

ORIGINAL CONTRIBUTIONS OF XI JINPING THOUGHT ON THE RULE OF LAW TO THE THEORY OF RULE OF LAW FOR ECOLOGICAL CIVILIZATION

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ORIGINAL CONTRIBUTIONS OF XI JINPING THOUGHT ON THE RULE OF LAW TO THE THEORY OF RULE OF LAW FOR ECOLOGICAL CIVILIZATION

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Xi Jinping Thought on the Rule of Law integrates Marxist dialectics of nature with legal theory and China's fine traditional ecological philosophy and culture. Drawing on universal experience in global ecological conservation, it proposes a few novel ideas on the rule of law, such as the proposition of 'a community of life for man and nature', alongside the worldview of 'harmonious coexistence between humanity and nature', the methodology of 'making coordinated efforts to cut carbon emissions, reduce pollution, expand green development, and pursue economic growth', and the praxis of 'protecting the ecological environment with the strictest systems and the most rigorous rule of law'. These form original theoretical achievements, opening new horizons for adapting Marxist theory on the rule of law to the Chinese context and the needs of the times, and providing a practical guide for advancing the building of a Beautiful China on the path of the rule of law.

Since the 18th National Congress of the Communist Party of China (CPC), General Secretary *Xi Jinping* has consistently emphasized from the perspective of the sustainable development of the Chinese nation that system is fundamentally, stably, and permanently related to the development of the cause of the Party and the country. To foster economic growth, political integrity, cultural prosperity, and ecological well-being, it is essential to give better play to the guiding and normative role of the rule of law, promote the establishment of an institutional framework characterized by the 'four beams and eight pillars' of ecological civilization, and construct a 'most rigorous rule of law' guided by the goal of implementing the 'strictest systems'. Through ongoing theoretical, institutional, and practical innovations in ecological civilization tailored to China's realities, an original theory of the rule of law for ecological civilization has been formulated. This theory integrates Xi Jinping Thought on the Rule of Law and Xi Jinping Thought on Ecological Civilization as mutually guiding

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values and methodological support, thereby pioneering new frontiers in adapting Marxist theory on the rule of law to the Chinese context and the needs of the times. It provides a fundamental guiding principle and practical roadmap for the comprehensive promotion of ecological civilization within the rule of law.

I. NEW PROPOSITION OF THE RULE OF LAW: A COMMUNITY OF LIFE FOR MAN AND NATURE

Prior to the 18th CPC National Congress, China's environmental challenges exhibited systemic complexity, characterized by an expanding scope of pollution, escalating ecological degradation, and intensifying resource limitations. While fostering an economic growth miracle on a global scale, the tension between rapid economic development and environmental sustainability became increasingly pronounced. The development paradigm driven by high capital investment, substantial resource consumption, and elevated pollutant emissions inevitably resulted in resource depletion and ecological deterioration, impairing the population's access to clean air, potable water, and a healthy environment. The deficiencies within the system of the rule of law governing ecological and environmental protection significantly contributed to this situation. Since the 18th CPC National Congress, General Secretary *Xi Jinping* has systematically distilled operational patterns from practical governance experiences, including integrating ecological civilization into the Five-Sphere Integrated Plan, advancing reforms of the legal system of ecological civilization, combating pollution intensively, and striving toward the comprehensive building of a Beautiful China. In this context, he introduced the new proposition of the rule of law: a community of life for man and nature.

General Secretary *Xi Jinping* stated that 'mountains, rivers, forests, farmlands, and lakes constitute a community of life. Human vitality depends on land, the land's vitality depends on water, water's vitality depends on mountains, mountains' vitality depends on soil, and soil's vitality depends on trees'.¹ Humanity must respect, conform to, and protect nature. In April 2021, General Secretary *Xi Jinping* was invited to attend the Leaders Summit on

1 XI JINPING, REGARDING THE SOUND MANAGEMENT SYSTEM FOR NATIONAL NATURAL RESOURCE ASSETS AND THE IMPROVEMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCE REGULATION MECHANISMS (NOVEMBER 9, 2013), in *SELECTED WORKS OF XI JINPING ON ECOLOGICAL CIVILIZATION* (VOL. 1), at 17 (Central Party Literature Press, 2025).

Climate and delivered a significant speech, during which he for the first time comprehensively and systematically elucidated the profound connotations and core principles of the ‘community of life for man and nature’. These include maintaining harmony between man and nature, pursuing green development, implementing systematic governance, prioritizing people-centered approaches, upholding multilateralism, and adhering to the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities.² These scientifically grounded theoretical explorations, rooted in practical application, represent the latest achievements in adapting Marxism to the Chinese context and the needs of the times.

*A. Integrating the Marxist Worldview and
Methodology with China’s Realities to Profoundly Expound
the New Dialectical Unity Between Man and Nature*

Marx pointed out that ‘Man lives on nature’,³ recognizing natural entities as the fundamental conditions for human existence. Human production, life, and systems of the rule of law are developed through interactions with nature, and when humans treat nature with respect, it reciprocates by providing its gifts. *Engels*, in *Dialectics of Nature*, explicitly identified dialectical thinking as the only cognitive approach suitable for the highest developmental stage of natural philosophy. Human survival necessitates existing within a specific natural environment and engaging in material and energy exchanges with nature; severing this exchange would render human life impossible and lead to the dissolution of human society. Studying *Marx* entails understanding and applying Marxist perspectives on the human-nature relationship. Nature, as the mother of life, demands that humans respect its laws to prevent misguided exploitation and ensure sustainable development.

*B. Combining Marxism with China’s Fine Traditional Culture to Reveal That
the Essence of the Relationship Between Man and Nature Is a ‘Community of Life’*

The Chinese nation has respected and loved nature since ancient times, developing a philosophical concept of ‘unity of heaven and humanity’,

² See XI JINPING, JOINTLY BUILDING A COMMUNITY OF LIFE FOR MAN AND NATURE (APRIL 22, 2021), in *SELECTED WORKS OF XI JINPING ON ECOLOGICAL CIVILIZATION* (VOL. 1), at 223 (Central Party Literature Press, 2025).

³ KARL MARX, THE ECONOMIC AND PHILOSOPHIC MANUSCRIPTS OF 1844, in *MARX & ENGELS SELECTED WORKS* (VOL. 1), at 55 (People’s Publishing House, 2012).

which is reflected in the ecological existence thought of ‘Tai-chi engenders yin and yang’, the ecological evolution culture of ‘one generation gives life to another generation in perpetual change’, the ecological humanism of ‘the moral unification between the heavens and mankind’, the land ethics of ‘great virtue accommodates all things’, and the ecological aesthetics of ‘grand music reflects harmony between heaven and earth’. The philosophical notion of ‘unity of heaven and humanity’ manifests in two primary ways. Firstly, through the integration of governance and legislation, it has given rise to ecological protection laws such as the prohibition against felling trees and damaging forests during the second month of spring, and the prohibition against burning grass at night in the third month of summer. Secondly, it is embedded within cultural practices, exemplified by the ‘24 Solar Terms’, which respect the natural cycles of heaven and earth, fostering traditional values of ‘benevolence toward all things’, ‘insight from observing things’, and ‘companionship with all things’. General Secretary *Xi Jinping* advocates for the inheritance and promotion of China’s fine traditional culture, emphasizing the importance of drawing wisdom and nourishment from the ecological traditions embedded within Chinese civilization.

*C. Integrating the ‘Harmony and Unity’ Value of
China’s Fine Culture with Sustainable Development to Jointly Build
a ‘Community with a Shared Future for Mankind’*

In 1972, the *United Nations Stockholm Declaration* explicitly proposed the concept of environmental protection. The *1992 Rio Declaration* established ‘sustainable development’ as the goal and direction for the development of mankind. General Secretary *Xi Jinping* astutely recognized that ecological civilization represents a significant achievement in the progress of human society. Humanity has evolved through stages of primitive civilization, agricultural civilization, and industrial civilization. Ecological civilization is a product of industrial civilization reaching a certain developmental phase and embodies a new requirement for harmonious coexistence between humanity and nature. Throughout the history of global development, environmental conservation equates to the preservation of productive forces, and ecological improvement facilitates the improvement of productive forces. Sustainable development serves as the ‘golden key’ to addressing current global challenges. At the United Nations General Assembly, General Secretary *Xi Jinping* issued a call to action: ‘We

must resolve the contradictions brought about by industrial civilization, aiming for harmonious coexistence between humanity and nature, thereby achieving sustainable development worldwide and comprehensive human progress.’⁴

In addressing key theoretical and practical issues such as why the rule of law is essential for ecological civilization construction, what kind of system of the rule of law should underpin ecological civilization, and how to establish such a system of the rule of law, General Secretary *Xi Jinping* innovatively proposed the concept of a ‘community of life for man and nature’. He reinterpreted the traditional Chinese philosophical idea of ‘heaven’ and ‘humanity’ as representing ‘nature’ and ‘man’ in modern society, revealing their fundamental essence as a ‘community of life’. The core values emphasize ‘harmony and unity’, sustainable development, and the realization of the ‘unity of heaven and humanity’ as a modern transformation. This concept serves as the foundational perspective for understanding Xi Jinping Thought on the Rule of Law in terms of its theory of the rule of law for ecological civilization.

II. THE WORLDVIEW OF THE RULE OF LAW: HARMONIOUS COEXISTENCE BETWEEN HUMANITY AND NATURE

Chinese modernization embodies a harmonious coexistence between humanity and nature. It is imperative to firmly establish and practice the concept that ‘lucid waters and lush mountains are invaluable assets’, and to plan development from the perspective of ecological harmony and sustainable coexistence. This ecological dimension of ‘Chinese modernization’ aims not only to generate greater material and spiritual wealth to meet the increasing aspirations for a better life but also to supply high-quality ecological products to satisfy the growing demand for a pristine environment. It advocates for the synchronized advancement of ‘productive development, ecological well-being, and improved living standards’. General Secretary *Xi Jinping*’s worldview of the rule of law on ecological civilization, developed through China’s practical activities and historical evolution in ecological civilization, offers an overarching vision and interpretative principles for the country’s

4 XI JINPING, COLLABORATING ON THE GLOBAL PATH TOWARD ECOLOGICAL CIVILIZATION, STRIVING TO BUILD A CLEAN AND BEAUTIFUL WORLD (SEPTEMBER 28, 2015), in SELECTED WORKS OF XI JINPING ON ECOLOGICAL CIVILIZATION (VOL. 1), at 61 (Central Party Literature Press, 2025).

building of the rule of law for ecological civilization. This worldview enriches and advances the global discourse on ‘sustainable development’ theories.

*A. Expanding the Conception of Humanity to
Lay the Humanistic Foundation for
the Rule of Law in Ecological Civilization*

General Secretary *Xi Jinping* pointed out: ‘While the abundance of gold and silver mountains is undoubtedly significant for human survival, lucid waters and lush mountains constitute a vital component of the people’s well-being and happiness, representing an irreplaceable natural resource beyond monetary value. Earning money is meaningless if the air and drinking water are contaminated and unfit for use.’⁵ This insight profoundly reveals the dual existential state of humanity and lays a philosophical foundation for legally defining an ‘eco-economic man’.

Understanding ‘humanity’ is the cornerstone of building the rule of law in ecological civilization. Humans originate from nature as a biological species within the Earth’s ecosystem, possessing natural attributes. Simultaneously, humans are the only species within the Earth’s ecological system endowed with ‘wisdom’, leading to the formation of societies and nations, which possess social attributes distinct from other organisms. The coexistence of human naturalness and social characteristics is evident: the body belongs to nature, while thought belongs to civilization. As a hallmark of human civilization, law has developed alongside the progress of human society, primarily reflecting mechanisms to regulate human natural attributes. Particularly during the industrial civilization era, laws emphasized rigid constraints on the ‘evil’ aspects of human nature to pursue material wealth growth. Consequently, the law abstracted ‘humans’ as economically rational, socially average individuals, excluding natural attributes and granting complete autonomous will. The ‘economic man’ is thus capable of unlimited exploitation of natural resources and the environment in pursuit of personal gain, exacerbating conflicts between humans and nature, as well as among individuals.

To protect the ecological environment through the rule of law, new humanistic standards must be legally established. This involves a holistic

5 XI JINPING, A SOUND ECO-ENVIRONMENT IS THE MOST INCLUSIVE PUBLIC BENEFIT (APRIL 10, 2013), in
SELECTED WORKS OF XI JINPING ON ECOLOGICAL CIVILIZATION (VOL. 1), at 3 (Central Party Literature Press, 2025).

consideration of human natural attributes and social properties from the perspective of the ‘community of life for man and nature’, integrating ecological principles into the ‘rationality’ of the ‘economic man’. Recognizing the natural attributes of the ‘economic man’, human well-being encompasses not only material wealth but also environmental quality and psychological satisfaction. Furthermore, acknowledging the natural life cycle of the ‘economic man’ encourages a perspective that balances present and future interests, and short-term and long-term benefits, and considers the needs of future generations. The ‘eco-economic man’ entails a comprehensive assessment of the long-term and systemic consequences of individual actions, promoting autonomous decision-making that minimizes or avoids environmental impact, thereby facilitating the realization of ‘harmonious coexistence between humanity and nature’.

*B. Expanding the Conception of Nature to
Establish New Value Concepts for
the Rule of Law in Ecological Civilization*

Laws of the industrial civilization era designate naturally occurring entities with economic value as ‘resources’ or ‘useful elements’, thereby establishing them as objects of legal relations. This approach excludes vital environmental components such as air and wild flora and fauna with no direct economic utility from legal protection. Humans, as members of biological populations, are integral components of the ecological system and are inextricably linked to nature. Legislation cannot treat nature solely as an object for exploitation nor base its protection solely on whether humans can utilize natural elements. Instead, it must encompass nature as an entire entity within the scope of legal safeguarding, thereby constructing a system of the rule of law that fosters a symbiotic, coexistent, co-governing, and mutually beneficial relationship between humans and nature.

1. Legal Subject Perspective: Man and Nature as a Community of Life. — Nature plays a multifaceted role in human survival and development, with human demands on the natural environment being equally diverse. The rule of law in ecological civilization must comprehensively address the multiple values and functions of nature, and ensure the regeneration and resilience of natural systems, while satisfying human needs. This entails protecting the ecological environment with the same care as safeguarding one’s eyesight and treating it with the reverence accorded to life itself. On the one hand, knowing that ecological conditions determine fundamental

human survival and civilizational progress, it must integrate human natural and social attributes to establish legal connections between ‘human social systems’ and ‘natural ecosystems’. On the other hand, recognizing nature’s partial subjectivity, specialized ecological legal liability systems should be established to strictly control human activities that damage nature.

2. Fairness and Justice Perspective: Lucid Waters and Lush Mountains Are Invaluable Assets. — Lucid waters and lush mountains constitute not only natural and ecological wealth but also social and economic assets. Nature is a legacy not only for contemporary society but also for future generations; it belongs to both individual nations and the global community. The rule of law must therefore provide comprehensive safeguards to protect the shared interests of present and future populations. This necessitates laws on the ecological environment to establish the concept of equality before nature, providing a systemic foundation for transforming natural resources into social wealth as the most inclusive public welfare. On the one hand, systems ensuring intergenerational equity must be created within the laws on the ecological environment to limit or prohibit the overexploitation of resources and environmental degradation by current generations. On the other hand, it is essential to uphold the concept of intergenerational equity, recognizing that the ecological environment people inhabit today is a borrowed asset from future descendants. This obligates present society to assume responsibility for passing on a healthy environment, advocating for minimalist, moderate, green, low-carbon, and civically responsible lifestyles and consumption patterns, thereby fostering a positive ecological culture.

3. Ecological Security Perspective: Safeguarding Natural Ecological Security Boundaries. — The baseline for harmonious coexistence between humanity and nature is ecological security. While traditional legal values encompass security at both individual and collective levels, they primarily refer to personal safety, property security, and conventional national security concerns such as economic stability and defense. Entering the twenty-first century, humanity faces formidable challenges including global climate change, biodiversity loss, and severe environmental pollution. Protecting nature equates to safeguarding human well-being; maintaining ecological security boundaries is essential for the continued development of human civilization and the sustainable progress of the Chinese nation. This necessitates that laws on the ecological environment adhere to a holistic approach to national security, prioritizing the effective prevention of

eco-environment risks and the realization of ecological security as core values. Meanwhile, it is imperative to protect the natural system's integrity and symbiosis through law-based thinking and methods, maintain the security boundaries of ecological systems, and ensure stable, coordinated, orderly, and sustainable utilization within the constraints of population, socio-economic development, and ecological environment.

III. THE METHODOLOGY OF THE RULE OF LAW: MAKING COORDINATED EFFORTS TO CUT CARBON EMISSIONS, REDUCE POLLUTION, EXPAND GREEN DEVELOPMENT, AND PURSUE ECONOMIC GROWTH

In the global developmental trajectory of human civilization, the rule of law has co-evolved with industrial civilization. However, due to a lack of recognition of the systemic principle that 'ecological advancement leads to civilization prosperity, whereas ecological deterioration leads to civilization decline',⁶ the 'ecological' dimension is absent within the rule of law. This absence stems from the legal paradigms established during the industrial era, which are closely linked to the Renaissance and the Enlightenment in the West, embodying an individualistic legal perspective. Concurrently, the application of scientific rationality to law emphasizes its abstract nature, leading to a legal reductionist approach that struggles to address systemic issues such as environmental pollution and ecological destruction. General Secretary *Xi Jinping* has explicitly proposed a holistic approach of the rule of law based on the interconnectedness of ecological and social systems, advocating for 'coordinated efforts to cut carbon emissions, reduce pollution, expand green development, and pursue economic growth'. This approach aims to foster the integration of 'ecology' and 'rule of law', thereby upgrading legal methodology to better accommodate the complexities of ecological governance.

A. Systemic and Holistic Method

The Earth's ecological system is an integrated organic whole, with natural ecosystems disregarding any administrative boundaries. The

6 XI JINPING, BUILDING A BEAUTIFUL CHINA AND STRIVING TOWARD A NEW ERA OF SOCIALIST ECOLOGICAL CIVILIZATION (MAY 24, 2013), in *SELECTED WORKS OF XI JINPING ON ECOLOGICAL CIVILIZATION*, at 8 (Central Party Literature Press, 2025).

emergence of severe ecological and environmental issues stems from both intrinsic natural ecosystem factors and human-induced causes, such as irrational exploitation and utilization of natural resources. The effectiveness of the rule of law as a means of governance depends on the establishment of a comprehensive legal framework capable of simultaneously regulating the intricate and interconnected systems of the Earth's ecological environment and human society.

In ecological and environmental protection, it is essential to establish a holistic perspective that emphasizes the overall situation, long-term vision, and comprehensive approach. One must avoid seeking small gains at great cost, attending to one thing and losing sight of another, living beyond one's means, or seeking quick success and instant benefits. A comprehensive plan and action strategy should be developed to systematically address eco-environmental restoration and protection from the source. This entails implementing targeted measures and achieving breakthroughs in key areas, akin to medical treatment — eliminating pathogenic factors such as wind and cold, promoting blood circulation and muscle relaxation, and regulating internal organs and meridians — aiming for targeted and effective remediation. In building the rule of law in ecological civilization, it is crucial to accurately grasp the profound significance of advancing the comprehensive building of a Beautiful China within the rule of law, thereby establishing the legal protection of the eco-environment as a core element of the building of the rule of law in ecological civilization. Additionally, it is crucial to consider the temporal precedence and functional positioning of the rule of law in ecological civilization within the national governance system, ensuring proper coordination among all aspects of lawmaking, law enforcement, administration of justice, and the observance of law related to ecological and environmental protection.

B. Inclusive and Collaborative Synergy Method

Environmental issues represent a collective challenge for humanity; no nation can remain isolated from their impact, nor can individuals enjoy unencumbered freedom. It is imperative to abandon a siloed approach, embracing an inclusive and collaborative synergy method that enhances the systemic, holistic, cooperative, and timely nature of legal frameworks.

The environment is fundamentally linked to people's livelihoods; lush

mountains symbolize natural beauty, while blue skies represent happiness. At its core, ecological and environmental issues stem from development and lifestyle paradigms. Establishing a comprehensive green, low-carbon, circular economic system and promoting a holistic transition toward green sustainable development are essential strategies for addressing China's ecological challenges. This necessitates the construction of a coordinated governance framework at both domestic and international levels. Domestically, the focus is on refining the system of the rule of law to facilitate the synchronized reduction of carbon emissions, pollution control, green expansion, and economic growth. Internationally, the emphasis lies in fostering multilateral cooperation to tackle global environmental issues, establishing a new global ecological governance order, and leveraging China's leadership and exemplary role in building a shared planetary community of life.

C. Dialectical Method Focusing on the Primary Contradictions and Their Key Aspects

The ecological environment has no substitutes; its utilization is often taken for granted, yet its loss is irreversible. While China has achieved historic progress in economic development, it has concurrently accumulated significant ecological challenges. Without decisive measures to curb the ongoing degradation of the environment and to prevent potential collapses of the ecological system, all economic and social advancements risk losing their significance. It is imperative to adopt a perspective aligned with the goal of sustainable development for the Chinese nation, focusing on the primary contradictions and their key aspects, and effectively balancing development with ecological conservation.

To promote social fairness and justice and enhance the well-being of the people, these objectives should serve as a mirror to examine various institutional mechanisms and policy regulations. Any issues that hinder the advancement of social fairness and justice necessitate reform; specific sectors or links with prominent problems should be prioritized as focal points for reform initiatives. Accordingly, it is essential to properly balance the relationship between high-quality development and high-level protection, address the interplay between targeted efforts and collaborative governance, reconcile natural restoration with artificial remediation, manage external constraints alongside endogenous motivation, and coordinate the 'carbon peaking and carbon neutrality' commitments with

autonomous actions. In building the rule of law for ecological civilization, a problem-oriented and goal-driven approach should be maintained to facilitate the modernization of the national governance system and governance capacity.

IV. THE PRAXIS OF THE RULE OF LAW: PROTECTING THE ECOLOGICAL ENVIRONMENT WITH THE STRICTEST SYSTEMS AND THE MOST RIGOROUS RULE OF LAW

General Secretary *Xi Jinping* emphasized: ‘The protection of the ecology and environment must rely on systems and the rule of law. The prominent issues in our ecological and environmental conservation largely stem from an incomplete mechanism, lax systems, insufficient rule of law, inadequate law enforcement, and ineffective penalties.’⁷ It is essential to incorporate ecological civilization legislation and institutional arrangements into the building of the rule of law and systems, establishing a scientifically rigorous and systematically comprehensive legal framework for eco-environmental protection. This approach promotes ecological civilization development through the principles and methods of the rule of law. The concept of ‘the strictest and the most rigorous’, which means the strictest systems and the most rigorous rule of law, serves as a practical guideline for the rule of law to safeguard the environment. Personal initiatives include integrating ‘ecological civilization’ into the *Constitution*, drafting and amending environmental protection laws and related statutes, and reforming ecological civilization governance and environmental resource judicial systems, all of which underpin the construction of the rule of law for ecological civilization.

A. The Basic Functions of ‘the Strictest and the Most Rigorous’ Approach

Building the rule of law for ecological civilization is a clearly purpose-driven aspect of national governance, encompassing three fundamental levels of function.

⁷ XI JINPING, PUSHING CHINA’S DEVELOPMENT OF THE ECOLOGICAL CIVILIZATION TO A NEW STAGE (MAY 18, 2018), in *SELECTED WORKS OF XI JINPING ON ECOLOGICAL CIVILIZATION* (VOL. 1), at 177 (Central Party Literature Press, 2025).

1. Regulate Power to Protect Rights. — Strict governance of authority and officials through institutional regulation, along with efforts to protect blue waters and promote green landscapes, necessitates accelerated institutional innovation, increased policy supply, comprehensive policy support, and strengthened enforcement mechanisms. Accountability must be pursued rigorously and consistently, regardless of location, time, or individual involved. Concurrently, it is necessary to refine the ecological compensation mechanism and the mechanism for realizing the market value of green products, ensuring that protectors and contributors receive tangible benefits. Effective utilization of green fiscal, taxation, and financial policies is crucial to prevent ecological protectors from being disadvantaged and to enable them to benefit from their efforts.

2. Maintain the Security Boundary Between Humans and Nature. — Ecological and environmental security constitute a vital component of national security and serve as a crucial safeguard for the sustained and healthy development of the economy and society. It is imperative to maintain a state of heightened vigilance to prevent the accumulation and proliferation of various ecological and environmental risks, and to be prepared to address any form of ecological and environmental threat. This requires the implementation of strict systems and rigorous rule of law to reinforce bottom-line thinking, thereby enhancing the nation's capabilities in risk assessment, monitoring, early warning, emergency response, and contingency management of ecological security threats.

3. Promote the Modernization of the Environmental Governance System and Governance Capacity. — Building a modern environmental governance system is a crucial guarantee for the timely realization of the goal of building a Beautiful China. It is essential to give better play to the role of the rule of law in consolidating foundations, ensuring stable expectations, and delivering long-term benefits, striving to build a modern socialist country in all respects under the rule of law. This requires establishing an environmental governance system characterized by clear guidance, scientific decision-making, robust enforcement, effective incentives, diverse participation, and constructive interaction through the implementation of the strictest systems and the most rigorous rule of law, thereby ensuring the sustainable development of the Chinese nation.

B. Advancing the Reform of the Ecological Civilization System with Strict Systems

The system is a fundamental, stable, and long-term issue underpinning the development of the cause of the Party and the country. To build an ecological civilization, it is essential to establish a comprehensive and systematic institutional system that safeguards the ecological environment through legal and regulatory measures. Since the 18th CPC National Congress, General Secretary *Xi Jinping* has personally led the formulation of numerous reform plans related to ecological civilization, including the *Opinions on Accelerating the Construction of Ecological Civilization* and the *Opinions on Comprehensively Promoting the Development of a Beautiful China*, and has also introduced multiple institutional measures, establishing the fundamental framework — the ‘four beams and eight pillars’ — for the construction of the ecological civilization.

1. *The System of Natural Resource Assets Featuring Clearly Defined Property Rights, Multi-Party Participation, Balanced Incentives and Constraints, and Systemic Integrity.* — It is essential to strengthen the top-level design for the construction of the ecological civilization system, focusing on institutional mechanisms, and fully leverage the pivotal role of reform as a key strategy. The approach emphasizes establishing a sound national natural resource asset management system and improving natural resource regulation, accelerating the development of land spatial planning and land use control systems. It also entails implementing the system for efficient utilization of resources, enforcing the system for paid use of natural resources, constructing waste recycling systems, establishing a clean, low-carbon, safe and efficient energy system, and improving the systems for developing and protecting marine resources.

2. *The System for Ecological and Environmental Protection with Strict Prevention at the Source, Strict Management During the Process, and Strict Punishment for Damage.* — This requires focusing on enhancing ecological and environmental quality by accelerating institutional innovation and increasing institutional supply, ensuring that systems serve as rigid constraints and inviolable upper limits. It is essential to fully implement the pollutant discharge permit system, promote market-based trading mechanisms such as carbon emission rights, and establish comprehensive risk management frameworks. Additionally, natural ecological protection systems should be improved, with the construction of a natural protected areas system centered on national parks. Strengthening ecological conservation and systematic

management of major rivers such as the Yangtze River and the Yellow River is imperative. Accelerating the integrated management of water and soil loss, desertification, and rocky desertification is also crucial. Furthermore, efforts must be intensified to protect biodiversity, thereby comprehensively enhancing the stability of natural ecosystems and their ecological service functions.

3. The Accountability System for Ecological and Environmental Protection Characterized by the Principles That Those with Authority Must Bear Responsibility, Those Responsible Must Demonstrate Accountability, and Failure to Fulfill Responsibilities Must Be Subject to Investigation. — This system enforces strict governance through institutional mechanisms to regulate authority and officials, protect blue waters, and promote green landscapes. It mandates that any violations requiring accountability, regardless of location, time, or individual, must be pursued to the end without exception, ensuring that institutions do not become toothless tigers — powerful but ineffective. Additionally, a comprehensive evaluation and assessment system for ecological civilization construction is established, with rigorous implementation of corporate main responsibilities and government regulatory duties. The central environmental protection inspection system is instituted to enforce the collective responsibility of Party and government entities for ecological damage and to pursue lifelong accountability. Reforms are advancing in comprehensive administrative law enforcement for ecological and environmental protection, with improvements to the environmental public interest litigation system and the development of a coordinated system linking administrative enforcement and criminal justice in ecological and environmental matters.

C. Establishing the ‘Most Rigorous’ System of Rule of Law Based on the ‘Strictest’ Systems

The law is of great value to the governance of a country, and the rule of law is the fundamental method for governing and administering state affairs. To achieve sustainable economic growth, political integrity, cultural prosperity, and ecological well-being, it is essential to enhance the guiding and normative functions of the rule of law. This involves advancing ecological civilization on the path of the rule of law to ensure the realization of modernization characterized by harmonious coexistence between humanity and nature.

1. A Sound and Complete Normative System of the Rule of Law. — The normative system of the rule of law serves as the legitimacy foundation of the system of rule of law for ecological civilization. It involves coordinated advancement of legislation and revision related to the ecological environment, resource and energy sectors; implementation of the strictest ecological environment governance system integrating land, underground, terrestrial, marine, regional coordination, and linkage; full enforcement of pollutant discharge permit systems; improvement of natural resource asset management systems; and the refinement of territorial spatial use regulation. The process includes efforts in coordinating the promulgation, revision, abolition, interpretation, and compilation of laws to promote the drafting of an ecological and environmental code, strengthen legislative connections with related laws, and foster a collaborative legal normative system for ecological civilization. Emphasis is placed on aligning Party regulations with national laws and ensuring coordinated efforts through a combined approach.

2. A Coordinated Implementation System of the Rule of Law. — This entails strengthening goal alignment, multi-pollutant control coordination, departmental cooperation, regional synergy, and policy integration, while simultaneously advancing the integrated governance of law-based exercise of state power, strict law enforcement, impartial administration of justice, and society-wide observance of the law. Promoting law-based exercise of state power involves guiding the Party in leading the formulation and enforcement of ecological environment laws. Advancing law-based government administration addresses issues such as irregular, lax, non-transparent, uncivil law enforcement, and dereliction or misconduct. Achieving justice in the judiciary aims to ensure that citizens perceive fairness and justice in every case. Promoting nationwide legal compliance and ecological law education integrates the rule of law with the rule of virtue.

3. A Supervision System of Rule of Law with Oversight over the Exercise of Authority. — Strengthening oversight of public powers involved in ecological civilization construction effectively promotes law-based exercise of state power, strict law enforcement, impartial administration of justice, and society-wide observance of the law. This forms a major framework centered on Party supervision, guiding national oversight, regulating public authority, and mobilizing social supervision. There is a need to further reinforce the political responsibilities of Party committees and governments at all levels for ecological and environmental protection, thereby advancing the central ecological and environmental protection inspections. Strengthening

law enforcement and regulatory oversight is essential to ensure clear delineation of responsibilities, accountability, and diligent fulfillment of duties. Additionally, it is crucial to fully leverage the supervisory roles of the People's Congress in legal oversight and the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference in democratic supervision to further improve the social supervision system.

4. *A Safeguard System of Rule of Law Embodying 'Good Laws and Good Governance'*. — This involves resource integration across sectors, mobilizing various forces to provide a solid foundation for the rule of law in ecological development. It includes refining economic policies supporting ecological civilization, and strengthening fiscal, tax, financial, and pricing policy support; optimizing market-based approaches to synergize market efficiency with proactive governmental intervention; enhancing technological support to achieve technological independence and resilience in environmental protection; developing ecological protection workforce capacity, leveraging modern information technology to empower the implementation and supervision systems of the rule of law, and advancing the modernization of environmental governance systems and capabilities.

5. *A Coordinated System of Domestic Rule of Law and Foreign-Related Rule of Law*. — There is a need to accelerate the strategic deployment of foreign-related rule of law, coordinate the advancement of domestic and international governance, and better safeguard national sovereignty, security, and developmental interests. This involves promoting reforms in global governance, constructing a community with a shared future for mankind, and pursuing the building of the rule of law in China within the vision of its national development, while situating this process within the global vision. It is essential to give better play to the role of foreign-related rule of law in linking domestic legal systems with international law, as well as in disseminating and sharing China's experiences in building the rule of law. Additionally, a thorough summary of China's successful judicial practices in ecological and environmental law should be undertaken to lead the comprehensive green transformation of human society, enrich sustainable development pathways, and foster the establishment of a new global order for ecological and environmental governance.

Xi Jinping Thought on the Rule of Law centers on addressing China's ecological and environmental challenges by applying Marxist theory on the rule of law, inheriting and promoting China's fine traditional culture, and integrating internationally recognized principles and methodologies of the rule of law. It involves theoretical, institutional, practical, and cultural

innovations from the perspectives of ecological civilization construction, focusing on its objects, processes, and subjects, thereby expanding and surpassing global achievements and empirical outcomes of the rule of law in sustainable development. Xi Jinping Thought on the Rule of Law not only offers China's solutions for global ecological governance but also provides a novel pathway for other nations to develop ecological civilization through the rule of law.

(Translated by Zhang Qing)
(Edited by Gong Li)

习近平法治思想关于生态文明法治理论的原创性贡献

内容提要 习近平法治思想坚持将马克思主义自然辩证法和法学理论相结合、与中华优秀传统文化哲学和文化相结合，吸取人类生态环境保护普遍性经验，提出“人与自然生命共同体”的全新法治命题以及“人与自然和谐共生”的法治世界观、“协同推进减污降碳扩绿增长”的法治方法论、“用最严格制度最严密法治保护生态环境”的法治实践论，形成具有原创性的理论成果，开辟了马克思主义法治理论中国化时代化新境界，为在法治轨道上全面推进美丽中国建设提供实践指南。
