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PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA
MISSION TO THE UNITED NATIONS

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PRESS RELEASE

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(Translation)

**Statement by H.E. Ambassador Zhang Yishan,
Deputy Permanent Representative of China to the United Nations,
at the Intergovernmental Preparatory Meeting for the CSD13 on Water**

(1 March, 2005, New York)

Mr. Chairman,

As a basic natural resource, water is a controlling element of the ecological environment, as well as a basis on which mankind depends for its survival. The sustainable use of water is an important component of sustainable economic and social development. Access to safe drinking water is a fundamental human right and also an important element of poverty eradication. Both the Millennium Summit and the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) have incorporated safe drinking water into their priority development agenda. According to related statistics, over the past decade or so, the situation of drinking water of nine hundred million people in the world has been improved. Yet, to attain the goal of safe drinking water by 2015, there is a need to solve the drinking water problem facing another 1.6 billion people. Urbanization, industrialization and population growth have given rise to an increased demand for water resources, aggravated pollution of water sources and mounted pressure on water supply facilities, adding to the difficulty in realizing preset goals.

At present, developing countries are lagging behind in terms of the sustainable use, preservation and management of water resources. The major obstacles to achieving safe drinking water goals relate to scarcity of funds, backwardness of technology, imperfection of systems, poor intersectoral coordination, inconsistency between national and local policies and regulations, mismanagement, and lack of holistic human settlement planning.

The period between 2005 and 2015 has been proclaimed as the International Decade for Action, "Water for Life". The international community should capitalize on this opportunity to step up cooperation, so as to promote the accomplishment of safe drinking water goals. Countries should take steps to beef up integrated water resources management, improve water allocation, enhance water use

efficiency, reduce costs, implement pro-poor policies, and strengthen governments' capacity in water resources planning and coordination. The international community and developed countries should also take practical actions to assist developing countries in tackling some perennial problems in the field of financial resources, technology and capacity building.

Mr. Chairman,

China regards the development and management of water resources as the foundation and safeguards for its national economic development and has incorporated it into the overall planning for national sustainable development. The Chinese Government has undertaken the following activities in the sustainable use of water resources:

1. In a follow-up to the 1992 Rio Conference on Environment and Development, the Chinese Government formulated China's Agenda 21, which includes its Water Agenda 21;

2. To fulfill the commitments at the WSSD, the Chinese Government has, since 2002, been developing a comprehensive national water resources plan, which is expected to be completed by the end of this year. The planning encompasses the following components: water resource survey and assessment, including its development and utilization; forecast of water demand and supply; water conservation, water resource preservation and allocation; the layout and programme of implementation as regards the development, utilization and protection of water resources; and assessment of the results of implementation. In addition, in a bid to attain the safe drinking water goals by 2015, the Chinese Government has stepped up its effort to solve the drinking water problem in rural areas. To date, China has solved drinking water problems for nearly 300 million rural residents in total.

3. Over the years, through practices and explorations, the Chinese Government has gradually come up with a line of thinking governing the sustainable use of water resources. The focus is on the harmony between man and nature. While emphasizing the development, utilization and harnessing of water resources, due attention is paid to their allocation, conservation and preservation. An integrated water resources management system has been established gradually, characterized by a water-right regime, water markets, and a combination of management by catchment with management by region. Along this line of thinking, a series of concrete measures have been developed and put in practice.

4. A preliminary legal and policy framework regulating water sustainability has been established and implemented, composed of the Water Law, Anti-Flood Law, Law on Water and Soil Preservation, and Law on Prevention of Water Pollution, as

well as policies regarding water industry, water conservation, reforestation and poverty reduction.

China has made some achievements in the sustainable water use by feeding 22 percent of the world' s population and supporting their economic development with 6 percent of the world' s renewable water resources. However, due to the extremely uneven distribution of water, China remains a developing country susceptible to frequent floods and droughts. Such problems as scarcity of water, water pollution, deterioration of water environment and soil erosion are yet to be completely solved. Due to the complex nature of the question of water, China needs to intensify its international cooperation in the field of technology, funding and management. China looks forward to further collaboration with all parties in this field in a joint effort to promote the realization of safe drinking water goals.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.