THE SYSTEM OF XIAOKANG INDICATORS: A FRAMEWORK TO MEASURE CHINA'S PROGRESS

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“Xiaokang” is a word bearing distinctive Chinese characteristics. Over 2000 years ago, this word featured one of the Chinese’ ideals for a society in which people worked hard for prosperity of their own families, led a well-off life, and enjoyed orderliness of the environment. Now, China has set the development goal for the first twenty years of this century to build a moderately prosperous society, or “Xiaokang society”, in all aspects that benefits over one billion population. Xiaokang society implies that the society must put people first and take the all-round development of people as its hard core. In building such a society, China will witness a more developed economy and expanded democracy, more advanced science, educational and culture achievements, higher degree of social harmony, more prosperous life of people, and promotion of more energy-saving and environment-friendly.

To measure the progress of China’s development process, we have constructed a set of indicators aiming at measuring and monitoring the building of a moderately prosperous society in all aspects, “a System of Xiaokang Indicators” for short. The system contains 23 indicators covering 6 aspects from economic development, social harmony, quality of life, democracy and legal system, culture and education, to resources and environment.

For the aspect of economic development, 5 indicators are adopted (per capita GDP, share of R&D expenses in GDP, share of tertiary economy, proportion of urban residents, urban registered unemployment rate) in order to reflect the progress of economic development in 5 areas including economic growth, innovation of science and technology, industrial structure, structure of population, and employment.
For the aspect of social harmony, 5 indicators are selected (Gini coefficient, ratio of urban residents’ income to rural residents’ income, coefficient of disparity of economic development among regions, coverage of basic social insurance, sex ratio of graduates from senior middle school) in order to reflect the harmony of society in 5 areas including income gap, urban-rural divide, regional divide, social security, and gender disparity.

For the aspect of quality of life, 5 indicators are used (per capital disposable income, Engel coefficient, housing space per capita, under-five child mortality rate, life expectancy) in order to measure the quality of people’s life in 5 areas including income level, consumption structure, housing conditions, public sanitation conditions and people’s health conditions.

For the aspect of democracy and legal system, 2 indicators are selected (civilians’ satisfaction for self democratic rights, index of public security) in order to reflect the status of democracy and legal system.

For the aspect of culture and education, 3 indicators (share of value added of cultural sectors in GDP, share of households’ expenses on cultural, educational, and recreational services in total expenses, average number of years receiving education) to reflect the progress of culture and education in 3 areas including development of cultural industry, social services, and education.

For the aspect of resources and environment, 3 indicators are selected (total energy consumption for every 10 000 yuan of GDP produced, index of constant arable land space, quality of environment) in order to measure sustainable development in areas of efficiency of resources use and environment quality.

The above 23 indicators present the different aspects of the development of a society and fit into an integrated system of indicators to measure the societal progress in an all-round way. These indicators constrain and reinforce each other. Based on this framework, we have made an estimation of the progress of the construction process of Xiaokang society in China. Taking 100 as the base, the result shows that the attainment level of Xiaokang society rose from 59.3 in 2000 to 72.7 in 2007.