

China pledges peaceful development in Antarctica



Chinese Vice Premier Zhang Gaoli (L) addresses the opening ceremony of the 40th Antarctic Treaty Consultative Meeting (ATCM) in Beijing, capital of China, May 23, 2017. [Photo/Xinhua]

The Chinese government reiterated its commitment to the peaceful development and research of Antarctica as the 40th Antarctic Treaty Consultative Meeting (ATCM) opened in Beijing Tuesday.

This is China's first time hosting the meeting, an annual decision-making mechanism established under the the Antarctic Treaty.

Peaceful, stable, green and sustainable development of Antarctica is in line with the common interests for mankind and a strong commitment to future generations, said Chinese Vice Premier Zhang Gaoli when addressing the opening ceremony.

China acceded to the Antarctic Treaty in 1983 and became a consultative member two years later.

In the past three decades, China has sent nearly 6,000 professionals to Antarctica since the nation dispatched its first Antarctic expedition team in November 1984.

Chinese leaders have stressed on various occasions the need to better protect and research Antarctica due to its special location and environment. To review its progress on Antarctica, China on Monday published the first full report on its study and use of the region over the past 30 years, titled "China's Antarctic Activities."

According to the report by China's State Oceanic Administration, the country has so far opened four research bases – the Great Wall station, Zhongshan station, Kunlun station and Taishan station – and established the Polar Research Institute of China in Shanghai in addition to sailing the icebreaker Xuelong (Snow Dragon).

The number of papers on Antarctic studies published by Chinese scientists and included by the Science Citation Index (SCI) has risen from 19 in 1999 to 157 in 2016, leading China to rank among the top 10 countries.

China has a relatively short history of study in Antarctica, but the progress it has achieved, especially in the past few years, has been huge, said Qin Weijia, director of the Chinese Arctic and Antarctic Administration.

China also raised its financial inputs in Antarctic research. In the past 15 years from 2001 to 2016, China invested 310 million yuan (about 45 million U.S. dollars) in related projects – 18 times the total for the years 1985 to 2000.

Antarctic research has remained one of the most difficult topics due to the lack of research data, said Qin.

China is not yet a global leader in Antarctic research, Qin said, but as the country grows in technology and overall national power, it is willing to contribute more to a better understanding of Antarctica.

China pays close attention to cooperation and sharing of information in the study of Antarctica. The Chinese National Arctic and Antarctic Data Center has provided data for more than 100 international projects and more than 10 countries.

"In past years, China has cooperated with more and more countries in various aspects such as policy making, expeditions and scientific studies," said China's Vice Foreign Minister Liu Zhenmin.

According to "China's Antarctic Activities," from 2016 to 2020, China plans to elevate its Antarctic activities to a higher level, including installing new Antarctic stations and deploying new and advanced icebreakers.

"Down the road, China is willing to join hands with the rest of the international community in understanding, protecting and using Antarctica," said the report.

Some 400 delegates from 44 countries and 10 international organizations which have signed the Antarctic Treaty attended the 40th ATCM in Beijing.

Xi calls for more replicable reform practices

Chinese President Xi Jinping Tuesday stressed the importance of pilot reform while calling for more reform practices that could be replicated and promoted.

Xi, also general secretary of the Communist Party of China (CPC) Central Committee and chairman of the Central Military Commission, made the remarks at the 35th meeting of the Central Leading Group for Deepening Overall Reform, which he heads.

Li Keqiang, Liu Yunshan and Zhang Gaoli, all members of the Standing Committee of the Political Bureau of the CPC Central Committee and deputy heads of the leading group, also attended the meeting.

A guideline on deepening reform of the educational system was adopted at the meeting, aimed to cultivate students' abilities in lifetime learning and creative thinking, as well as the ability to adapt to the times.

Educational reform should update the methods of school running as well as management mechanisms to promote comprehensive development, according to a statement issued after the meeting.

In a separate topic, the leading group called for enhanced efforts to allow foreign investors easier access to China's key sectors via a "negative list" approach.

The statement outlined several sectors that should further open to foreign investment, including services, manufacturing and mining.

The leading group also urged standardization of Chinese firms' overseas operations, urging the formation of a supervision system featuring clear demarcation of rights and obligations and effective risk control.

According to the meeting, a long-term supervision and early warning system should be established to keep an eye on resources and environmental constraints on economic development. Environmental monitoring should be conducted in a scientific way with collection of reliable data.

The leading group also vowed to push for establishment of the personal information and asset system, and introduce information rating and a traceable security mechanism to ensure that personal information is safe and used properly.

To improve air quality in the Beijing-Tianjin-Hebei region with coordinated efforts, the leading group called for efforts to conduct a pilot program on

setting up a cross-region environmental protection agency.

Environmental regulation in the region should apply unified standards, assessment, monitoring and law enforcement.

With the principle of prioritizing environmental protection and proper use of resources, the leading group called for use of market-based and paid-use mechanisms to develop maritime areas and uninhabited islands. Certain such regions that need special protection are prohibited from development.

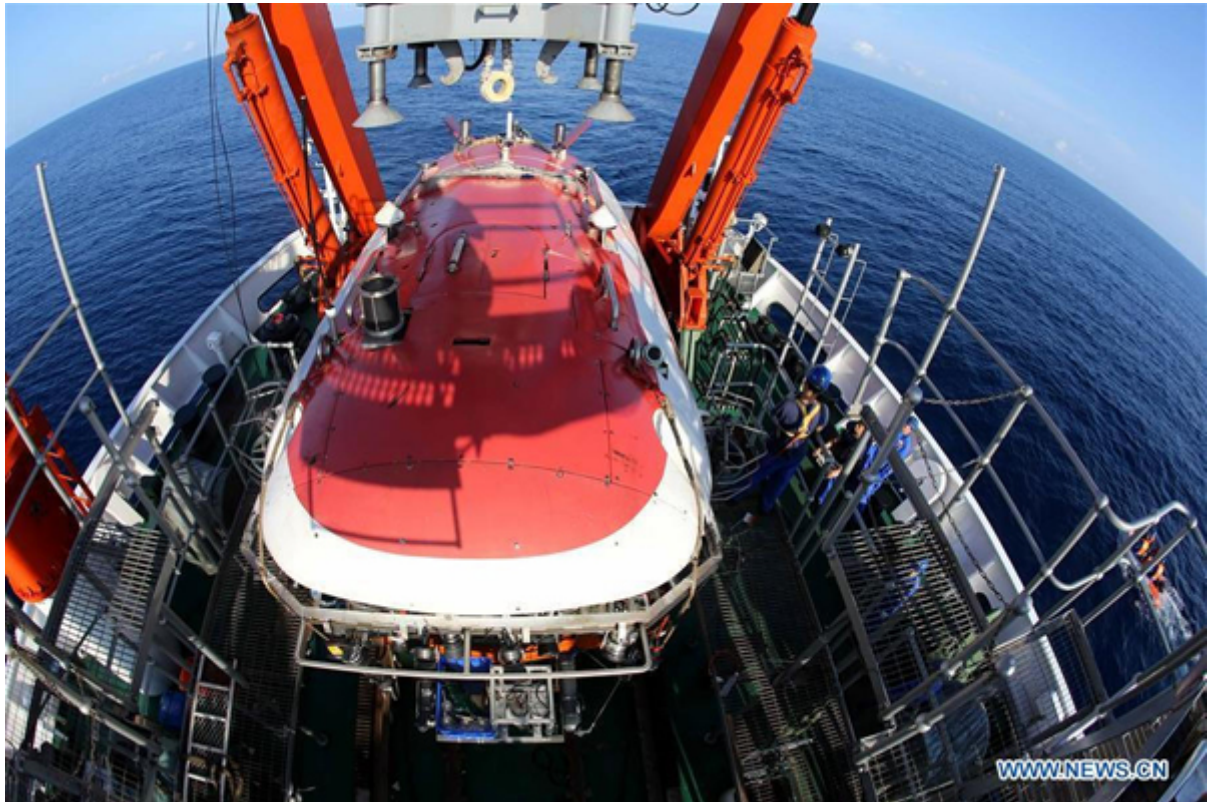
The statement also said time has been ripe to officially establish the system of public interest litigation by prosecutors after nearly two years of pilot reform.

In July 2015, the Supreme People's Procuratorate began the pilot program that allowed prosecutors in 13 provincial divisions to institute public interest litigation in civil and administrative cases.

So far, prosecutors have filed public interest lawsuits related to environmental protection, food and drug safety, state assets and state land use.

Abundant case samples and rich experience have been gained and the procedural mechanism well tested, according to the statement, which called for legal guarantees for procuratorates to file such litigation.

[Jiaolong plumbs deepest region of the ocean](#)



Jiaolong, China's manned submersible, is about to dive into the South China Sea, May 10, 2017. [File Photo/Xinhua]

The Jiaolong, China's manned submersible, dived in the Mariana Trench on Tuesday, making the first of a series dives for the third stage of the country's 38th oceanic expedition.

The craft reached a depth of 4.8 kilometers at 9:49 a.m. and remained submerged for about nine hours in all, said Tang Jialing, the pilot of the Jiaolong.

The Mariana Trench—in the western Pacific Ocean about 200 km southwest of Guam—is the site of Challenger Deep, the deepest valley in the ocean. Tuesday's dive was made along the northern slope of the 11-km-deep valley.

In the next few days, the Jiaolong will make another dive to 6.3 kilometers and three more to 6.7 kilometers in the Marina Trench.

During these dives, it will collect samples of seawater, sediment, rocks and deep sea creatures to study the trench's geochemical and biological activity, Tang said. In later missions, the Jiaolong will retrieve a deep-sea sampler planted there at a depth of 6 km last year.

Next, the expedition will sail to the Yap Trench, on the southern tip of the Marina Trench, and make five more dives.

The 38th oceanic expedition, which began on Feb. 6, is the longest and includes the most missions yet for the Jiaolong. The first of its three stages took place in the Indian Ocean for 59 days, and the second in the South China Sea for 34 days, according to China's National Deep Sea Center.

The third stage began on May 16, when the scientific expedition ship Xiangyanghong 09 set sail for the Mariana and Yap trenches carrying the submersible and 96 scientists. The entire expedition is planned to end on June 9, when the Xiangyanghong 09 returns to port.

The deep sea is often regarded as Earth's last frontier. Its exploration can yield better understanding of how organisms adapt and live in the world's most extreme environment, said Wu Changbin, commander of the expedition's third stage.

The ocean's floor in the Mariana Trench is dark place with water temperatures from 1 to 4 C and atmospheric pressure 1,000 times greater than at the sea's surface.

Yet life blossoms, due to hot water vents that emit chemicals such as hydrogen sulfide, which bacteria and other microbes can feed on and in turn support a variety of exotic creatures ranging from giant amoebas to bioluminescent fish.

Chinese scientists discovered 27 such vents in the Indian Ocean during the first stage of the expedition. In the South China Sea, they found rare bio examples such as sea lily and a branch of red coral attached to polymetallic nodules—clusters of minerals containing more than 10 elements, ranging from cobalt to manganese.

The Jiaolong, named after a mythical dragon, reached its maximum depth yet of 7,062 meters in the Mariana Trench in June 2012. China is building a new mother ship to operate and support the Jiaolong, and it is expected to enter service in 2019.

[Asia/Oceania anti-doping conference closes in China](#)

Government representatives from Asia and Oceania have gathered in east China's Hangzhou to discuss ways to boost international cooperation on anti-doping in sports.

More than 80 people from over 20 countries in the Asian and Oceanian region and relevant international organizations, such as the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA), attended the 14th Asia/Oceania Region Intergovernmental Ministerial Meeting on Anti-Doping in Sport, which took place at the Zhejiang provincial capital on May 22 and 23.

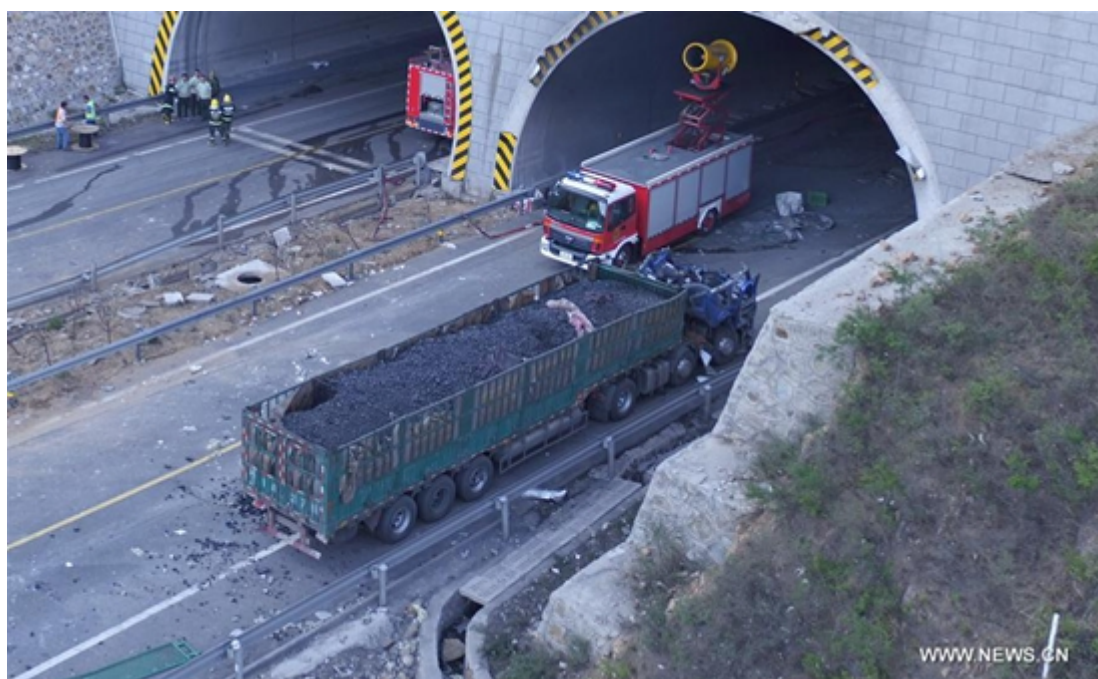
Addressing the opening of the two-day meeting, Li Yingchuan, deputy minister of the State General Administration of Sport of China, stressed that the Chinese government has always adopted "zero tolerance" policy towards doping

and pledged to strengthen collaboration with relevant parties including the International Olympic Committee (IOC), the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) and other Asian/Oceanian countries in the fight against doping.

WADA officials introduced its future work plan at the meeting, and the participants exchanged opinions on enhancing cooperation.

Officials from Hangzhou municipal government also briefed the delegates on the city's preparations for the 2022 Asian Games.

[12 dead, 15 injured in China oil tanker explosion](#)



Rescuers clean the accident site of a truck collision and explosion on the highway linking cities of Zhangjiakou and Shijiazhuang in Laiyuan, north China's Hebei Province, May 23, 2017. Twelve people were killed and 15 others injured in the truck collision. The accident happened at around 6:20 a.m., when an oil tanker rear-ended a coal truck in a tunnel of the highway linking cities of Zhangjiakou and Shijiazhuang, according to the government of Laiyuan County. [Xinhua/Zhu Xudong]

Twelve people were killed and 15 others injured in a truck collision in north China's Hebei Province Tuesday morning, local authorities said.

The accident happened at around 6:20 a.m., when an oil tanker rear-ended a coal truck in a tunnel of the highway linking cities of Zhangjiakou and Shijiazhuang, according to the government of Laiyuan County.

The collision caused an explosion and fire, killing 12 and injuring three on

the site. Another 12 people were slightly injured when the explosion damaged their homes nearby.

Further investigation and response work are underway.