Preface

2015 is a critical year for the course of international cooperation to address climate change. A new legally binding outcome, which is expected to be reached at the Paris Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), has brought the climate change issue back to the center of the international arena.

Just in 2014, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) published its Fifth Assessment Report. Robust evidence was provided to show the unequivocal warming of the climate system and its extensive adverse impacts. It has been also confirmed that, from 1951 to 2010, more than half of the observed temperature rise was caused by anthropogenic GHG emission. To achieve the 2 degree target is quite challenging, and there is little time left for us to mitigate climate change and enhance our climate resilience.

In the meantime, the good news is that the concept of “low-carbon” has become more and more accepted by both developed and developing countries, thanks to the enhancement of public awareness of green growth as well as the technology advance in renewable energy and other clean energy sources. Combating climate change is no longer only a burden-sharing practice, but is turning into a benefit-sharing process. Although member countries still negotiate about the emission allowance and emission reduction targets under the UNFCCC process, they are beginning to put more emphasis on pursuing cooperation opportunities.

So far, 29 Parties to the UNFCCC have submitted their Intended Nationally Determined Contributions (INDCs). Further efforts are still needed to implement their post-2020 pledges and enhance the ambition to achieve the 2 degree target. In this regard, the Paris outcome is not an ending, but a starting point.

China plays an important role in combating global climate change, due to the scale of its economy, its GHG emissions, and its leadership in developing countries. China’s choices on diplomatic strategy and its development pathway will significantly shape the international climate regime.

In recent years, China has been more and more actively engaged in international cooperation on climate change. China is always willing to contribute positively to achieve an equitable, effective, and win-win international climate change cooperation agreement. Climate change has also become an important topic in China’s foreign policy. China has published several joint announcements with the U.S., the EU, Brazil, and India. In-depth studies on how China can participate in both bilateral and multilateral climate change cooperation are needed.

On 30 June 2015, China submitted its INDC and announced the targets of peaking CO₂ emission around 2030, reaching around 20% non-fossil fuels by 2030, and increasing 4.5 billion m³ in forest growing stock. To achieve these ambitious targets, China needs substantial domestic efforts, given that China is also facing many development challenges, e.g. environmental pollution. An “energy revolution” is key to reaching the CO₂ emissions peak and to achieve the non-fossil fuel targets. It is also important for China to achieve its mitigation targets in a cost-effective way by better mobilizing resources through market mechanisms. China has already started its low-carbon journey while still requiring wiser and more effective ideas.

At this special point of time, strengthened understanding and discussion of China’s international and domestic climate policies could be tremendously helpful. I expect this spe-
cial issue on “Climate Change Politics in China: A Coming of Age” could provide the readers valuable and enlightening thoughts.

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