

Environmental Performance Review of China:
Lessons Learned from Yunnan Province Experience
Kunming, 10 August, 2005

China's State Environmental Protection Administration and the Organisation of Economic Co-operation and Development organised a workshop, 9-10 August 2005 in Kunming, to discuss experience with environmental performance assessment in Yunnan Province and its implications for conducting an OECD Environmental Performance Review of China. The workshop benefited from a discussion in a workshop organised by the Asian Development Bank/United Nations Environmental Programme, 8-9 August 2005, on an environmental performance assessment of Yunnan Province that was conducted as part of the Greater Mekong Sub-region Project. Participants included representatives of SEPA, OECD, ADB, UNEP, Yunnan EPB and other departments, NGOs as well as other national and international experts.

1. The overall conclusion of the workshop was that the environmental performance assessment of Yunnan provides a good basis for undertaking an OECD Environmental Performance Review of China.
2. Experience from Yunnan shows that China has positive experiences in environmental management of interest to OECD countries, and that OECD countries experience would be useful to help China to address some of the environmental challenges it faces.
3. Assessing environmental performance must take account of the broader social and economic context. In particular, the extent to which environment is integrated into economic and sectoral policies requires careful examination. The views of economic organisations like OECD can be helpful in supporting the development of a mix of regulatory and economic instruments for achieving environmental objectives that are consistent with a market-based economy.
4. Assessing environmental performance can assist environment ministries/agencies
 - By identifying achievements and challenges in the implementation of environmental policies
 - By promoting a more results-oriented approach
 - By promoting greater accountability
 - By facilitating integration of environmental concerns into sectoral policies.
5. An important part of performance assessment involves assessing the efficiency and effectiveness of government actions to achieve results.
6. Environmental information in Yunnan was not perfect but provided a good basis, together with other information, to conduct an environmental performance assessment. Nevertheless, environmental data for China would have to be carefully interpreted taking into account its quality and reliability, and the purpose for which it was being used. Some core data and indicators should use international definitions and methodologies, but other national indicators would also be important.
7. In conducting environmental performance reviews, it is crucial to distinguish between intentions, actions and results. The pressure-state-response model provides a useful framework for EPRs.
8. It will be important for OECD and SEPA to maintain close cooperation throughout the review process. OECD would need to provide support to SEPA in order to conduct the EPR of China. SEPA would need to provide OECD with the information required.
9. Effective dissemination of the findings of environmental performance assessments/reviews by the Chinese authorities would help to mobilise public and political support for achieving environmental objectives.
10. While the ADB and OECD approaches share many features they also have some differences:
 - Both OECD and ADB assess performance in relation to domestic objectives and international commitments that the country has accepted; however, in addition ADB uses a rating scheme
 - The OECD approach to "peer review" is based on an inter-governmental process of solidarity and mutual support in achieving environmental objectives; the ADB approach aims to establish a consensus within the reviewed country or Province.