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CHINA'S STRATEGY FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

Abstract. The article aims at defining the methods applied by China to realize the notion of sustainable development by combining economic and social development with issues related to environmental protection. The communist party fully recognized the problem of environmental pollution and commenced actions to solve the problem. China works out its own solutions mechanism for environmental protection adjusted to domestic conditions. Promotion of renewable energy sources has become a part of the entire development process of the state. These activities can serve both to reduce the scale of environmental pollution and improve China's negotiating position in the international arena with regard to climate issues.

THEORY OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

The concept of sustainable development assumes the integration of the economic, environmental, and social spheres. It primarily emphasizes the state's ability to sustain long-term development with focus on the needs of future generations. Sustainable development does not contradict the idea of progress itself, however, it puts the emphasis on a very important element of moderation in the management of available goods and obligations toward future generations. The state's economic policy should encompass the principles of sustainability. Particularly important is the development of a long-term vision of development, taking into account the limitations on the size of resource consumption and the improvement of the existing socio-economic structures, definition of a new spatial order, and development of rational basis for the functioning of the natural environment. The last of the above-

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mentioned elements requires a special highlight, taking into account that it is nature which, as it seems, should set appropriate boundaries for the functioning of economy.

The problem regarding environmental and economic objectives results from the strong link between both systems. Economy uses environmental resources and causes residues in the environment. This process is accompanied, however, by imbalance resulting from taking in too many resources and generating waste exceeding assimilation capabilities of the environment.¹

According to Holger Rogall, ‘sustainable development’ means “ensuring sufficiently high environmental, economic, and socio-cultural standards for all people living today and the future generations within the limits of nature’s tolerance through the implementation of the principle of intragenerational and intergenerational justice”.² The concept of ‘sustainable development’ was defined in a similar vein by Bogusław Fiedor and Romuald Jończy, according to whom it consists in “the maximization of the net benefits of economic development while protecting and ensuring regeneration of the usefulness and quality of natural resources in the long term. Hence, economic development must denote not only an increase in per capita income, but also an improvement of other elements of social welfare. It must also include necessary structural changes in economy and society as a whole”.³

The term ‘sustainable development’ has been broadly presented in the report of the World Commission on Environment and Development from 11th December 1987. According to the accepted definition, sustainable development refers to meeting the present needs without taking the ability to meet the needs away from the future generations.⁴

The concept was developed during the Earth Summit, i.e. the United Nations’ Conference “Environment and Development”, when the following declaration was adopted—*Rio Declaration on Environment and Development*

¹ J. CZERNA-GRYBIEL, “Finansowanie infrastruktury technicznej dla zrównoważonego rozwoju,” *Zeszyty Naukowe Uniwersytetu Szczecińskiego, Finanse, Rynki finansowe, Ubezpieczenia*, 62 (2013): 22.

² HOLGER ROGALL, *Ekonomia zrównoważonego rozwoju. Teoria i praktyka*, transl. JERZY GILEWICZ (Poznań: Wydawnictwo Zysk i S-ka, 2010), 24–25.

³ BOGUSŁAW FIEDOR, and ROMUALD JOŃCZY, “Globalne problemy interpretacji i wdrażania koncepcji sustainable development,” in: *Rozwój zrównoważony. Teoria i praktyka ze szczególnym uwzględnieniem obszarów wiejskich*, ed. BOGUSŁAW FIEDOR and ROMUALD JOŃCZY (Wrocław: Uniwersytet Ekonomiczny we Wrocławiu, 2009), 41.

⁴ *Report of the World Commission on Environment and Development*, United Nations, General Assembly, 11th December 1987, <http://www.un.org/documents/ga/res/42/ares42-187.htm> [accessed 10.07.2014].

(14th June 1992). It states that in order to achieve sustainable development, environmental protection is necessary as an integral part of the development process. It was emphasized that it could not be considered separately from it.⁵

During the conference in Rio de Janeiro, *Agenda 21*, a policy document setting out the strategy of sustainable development on a global scale, was adopted. It emphasized that humanity had found itself at a turning point in history, when the need to refer to the problems associated with the growing gap between and within nations, poverty, hunger, poor health, illiteracy, and deteriorating ecosystems had appeared. *Agenda 21* highlighted the most pressing problems of the present, intending to prepare the world for the challenges that would arise in the 21st century. The document states that the integration of environmental issues and the development will allow, to a greater extent, for meeting the basic needs of the people and improving their standard of living, as well as to better protect and manage ecosystems, creating a secure and prosperous future. No country is able to achieve these objectives alone, therefore global partnership for sustainable development should be realized jointly.⁶

Despite such a comprehensive definition of the concepts, the issue of practical implementation raises doubts. The evaluation of the implementation of guidelines outlined in *Agenda 21* is still far from ideal. Sustainable development has not yet become the main principle which applies to all policy areas. It remains a concept devoid of specific content, which makes its public perception relatively negligible. The main idea may create various misperceptions, becoming a form of ideological manipulation. Its weakness is also the modest range of undertaken activities.⁷ Two overlapping areas may be identified in the discussion on sustainable development. One refers to its meaning and the second is focused on practical aspects, i.e. its implementation. The objective of sustainable development becomes the merge of different interests that do not necessarily interact with each other.⁸

⁵ *Rio Declaration on Environment and Development*, United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, United Nations Documents, 14th June 1992, <http://www.un-documents.net/rio-dec.htm> [accessed: 10.07.2014].

⁶ *Agenda 21*, United Nations Documents, <http://www.un-documents.net/agenda21.htm> [accessed: 10.07.2014].

⁷ ROGALL, *Ekonomia zrównoważonego rozwoju*, p. 49-50.

⁸ CHRISTOPHER J. BARROW, *Environmental Management for Sustainable Development* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 29.

The concept focuses on the implementation of three objectives of economic growth, environmental protection, and health and happiness of people. It is recognized, however, that there is a fundamental conflict in the concept of sustainable development, especially between the desire to take into account environmental constraints and the desire to grow and develop. Thus, the key question that emerges here relates to whether the ambitious plans for the implementation of sustainable development can be achieved in real-life situations in the world and within an appropriate environmental framework.⁹

In consideration on sustainability, Allan Johansson drew attention to two important areas. One of them referred to the needs, mostly of the poor, who should have priority. The second pointed to the recognition of limitations, technological and organizational, of the environment to meet the needs of both present and future generations. According to Johansson, the definition refers to the entirety of transformation needed in the economy and society to reach distant targets. Therefore, the debate on the same technological possibilities and limitations of sustainable development is becoming so significant. It is particularly important to address the problems in relation to the environment, understood not only as a lively nature, but also as a society.¹⁰

CHINA AND THE CONCEPT OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

After the conference in Rio, the Chinese authorities, like many other governments in the world, have developed their own version of *China's Agenda 21*, which provided guidance on the national level. On 25th March 1994, the State Council of the People's Republic of China approved *China's Agenda 21. White Paper on China's Population, Environment and Development in the 21st Century*.¹¹

The *Agenda* consisted of twenty chapters, however four main lines of action may be distinguished, namely:

⁹ *Ibidem*, p. 30.

¹⁰ ALLAN JOHANSSON, *Czysta technologia. Środowisko, technika, przyszłość*, transl. ANDRZEJ DONIEC (Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Naukowo-Techniczne, 1992), 30.

¹¹ 中国21世纪议程. 中国21世纪议程. 中国21世纪人口、环境与发展白皮书 [China's Agenda 21. White Paper on China's Population, Environment and Development in the 21st Century], The Administrative Center for China's Agenda 21, <http://www.acca21.org.cn/cca21pa.html> [accessed: 10.07.2014].

- comprehensive strategy and policy for sustainable development,
- social sustainability,
- economic sustainability, and
- rational use of resources and environmental protection.¹²

On 1st June 2012, China submitted *The People's Republic of China National Report on Sustainable Development*, presenting the results and achievements since 2001 in the implementation of the sustainable development strategy, challenges, and identification of future strategic initiatives. It was emphasized that during the last two decades, China actively sought to react to changes within the country and in the international environment. The state took effective measures related to the restructuring of the economy, improving the lives of the citizens, as well as conserving resources and environment. In the years 2000-2010, the number of people living in absolute poverty has decreased from 94.22 million to 26.88 million. At the same time, there has been a significant improvement in energy efficiency in the most energy-intensive industries. It was also pointed out that China was still a developing country, since the low gross domestic product per capita puts China somewhere near the hundredth country of the world. It was emphasized that still 122 million people lived in poverty. Natural resources and environmental conditions significantly affect the economic development of China. Uneven development conditions between regions and low competence in the development of scientific and technological innovation may be observed. Therefore, China must transform its attitude with regard to development policy, introducing new methods of development. It was stressed that China attached great importance to international cooperation.¹³

The full interpretation of the concept of sustainable development was presented on 24th September 2013, during a meeting of the Leaders Dialogue of the United Nations High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development in New York by the Foreign Minister Wang Yi, who said that the concept of sustainable development had been well known in China. Concepts of "harmony between man and nature and not to drain the pond to catch the fish" have always been an essential component of the cultural tradition. He stressed that sustainable development was the basis for state policy. The Chinese government made it clear that it could not follow the current path,

¹² *Ibidem*.

¹³ 中华人民共和国可持续发展国家报告 [The People's Republic of China National Report on Sustainable Development), National Development and Reform Commission, 1th June 2012, http://www.sdpc.gov.cn/xwzx/xwtt/t20120601_483687.htm [accessed: 11.02.2014].

ignoring environmental pollution, but had to take responsibility both for future generations and the international community. The implementation of scientific development must prioritize human rights and must be based on the promotion of a comprehensive, coordinated, and sustainable development. Efforts should be made to reach economic development while highlighting the importance of environmental protection in order to safeguard the fundamental and long-term interests of the people. He stressed that sustainable development was the only way to implement the 'Chinese Dream.'¹⁴

During the 17th National Congress of the Communist Party of China in 2007, the assumptions of reforms in the long term were presented, emphasizing the need for transformation within the current model of development. The adopted theory of 'harmonious society' (和谐社会, *hexie shehui*) placed the emphasis on sustainable economic growth, development of China's western and central regions, and rural development. The focus was on efforts to achieve a better balance in five areas: the development between urban and rural areas, between regions, between economic and social development, between man and the environment, and between internal development and policy of 'openness' to the world.¹⁵ According to the new vision of development promoted by the Communist Party of China, the society was to become the major beneficiary of a growing economy. The widening gaps in the income and standard of living of the inhabitants of the country may lead to increased social tensions and, consequently, challenging the authorities' position.¹⁶

The coupling between economic development and transformations in other areas is also reflected in the provisions of the 17th National Congress of the Communist Party of China from 2012. CPC General Secretary Hu Jintao said at the time that the general developmental approach of the state should have taken into account the promotion of economic, political, cultural, social, and environmental progress. The primary objective is to achieve social modernization and the great revival of the Chinese nation. Parti-

¹⁴ *Sustainable Development — The Road to Achieve Chinese Dream and Human Progress*, Remarks by H.E. Wang Yi Foreign Minister of the People's Republic of China At the Leaders Dialogue of the United Nations High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development, New York, 24th September 2013, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, 26th September 2013, <http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/eng/wjdt/zyjh/t1081238.shtml> [accessed: 11.02.2014].

¹⁵ ŁUKASZ GACEK, *Bezpieczeństwo energetyczne Chin. Aktywność państwowych przedsiębiorstw na rynkach zagranicznych* (Kraków: Księgarnia Akademicka, 2012), 19.

¹⁶ ŁUKASZ GACEK, *Chińskie elity polityczne w XX wieku* (Kraków: Księgarnia Akademicka, 2009), 297.

cular attention was drawn to putting strong emphasis on environmental issues. It was stressed that ecological progress remained a long-term objective determining the welfare of citizens and the future of the state. Given the limitations on the available resources, serious environmental pollution, and degradation of the ecosystem, China must take action to raise public awareness on environmental issues. Key importance was assigned to the improvement of the development of China's geographic space, promotion of the conservation of all resources, enhancing the protection of the ecosystem and the environment, and strengthening the system to promote ecological progress.¹⁷

Based on the principle of maintaining a balance between population, resources, and environment on the one hand, and the promotion of economic, social, and environmental on the other, the current pace of development should be kept under control and its spatial arrangement should be adjusted. China should initiate a revolution in the areas related to the production and use of energy by promoting energy-efficient and low-carbon development industry, as well as new and renewable sources of energy in building the country's energy security. Ecological environment is an essential condition for sustainable human and social development. Therefore, China should establish a system for the development and protection of geographical space, a system providing the best possible protection of arable lands, and water resources and environmental protection management systems.¹⁸

This topic was developed by the new party leadership—Xi Jinping and Li Keqiang. On 10th September 2013, Prime Minister Li Keqiang said that China should rely on reforms aimed at achieving long-term, sustainable, and healthy development of the economy. The key to the carried out economic reforms must be a proper balance between the role of the government, market, and society. The government should give the market more vitality. The Prime Minister stressed that the focus were the reforms that would allow more people to enjoy their fruit. The issue of environmental pollution is the result of intensive development. However, the government intends to increase efforts to eliminate outdated production capacity and develop sectors related to saving resources and protecting the environment.¹⁹

Given the qualitative goals of sustainable economy, the key issues are social and environmental space. The integration of measures for achieving

¹⁷ 胡锦涛在中国共产党第十八次全国代表大会上的报告 (Xinhua, 17th November 2012).

¹⁸ *Ibidem*.

¹⁹ *China needs reforms for economic development: Premier* (Xinhua, 10th September 2013).

these objectives is a key determinant of the transformation carried out in the framework of development model transformation in China.

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND SOCIAL ISSUES

At the end of 1970s, China initiated reforms changing the existing economic structure of the country. The gradual shift from mechanisms characteristic of planned economies and taking into account a wider degree of market solutions has resulted in a rapid acceleration of economic growth. In the next over three decades, China grew at an annualized rate of about 10%, which was also accompanied by a significant increase in the standard of living of the inhabitants of the country. Recent years, despite a clear economic slowdown, are still characterized by high rates. In 2013, China's GDP reached RMB 67.67 trillion (USD 10.3 trillion), increasing by 6.9% growth as compared to the previous year.²⁰ Projections for the future suggest maintaining the current pace of development.²¹ It will, however, entail the need to undertake reforms toward a more sustainable development model.

In 2014, the share of China's GDP in world GDP accounted for 16.7%.²² The analysis of the Center for Economics and Business Research (CEBR) shows that in 2028, China will become the largest economy in the world, deposing the former leader—the United States. It is worth noting that China would then refer to the glorious tradition of 1890, when it bore the palm.²³

The growing role of China in the global economy is also shown by the fact that since 2013, China took the leading position in the global trade. During this time, the Middle Kingdom increased its trade volume, overtaking the United States. The biggest trade partners of China for years have consistently been the European Union, United States, countries associated in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), and Japan.

Despite these favorable data, China, taking into account the huge population of over 1.3 billion, still remains a developing country. Nevertheless, the dynamic growth of income per capita should be noted here. Only in

²⁰ *China's growth hits 25-year low, within official target* (Xinhua, 19th January 2016).

²¹ *China Focus: China likely to maintain 7% growth for 20 years* (Xinhua, 5th March 2015).

²² *China GDP*, Trading Economics, <http://www.tradingeconomics.com/china/gdp> [accessed: 23.12.2015].

²³ See: *Cebr's World Economic League Table*, Centre for Economics and Business Research (CEBR), 26th December 2013.

1990-2014, GDP per capita increased over twenty-fold, and over the last decade — sixfold.²⁴

Table 1. Comparison of GDP growth dynamics and GDP per capita in 1980-2012.

<i>Year</i>	<i>GDP (USD billion)</i>	<i>GDP per capita (USD)</i>
1981	194	196
1990	359	316
2000	1 205	955
2005	2 269	1 740
2010	6 040	4 515
2011	7 492	5 574
2012	8 462	6 264
2013	9 491	6 992
2014	10 355	7 590

Source: study based on: GDP (current US\$), The World Bank, <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.MKTP.CD/countries> (accessed: 30.01.2016); *GDP per capita (current US\$)*, The World Bank, <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.PCAP.CD> (accessed: 30.01.2016).

In the context of the above-mentioned data, anxiety is related to the unequal distribution of wealth in China. The *Global Wealth Report 2013* prepared by the Swiss bank Credit Suisse, showing the distribution of global wealth, took into account the value of financial and non-financial assets, as well as household debt. This study showed that the average income per capita in China was still almost six times lower than in Europe and more than thirteen times lower than in North America. It should also be noted that this income was less than half the global average. The results showed that the level of global wealth in 2013 amounted to nearly USD 241 trillion, but for China, it accounted for over USD 22 billion. Forecasts predict that the level of global wealth will increase by about 40% over the next five years, reaching USD 334 trillion in 2018. Mainly the emerging markets will be responsible for the growth (29% growth). China alone will generate nearly half of the increase attributable to this group of countries. The report noted, however, that the distribution of wealth in China would continue to proceed

²⁴ *GDP per capita (current US\$)*, The World Bank, <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.PCAP.CD> [accessed: 30.01.2016].

unevenly. By 2018, the number of millionaires in China will nearly double, reaching over 2.1 million people, as compared to 1.1 million today.²⁵

This is undoubtedly an accumulating problem, given that for more than three decades, the differences in the income of the Chinese has been gradually widening. It is well illustrated by the ratio of social inequality, the so-called Gini coefficient, which is the measure of income inequality. Its value is between 0 and 1, where 0 means complete uniformity of the distribution of income, i.e. everyone's income is at the same level, while 1 means perfect inequality, where one person gets all the income and the other gets no income. The coefficient may also be expressed in a point form, where the scale covers the range from 0 to 100 or a percentage. In this case, the corresponding range of values is used.

The Gini coefficient for China proves that since the launch of Deng Xiaoping's reforms initiated by the end of the 1970s, an increasing diversity in per capita income of China follows. In 1981, it amounted to 29.1 points, while in 2009 already 42.1 points.²⁶ Anxiety may be raised by the fact that China is located in the upper part of the 30-45 range denoting average income stratification, where GDP growth translates into the increase in the purchasing power of a large part of society, but at the same time a significant group of people excluded from social life may be observed. Range within 45-70 refers to the economies of countries characterized by a high or very high dissection of income, which means that economic growth benefits only a narrow social group. At the opposite extreme are the economies in the range of 20-30, which can be described as welfare states.²⁷

The ongoing process of industrialization and the accompanying increase in the level of urbanization creates new social needs. According to statistics of the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS), China's population in 2014 was 1,368 billion. During this time, 749 million of the population (54,77%) lived in urban areas.²⁸ For comparison, in 1978, the urbanization level did not exceed 18%. Since the late 1970s, the level of urbanization in China has been gradually

²⁵ See: *Global Wealth Report 2013*, Research Institute Credit Suisse, Zurich, October 2013.

²⁶ *GINI index* (World Bank estimate), The World Bank, <http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SI.POV.GINI> [accessed: 25.12.2015].

²⁷ MAGDALENA KINGA STAWICKA, "Ekonomiczne rozwarstwienie społeczeństwa Unii Europejskiej po światowym kryzysie gospodarczym – problematyka rozkładu dochodów," in: *Nierówności społeczne a wzrost gospodarczy. Modernizacja dla spójności społeczno-ekonomicznej w czasach kryzysu* (Rzeszów: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Rzeszowskiego, 2012), 128.

²⁸ *Statistical Communiqué of the People's Republic of China on the 2014 National Economic and Social Development*, National Bureau of Statistics of China, 26 February 2015, http://www.stats.gov.cn/english/PressRelease/201502/t20150228_687439.html [accessed: 30.11.2015].

increasing, by an average of 1% per year.²⁹ The forecasts of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences suggest that the level of urbanization in China only by 2018 will exceed 60%.³⁰ It is worth mentioning more than 274 million (2014) migrant workers, who constitute nearly 20% of the total population in China. The majority are young and middle-aged people. Their average monthly salary is not even half the national average.³¹

The issue of stratification has become one of the key challenges for the Communist Party of China. In the report of the Chinese government from 5th March 2014, Prime Minister Li Keqiang stressed the need to develop a system and mechanisms to integrate the development of urban and rural areas, and pave the way for urbanization processes. A new type of urbanization should refer first to the interests of society. Furthermore, it takes into account, among others, the protection of the ecological environment. The plan provides for, among others, development of transport infrastructure, protection of water resources, as well as the development of energy services and utilities.³²

In March 2014, the CPC Central Committee and the State Council announced the first official plan for the urbanization of China—*National New-type Urbanization Plan (2014-2020)*. It states that in accordance with the plan of ‘green development’ (绿色 发展, *lǜsè fazhan*), China intends to extend the construction of green cities by propagating environmental solutions, promoting the development of ‘green’ mechanisms of production and consumption, and ‘green’ lifestyle. Actions to improve the environment and access to clean drinking water for all the inhabitants of the cities are assumed.³³

It seems that the issue of coupling between the environment and urbanization will determine the success of the implemented reforms. Environmental protection needs to be a component part of the ongoing process of urbanization.

²⁹ “China should follow sustainable urbanization path,” Xinhua, *China Daily*, 7th September 2013.

³⁰ “China’s urbanization rate to hit 60% by 2018,” Xinhua, *China Daily*, 27th December 2013.

³¹ *Statistical Communiqué of the People’s Republic of China on the 2014 National Economic and Social Development*, National Bureau of Statistics of China, 26 February 2015, http://www.stats.gov.cn/english/PressRelease/201502/t20150228_687439.html (accessed: 30.11.2015).

³² 政府工作报告. 2014年3月5日在第十二届全国人民代表大会第二次会议上国务院总理 李克强 [Report on the Work of the Government. Delivered at the Second Session of the Twelfth National People’s Congress on March 5, 2014], Xinhua, 14th March 2014.

³³ See: 授权发布: 国家新型城镇化规划 (2014–2020年) [National New-type Urbanization Plan (2014–2020)], Xinhua, 16th March 2014.

Apart from obvious differences in living standards in the countryside and in the cities, a number of issues relating to the differences in development between regions are highlighted. Areas to the east of the country are developing much faster than their counterparts in the interior of the country. It is impacted by a number of factors. Provinces on the east coast have a higher concentration of population, relatively favorable geographical and climatic conditions, and better absorption of capital, which allows them to build a competitive advantage in relation to the interior regions. In 1999, China's former President Jiang Zemin, presented a plan for the development of the western regions, which was to contribute to a more dynamic development policy in this part of the country.

SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION

In the context of building a sustainable economy, issues relating to environmental protection are of high importance. China accounted for 30% % of global carbon dioxide (CO₂), 35% of sulfur dioxide (SO₂), 25% of nitrogen oxide (NO_x), and 35% PM2.5 dust air pollution. In the ranking of the Environmental Performance Index—EPI, classifying 178 countries in the world in terms of the degree of purity and quality of the environment, prepared every two years by Yale and Columbia Universities, China was placed on the 118th position. The survey methodology has been developed on the basis of twenty separate indicators in nine categories, including, among others, air quality, forests, fisheries, climate, and energy. Points were assigned from 0 to 100, wherein the higher the number the better the outcome. Based on these indicators, China received 43 points. For comparison, Switzerland, placed at the topmost position, received the score of over 87 points. Poland ranked 30th with a score of nearly 70 points.³⁴

China recognized the fact that development policy must take environmental costs into account. Implementation of the objectives requires the development of appropriate technology in a way that maintains the economic competitiveness of the state.

In September 2009, the Chinese leader, Hu Jintao, in a speech at the UN forum said that climate change, being closely related to the question of

³⁴ See: Environmental Performance Index, <http://www.epi.yale.edu/epi> [accessed: 01.05.2014].

human existence and development, is a challenge for all countries in the world. Climate change is not just an environmental issue, but most of all development.³⁵ In a similar vein, Prime Minister Wen Jiabao said on 27th February 2011, that China would never seek to achieve a high level of economic growth at the expense of the environment, as this could result in an unbalanced development, accompanied by excess capacity and intense consumption of resources. Therefore, the central government would adopt new criteria for the evaluation of local governments, paying more attention to the issue of productivity, protection of the environment, and improvement of the living standards of citizens. He stressed the need to change the criteria for the assessment of officials, taking into account the feelings of the society itself.³⁶ In early March 2011, Wen Jiabao outlined the main objectives of improving energy efficiency in the country. Key points related to the reduction of energy consumption per GDP unit by 16% within five years to 2015, reduction of carbon dioxide emission by 17% in 2010-2015, as well as reduction of carbon dioxide emission by 40-45% by 2020, as compared to 2005 emission.³⁷ In June 2015 China has announced a target to cut its GHG emissions per unit of gross domestic product by 60-65% from 2005 level by 2030. It also would increase the share of non-fossil fuels in primary energy consumption to around 20% by 2030, and peak CO₂ emissions around the same point.³⁸

Issues related to environmental protection are governed by the *Environmental Protection Law of the People's Republic of China* from 26th December 1989. The document declared that the environmental protection plans formulated by the state must be coupled with economic and social development plans.³⁹

In April 2014, the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress adopted a revised version of the *Environmental Protection Law*. According

³⁵ *Join Hands to Address Climate Challenge*, Statement by H.E. Hu Jintao President of the People's Republic of China At the Opening Plenary Session of The United Nations Summit on Climate Change, New York, 22th September 2009, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, 23th September 2009, <http://www.fmprc.gov.cn/eng/wjfb/zjzg/gjs/gjxw/t606275.shtml> [accessed: 08.11.2013].

³⁶ *Premier Wen: China targets slower growth to focus on people*, Xinhua, 27th February 2011.

³⁷ *China announces 16 pct cut in energy consumption per unit of GDP by 2015*, 5th March 2011, http://www.gov.cn/english/2011-03/05/content_1816947.htm [accessed: 12.10.2013].

³⁸ 中国宣布后2020气候目标：碳排放强度下降60%-65% (Zhongguo xuanbu hou 2020 qihou mubiao: tan paifang qiangu xiajiang), 北极星节能环保网 (Beijixing jieneng huanbao wang), 1st July 2015, <http://huanbao.bjx.com.cn/news/20150701/636379.shtml> [accessed: 25.11.2015].

³⁹ 中华人民共和国环境保护法 [Environmental Protection Law of the People's Republic of China], 26th December 1989, Ministry of Environmental Protection of the People's Republic of China, http://www.zhb.gov.cn/ztbdrdzl/2010sdn/zcfl/201001/t20100113_184209.htm [accessed: 24.04.2014].

to the amendment, economic and social development should be coordinated with environmental protection. China has announced studies on the impact of environmental change on the health of citizens. An announcement of the establishment of an early warning system, which monitors the state of the environment and the health of the people of the country was also made. It mentioned toughening penalties for violations of applicable environmental standards. The changes transferred greater responsibility for environmental issues to local governments. Under the new rules, officials may lose their job or be demoted for covering up environmental problems.⁴⁰

A qualitative change in the Chinese approach to environmental issues took place in June 2006, when China published the *Environmental Protection in China from 1996 to 2005*. It also said that raw material shortages and environmental problems were an obstacle to the development of the state. The Chinese government announced the acceleration of the ‘three transformations’ (三个转变, *san ge zhuanbian*). The first pointed to moving away from emphasizing only economic growth while ignoring environmental protection in favor of collating those two elements. The second emphasized the modification of a model putting environmental protection behind economic growth in the direction of their synchronization. The third concerned the change in the use of mainly administrative measures for environmental protection in favor of comprehensive recognition of legal, economic, and technical tools, and necessary administrative measures in solving environmental problems.⁴¹

The fifth generation of party leaders fully recognizes that economic development must also assume the protection of the environment. On 24th May 2013, President Xi Jinping said that China would not sacrifice the environment for the achievement of interim economic development. It was important to construct a balance between these two spheres. Xi also spoke of the responsibility for future generations.⁴²

An important step in the fight against environmental pollution were the new regulations approved by the State Council on 10th September 2013 (*The*

⁴⁰ 中华人民共和国环境保护法自2015年1月1日起施行, The Central People’s Government of the People’s Republic of China, 24th April 2014, http://www.gov.cn/xinwen/2014-04/25/content_2666328.htm [accessed: 25.04.2014].

⁴¹ 中国的环境保护(1996–2005) [Environmental Protection in China (1996–2005)], June 2006, *Zhongguo Zhengfu Baipishu 2005–2006*, (White Papers of Chinese Government), Information Office of the State Council of the People’s Republic of China, Foreign Languages Press, Beijing 2007, p. 448.

⁴² “President Xi pledges not to sacrifice environment,” Xinhua, *China Daily*, 24th May 2013.

Airborne Pollution Prevention and Control Action Plan (2013-17). The plan provides for a reduction in coal consumption, as well as the closure of some industrial plants, factories, and steelworks. The emphasis was on the development of the gas and nuclear sector. Within five years, air pollution in large cities of China is to be significantly reduced.⁴³

The fact that China attaches great importance to the development of clean energy is evidenced by the fact that for several years, the country has been a global leader in green energy, noting the highest expenditures in the development of clean technologies. In 2015, global investment in renewable energy sources amounted to nearly USD 329 billion, while China alone accounted for more than USD 110 billion, according to data from Bloomberg New Energy Finance. Most of the investments concerned sectors related to wind and solar power.⁴⁴

At this moment, it should be emphasized that China has made a number of projects in the development of clean energy sources. The plan for development of renewable energy sources defined in the 12th Five-Year Plan (2011-2015) emphasized the development of hydropower, wind and solar power, and biomass. This resulted in demonstration projects related to green energy and pilot programs in residential renewable energy. The plan provides for the development of the shale gas and nuclear energy sector.⁴⁵

On the other hand, however, it should be emphasized that China's economy is largely based on coal, which covers nearly 70% of the demand for energy. In this situation, the success of green policy will determine first of all the changes taking place in this sector, particularly in the context of measures for the improvement of the efficiency of the use of coal and the development of advanced coal technologies.⁴⁶

⁴³ 国务院关于印发大气污染防治行动计划的通知 [The Airborne Pollution Prevention and Control Action Plan (2013-17)], The Central People's Government of the People's Republic of China, 10th September 2013, http://www.gov.cn/zwggk/2013-09/12/content_2486773.htm [accessed: 18.09.2013].

⁴⁴ *Clean energy defies fossil fuel price crash to attract record \$329bn global investment in 2015*, Bloomberg New Energy Finance, 14th January 2016, http://about.bnef.com/press-releases/clean-energy-defies-fossil-fuel-price-crash-to-attract-record-329bn-global-investment-in-2015/?utm_medium=microsite&utm_campaign=BNEF2015&utm_source=PRlink&utm_content=link&utm_term= [accessed: 30.01.2016].

⁴⁵ 中国应对气候变化的政策与行动 2012年度报告 [China's Policies and Actions for Addressing Climate Change (2012)], The National Development and Reform Commission, November 2011, http://www.china.org.cn/chinese/2012-11/22/content_27193717.htm [accessed: 13.11.2013].

⁴⁶ See: ŁUKASZ GACEK, "Sektor węglowy w systemie energetycznym Chin — perspektywy rozwojowe," *Roczniki Humanistyczne* 62 (2014), 9: 83–101.

CONCLUSIONS

The concept of sustainable development does not set clearly defined boundaries. It shows that we are dealing with a process extended in time, which takes into account the needs and aspirations of future generations. China intends, for this purpose, to create suitable conditions for economic and social development, which consider the protection of the natural environment. These activities are related to the elimination of undesirable economic activities which carry a risk for human health and life.

The primary objective involves the integration of processes of economic, social, and ecological development. The emphasis is on promoting farming methods which take into account the limits set by the nature. At the same time, however, the implementation of environmental objectives cannot be done at the expense of a visible reduction in the rate of development, which may result in an increase in social tensions. Maintaining dynamic economic development while promoting the environmental policy remains an important element from the standpoint of the Communist Party in the context of the legitimacy of power.

It seems that key role in the implementation of policies for sustainable development has to be played by the local governments that have taken over a number of powers in this matter. They are responsible for the state of the environment in areas under their jurisdiction. But this is just a theory, given that the policy of the central government often differs from the policy of the representatives of local governments. In the pursuit of economic growth, which remains one of the most important determinants of evaluating the effectiveness of their actions, they are often flexibly guided by ecological principles, protecting businesses posing threats to the environment.

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STRATEGIA CHIN DLA ZRÓWNOWAŻONEGO ROZWOJU

Streszczenie

Artykuł dotyczy określenia metod stosowanych przez Chiny celem realizacji zrównoważonego rozwoju poprzez łączenie rozwoju gospodarczego i społecznego w sprawach związanych z ochroną środowiska. Partia komunistyczna, w pełni uznając problem zanieczyszczenia środowiska, rozpoczęła działania zmierzające do rozwiązania tego problemu. Chiny wypracowują własne mechanizmy w zakresie ochrony środowiska, dostosowane do warunków krajowych. Częścią całego procesu rozwoju państwa stało się promowanie odnawialnych źródeł energii. Działania te mogą służyć zarówno zmniejszeniu zanieczyszczenia środowiska, jak i poprawie negocjacyjnej pozycji Chin na arenie międzynarodowej w kwestiach klimatycznych.

Słowa kluczowe: Chiny, zrównoważony rozwój, ochrona środowiska, energia.

Key words: China, Sustainable Development, environmental protection, energy.