

Ocean policy in China and its response to UNCLOS

China is situated in the eastern Asian continent with a land territory of 9.6 million square kilometers and a population of 1.3 billion. From north to south, China borders an internal sea, the Bohai Sea, and three semi-enclosed seas, the Yellow Sea, the East China Sea, and the South China Sea. China has a coastline of more than 18,000 kilometers and an island coastline of over 14,000 kilometers. These coastlines, together with numerous bays and gulfs, provide China with favorable natural conditions to develop marine industries. By 1996, the gross industrial and agricultural output of coastal cities and countries accounted for approximately 60% of national gross output value, which has grown from 6 billion yuan (RMB) in 1978 to 400 billion yuan(RMB) at the end of 2001, with its growth rate far higher than that of GDP in China. However, China's economy has come at the high cost of its natural resources and environment. China's ecological health and wealth of natural resources have experienced tremendous strain and depletion.

On 15th May 1996, Standing Committee of the National People's Congress ratified the *United Nations Convention of Law of the Sea (UNCLOS)*. In order to harmonize the marine legislation with the provisions of UNCLOS, Chinese government issued a series of laws and regulations to guide its ocean management. These include the *Law of PRC on the Territorial Sea and the Contiguous Zone* enacted in 1992(1992 TS/CZ Law), the *Law of the PRC on the Exclusive Economic Zone and the Continental Shelf* in 1998 (1998 EEZ/CS law), the *Law of PRC on Marine Environment Protection* (MEPL), *Law of PRC on the Use of Sea Areas* (Sea Areas Law) and the *Law of PRC*

on Fisheries (fisheries Law) etc. Besides adopting national marine laws, China has also issued a number of important documents setting up the framework for ocean management and the most important one is *China Ocean Agenda 21*. China's marine policies are most comprehensively outlined in China Ocean Agenda 21 adopted in 1996 as the specification of China Agenda 21 in the ocean arena. In May 1998, China promulgated an ocean policy White Paper, the Development of China's marine Programs, for the first time since 1949. These laws and policy initiatives provide principles and detailed guidelines to address ongoing ocean issues. As one of the largest countries with the greatest population in the world, China has taken steps to participate in various forms of cooperation, and is playing a more and more active role in international affairs. China has endorsed the Agenda 21, the Biodiversity Convention etc. UNCLOS provides China with an opportunity to consolidate its links with the world, and a vital opportunity to develop its "Blue Economy". This enabled it to take part in world marine affairs, and more importantly, to pursue a sustainable development strategy consistent with international standards.

UNCLOS on the other hand provides challenges for China in several areas among which delimitation of exclusive economic zone and continental shelf are the most contentious ones. In the speech, several hot issues, such as oil and gas exploitation in the continental shelf of East China Sea, fishery resources contradiction in Yellow sea and delimitation of exclusive of economic zone in South China Sea will be introduced respectively. Green Algae bloom in Qingdao before Olympic game will also be illuminated. The speech will be spread out as follows:

1. Status of sea areas in China

1.1 Geographical and biological features of the Bohai Sea and three semi-enclosed seas

1.2 Social and economic dependence on the sea areas

2. Ocean management of China

2.1 government management in China

Functions of Oceanic Bureau, Bureau of Maritime Administration, Fishery bureau and Ministry of Environment Protection

2.2 ocean-related judicial claims in China

3. Ocean laws and policies review in China

4. Participation in international cooperation

5. Several hot issues

5.1 Oil and gas exploitation in the continental shelf of East China Sea

5.2 Fishery resources contradiction in yellow sea

5.3 South China Sea issue

5.4 Oil spill pollution along the coastline of China

5.5 Green Algae bloom in Qingdao before the Olympic Game

6. Introduction of Ocean University of China

There might be minor adjustments of the contents when the speech is given.