under wraps.

[EPSRC Invests in UK/China Research Partnerships for Sustainable Materials for Infrastructures](#) (EPSRC, 12/17/2014) Six new research projects, to improve the sustainability of infrastructure development in the UK and China, are to receive over £3 million in funding from the Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council (EPSRC). The funding follows on from a visit to the UK earlier this year by NSFC President Yang Wei.

[Two Companies Are Making Treasure From China's Electronics Trash](#) (China Tech News, 12/18/2014) A couple of Chinese technology companies are helping to turn old mobile phones into profit. Shenzhen GEM has signed a strategic cooperation

agreement with Aihuishou.com for a long-term brand partnership. With the cooperation, Shenzhen Green Eco-Manufacturer High-Tech Company Ltd. will become the preferred environmental-protection processing partner of Aihuishou.com in China.

GOVERNMENT

[Obama: Nice Infrastructure, China, Shame About the Air](#) (China Digital Times, 12/04/2014) In an address and Q&A session at the Business Roundtable in Washington on Wednesday, President Barack Obama commented on the development of Sino-U.S. relations and used China as a key reference point for answers on other topics. He told gathered executives the United States wants to build a constructive win-win relationship with China, but expressed concern about human rights issues, growing nationalism, and commercial cybersecurity. From a transcript at WhiteHouse.gov:

[China Takes Another Step Forward in War on Pollution](#) (The Diplomat, 12/08/2014) Last week, China announced that it would be launching a 50 billion RMB (\$8.13 billion) environmental protection fund to curb pollution. Funds take the form of low or no-interest loans from the National Development and Reform Commission and the Ministry of Finance to critical industries. Although these industries have not yet been specified, analysts anticipate funds going, at least in part, to the water treatment industry. This policy is viewed as a market-based solution to environmental protection since it will boost the role of pollution treatment industries.

[Key Section of Water Diversion Project Opens](#) (China Digital Times, 12/12/2014) After a decade of construction, the middle route of China's South-to-North Water Diversion Project began sending water towards Beijing on Friday. The three-phase project aims to deliver trillions of gallons of water each year from the Yangtze River thousands of kilometers northward to the arid, industrialized, and rapidly desertifying north. Supposedly conceptualized by Mao Zedong in 1952, construction for the project began in 2002, and has so far cost nearly US\$80 billion—making it one of the most costly and largest engineering projects in world history.