

Speech at the 4<sup>th</sup> International Yellow River Forum

## 在第四届黄河国际论坛上的致辞

H.E. Mr. Chen Lei, Minister of Water Resources, P. R. China

中华人民共和国水利部部长 陈雷

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By

H.E. Mr. CHEN Lei

Minister of Water Resources, P. R. China

(October 20th, 2009)

Distinguished guests,

Dear participants, ladies and gentlemen,

Today the 4<sup>th</sup> International Yellow River Forum embraces its grand opening in Zhengzhou, a city by the Yellow River. Focusing on the overarching theme of "Conservation Culture and River Ethics", the Forum has welcomed over 1,000 distinguished guests and participants from home and abroad, who have gathered here to jointly review and explore important issues, such as development and protection of rivers, construction of river-basin ecology and sustainable utilization of water resources. The Yellow River Forum is a cross-regional, inter-disciplinary and multi-professional event and a grand gathering that agglomerate wisdom, strength and actions. Availing myself of this opportunity and on behalf of the Ministry of Water Resources, P. R. China, I would like to sincerely congratulate the opening of the Forum and warmly welcome all the distinguished guests and participants!

Water is the source of life and the foundation of civilization. River is not

only an important factor maintaining the health of ecological system, but also a grand cradle that nurtures human history and civilization. Long-term excessive development and utilization of water resources by human beings, and intensifying climate change over the recent years have exposed rivers worldwide to severe survival crisis. Proper handling of the relationship between human and nature and that between human and river not only lays the precondition and foundation for conservation culture development, but also constitutes the core and key point of the theories and practices of river ethics. During its rapid development process, human beings should never ever forget their duties and obligations to the nature and must develop firm awareness of conservation culture and river ethics. We should protect human beings from water disasters while prevent damages on water from mankind. Furthermore, while we develop and utilize rivers, we should treasure and protect them. It is a shared mission of all countries in the world to safeguard sustainable socio-economic development by sustainable utilization of water resources, and to promote development of conservation culture through practicing river ethics.

China is the most populous developing country in the world, featuring relative water shortage and frequent flood and drought disasters. Since the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949, the Chinese Government has led its people to construct a large number of water

projects, and established a relatively complete water infrastructure system and a water management and protection system, fundamentally controlled frequent floods and droughts which have persistently annoyed China. Today, China feeds more than 21% of world's population and safeguards its economic development by 6% of world freshwater and 9% of farmland, and is striding forward to a moderately prosperous society. This outstanding achievement is unprecedented throughout the 5000-year history of the Chinese Nation, and also an enormous contribution China has made to the whole world.

Currently and for a certain period of time in the future, China will exert great efforts to establish a moderately prosperous society in an all-round way and accelerate modernization. The Chinese Government is fully aware of the acute conflict between socio-economic development and resource/environment condition, the severe impacts of flood and water-logging disasters, drought and water shortage, water pollution and soil erosion, as well as the arduous task of maintaining ecological health of rivers. Accordingly, the Government proactively advocates the development of conservation culture, sticks to the concept of putting people first and maintaining harmony between people and nature, persists in rational water development, high-efficient utilization, integrated approach, optimized allocation, overall conservation, effective protection and scientific management. We will endeavor to construct a

water-saving and pollution-prevention society that features government dominance, public participation and harmonious development, to develop a water management and development layout that safeguards, serves and improves people's livelihood, and maintain a healthy ecological system of rivers and lakes which can run peacefully and continuously with natural landscape well-preserved. To this end, while markedly increasing its investment in water management and further upgrading the safeguarding capability of water infrastructure, the Chinese Government has implemented the most strict water resources management system, accelerated the definition of three "red lines" or guard lines for water development and utilization, pollutant carrying capacity of water function zones and water use efficiency to ensure sustainable water utilization.

As the mother river, the Yellow River has not only nurtured the Chinese Nation, but also conceived the brilliant Chinese civilization and sustained from generation to generation. Today, with 2% of the national river runoff, the Yellow River irrigates 15% of national effective irrigated farmland, feeds 12% of the national population, creates 11.5% of national GDP and plays an important strategic role in China's national economic development. Over the 60 years since 1949, generations of water staff have made hard explorations and exerted unremitting efforts to manage, develop and protect the Yellow River. They have made great achievements and accumulated valuable experience. Particularly in recent

years, the Yellow River Conservancy Commission (YRCC) has put forward the management concept of "maintaining healthy life of the Yellow River" and carried out effectively the development of conservation culture and river ethics on the Yellow River. Remarkable achievements have been made in areas including but not limited to integrated Yellow River water resources management and integrated flow regulation, water and sediment regulation at Xiaolangdi Multi-purpose Dam Project, standard levee construction in the lower-reach, water and soil conservation on the Loess Plateau and ecological rehabilitation of the Hei River, Tarim River and Shiyang River. We have made the record of non-breach on the Yellow River mainstream during flood seasons (summer and autumn) for over 63 years, which puts an end to the perils of frequent displacement of Yellow River mainstream in history. We have realized non-drying-up of the Yellow River for 10 consecutive years and of the East Juyan Lake, to where the Hei River flows for 5 consecutive years. Besides, ecology of Tarim River basin and Shiyang River basin is being rehabilitated year by year, ringing a paean to greenness. Meanwhile, we are fully aware that the Yellow River basin suffers from the severest water shortage, the most intensive conflict between water supply and demand, and the most fragile ecological environment in China, and that it is most difficult to manage and protect compared with other rivers in the world. At present and for a period to come, we must integrate the development of conservation culture with management, development and protection of

the Yellow River, coordinate short-term management targets with long-term stability of the Yellow River with both structural and non-structural measures. In line with the general goals of “no breach of levees, no dry-up of river courses, no exceeding of water quality standard, and no increase of height of river bed”, we should target at the key problems of the Yellow River, including finite river flow, excessive sedimentation and disproportionate ratio of sediment in water, endeavor to increase water flow, reduce sediment, and regulate water and sediment to achieve proportionate relation between the two. We should accelerate the development and improvement of a water-and-sediment regulation and control system, a flood-control and sediment-reduction system, an integrated water resources management and comprehensive regulation system, a water quality monitoring and protection system, and a water-and-soil conservation and sediment interception system so as to ensure that the Yellow River runs peacefully and continuously. The ultimate goal is to achieve sound management of the Yellow River so that it serves as a blessing to the Chinese Nation.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Since 2003, three International Yellow River Forums have been successfully organized, providing excellent opportunities for extensive exchanges and cooperation for international water communities and giving rise to an influential international platform for communication in

the water sector. With "Conservation Culture and River Ethics" as its overarching theme, the Fourth International Yellow River Forum has 9 topics, including the Impact of Global Climate Change on the Living Environment of Mankind, Conservation Culture and Modern River Basin Management, and River Basin Ecological Construction, etc., and additional 15 sessions either on inter-governmental cooperation or organized by international organizations. I sincerely hope that participants from China and abroad will be able to communicate intensively on the hot topics and key issues with regard to the management of Yellow River basin and other river basins in the world, exchange views, enlighten each other, reach consensus and stimulate mutual development. Let us join hands to tackle difficulties and challenges confronting us on our way forward and make our due contribution to the progress of the human civilization and sustainable socio-economic development of the world.

Finally, I wish the 4th International Yellow River Forum a great success!

Thank You!