

International Cooperation on SDGs in Northeast Asia: China's Practice and Exploration

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Abstract

SDGs refers to the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) adopted by the United Nations in 2015, aiming to promote global sustainable development in three dimensions: economic, social, and environmental. As a major power in Northeast Asia, China has actively participated in the global sustainable development cause, achieved remarkable results in promoting sustainable development strategies at home, and played a crucial role in the international cooperation on SDGs in Northeast Asia. In view of the current geopolitical conflicts and other difficulties faced by Northeast Asia's sustainable development cooperation, an in-depth study of China's practical path in Northeast Asia's SDGs international cooperation will not only help China leverage its advantages in regional cooperation, fulfill its responsibilities, and achieve mutual benefits and win-win results, but also offer new ideas for solving the problems of Northeast Asia's sustainable development, promote cooperation among countries in the region, and facilitate the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in Northeast Asia.

Keywords: Northeast Asia, SDGs Cooperation, Chinese Practice, Path Exploration

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1. Introduction

In September 2015, the United Nations Summit on Sustainable Development adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which encompasses 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). These goals provide a comprehensive and challenging blueprint for the world to achieve coordinated social, economic, and environmental development from 2015 to 2030. They are designed to address a wide array of global issues, including poverty eradication, climate change, economic growth, and social equity. The goals are interconnected and emphasize the significance of global cooperation, encouraging all stakeholders, such as governments, the private sector, and civil society, to collaborate.

The countries in Northeast Asia hold an important position in the global economic and geopolitical arenas. This region includes China, Japan, the Republic of Korea, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Mongolia, and the Russian Far East. It is one of the most economically dynamic regions globally, with large economies and abundant natural and human resources.¹ However, the countries in Northeast Asia face both unique

opportunities and serious challenges in the pursuit of sustainable development goals.

In the economic domain, despite the disparities in the levels of economic development and industrial structures among the countries in the Northeast Asian region, they are highly complementary, offering broad prospects for extensive economic cooperation. China's manufacturing strengths, Japan and South Korea's advanced technologies and high-end manufacturing industries, and Russia's energy resources have the potential to realize the optimal allocation of resources and the synergistic development of industries through cooperation. Nevertheless, issues like trade protectionism, trade barriers, and unbalanced economic development within the region impede the process of regional economic integration and affect the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals' objective of promoting economic growth and employment.

At the social level, the Northeast Asian countries have made certain accomplishments in areas such as education and healthcare. However, there are also problems like an aging population, wealth gaps, and uneven social welfare. For instance, in Japan, the severity of its aging population has exerted

¹ 吴昊. 东北亚区域经济合作研究 [M]. 社会科学文献出版社. 2020. 10

tremendous pressure on its social security system. Meanwhile, some developing countries still need to improve the distribution of educational resources and the accessibility of healthcare services, which goes against the SDGs' objectives of ensuring health for all, providing high-quality education, and reducing inequality.

On the environmental front, the countries in Northeast Asia face multiple challenges, such as climate change, environmental pollution, and resource scarcity. Industrial activities, energy consumption, and rapid urbanization in the region have led to increasing air, water, and soil pollution. Simultaneously, due to their geographical locations and climatic conditions, the countries in Northeast Asia are vulnerable to climate change, and the frequent occurrence of extreme weather events poses a threat to ecosystems and human life, which is contrary to the requirements of the Sustainable Development Goals regarding addressing climate change, protecting ecosystems, and promoting the sustainable use of resources.

As a major power in Northeast Asia, China plays an indispensable role in promoting sustainable development in the region. China has actively participated in the global sustainable development process and vigorously promoted sustainable development strategies at home, achieving remarkable results, particularly in poverty alleviation, renewable energy development, and ecological environmental protection. It has also accumulated rich experience. In regional cooperation in Northeast Asia, China has carried out extensive cooperation with neighboring countries in fields like economy and trade, energy, environmental protection, and cultural exchanges, and has made positive contributions to promoting sustainable development in the region. However, currently, the sustainable development cooperation among Northeast Asian countries still faces numerous difficulties, such as geopolitical conflicts, historical legacy issues, and imperfect cooperation mechanisms, which hinder the realization of regional sustainable development goals.

Against this backdrop, it is of great practical significance to study China's practical path in international cooperation on SDGs in Northeast Asia. On the one hand, it will help China better leverage its own advantages, assume greater responsibility in Northeast Asian regional cooperation, promote the process of regional sustainable development, and achieve mutual benefits, win-win results, and common development with neighboring countries. On the other hand, by exploring effective practical cooperation paths, it can offer new ideas

and methods for resolving the problems faced by the Northeast Asian countries in their sustainable development, promote cooperation among regional countries within the framework of the SDGs, jointly address global challenges, and facilitate the smooth implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in Northeast Asia.

2. Theoretical Foundations

2.1 Theory of Sustainable Development

This theory serves as a crucial cornerstone for international cooperation on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). It originated in the mid-20th century and gradually took shape as global environmental problems became increasingly prominent and people began to reflect on the traditional development model.²

In 1987, the World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED) defined sustainable development in its report "Our Common Future" as "development that meets the needs of the present generation without jeopardizing the ability of future generations to meet their own needs." This definition emphasizes the harmonious coexistence and coordinated progress among the three dimensions of the economy, society, and environment, thereby providing a fundamental framework for the establishment of sustainable development goals.

In Northeast Asia, the theory of sustainable development guides countries to attach importance to environmental protection and social equity while striving for economic growth. For instance, during its economic development process in Northeast Asia, China has actively promoted industrial upgrading and transformation, phased out high-energy-consuming and high-polluting industries, vigorously developed a green and circular economy, and strengthened ecological environment protection and restoration. All these efforts are precisely the concrete manifestations of the theory of sustainable development in regional development.

2.2 Global Governance Theory

This theory offers a framework and mechanism for international cooperation on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Global governance entails resolving global issues through binding international rules to maintain a normal international political and economic order.³ Under the

² Mebratu D. Sustainability and sustainable development: historical and conceptual review. *Environmental Impact assessment Review*, 1998, 18(6): 493-520.

³ Lawrence Finkelstein. "What is Global Governance?", *Global Governance*, Vol.1, No.3, 1995. Thomas Weiss, Rorden Wilkinson. "Global Governance to the Rescue: Saving International Relations?", *Global Governance*, Vol.20, No.1, 2014. 薛澜, 关婷. 多元国家治理模式下的全球治理——理想与现实[J]. *政治学研究*. 2021 (03): 65-77+161-162.

framework of global governance, governments, international organizations, non-governmental organizations, and the private sector participate in formulating and implementing global rules and decisions through consultation and cooperation. With regard to international cooperation on SDGs, the theory of global governance emphasizes that countries should reinforce international cooperation and coordination in the pursuit of achieving the SDGs and jointly address global challenges.

In the Northeast Asian region, when dealing with climate change and transboundary environmental pollution, countries need to enhance communication and coordination among governments and establish effective regional cooperation mechanisms based on the theory of global governance. Meanwhile, they should encourage the active participation of enterprises, social organizations, and other non-governmental entities to form a multi-dimensional and collaborative governance scenario. The Northeast Asian Subregional Environmental Cooperation Programme (NEASPEC), with the involvement of the countries in Northeast Asia, serves as an environmental cooperation initiative under the guidance of the global governance concept. Its aim is to address regional environmental problems like air pollution via technical assistance and data sharing.⁴

2.3 International Interdependence Theory

This theory provides motivation for international cooperation on SDGs from the perspective of interstate relations. According

to this theory, along with economic globalization and scientific and technological progress, the degree of interconnection and interdependence among countries in terms of economy, politics, and culture has been deepening.⁵ Under this interdependence, the interests of all countries are closely intertwined, making it difficult for any single country to handle global problems independently. Hence, it is essential to achieve common interests through international cooperation.

In Northeast Asia, there is a high degree of economic complementarity among countries. Japan and South Korea possess advanced technology and capital, China has a huge market and a manufacturing base, and Russia has energy resources, among other aspects. This economic interdependence has driven countries to cooperate in the field of sustainable development to realize the optimal allocation of resources and common development. Meanwhile, when addressing global challenges like climate change and the prevention and control of infectious diseases, the countries in Northeast Asia are aware of their interdependence. Only through strengthened cooperation can they effectively respond to these challenges and safeguard the common interests of the countries in the region.

3. Current Status of Cooperation

3.1 Participation of SDGs in Northeast Asian Countries

According to the UN Sustainable Development Goals Report

⁴ NEASPEC. <https://neaspec.org/>

⁵ Robert O. Keohane and Joseph S. Nye Jr., "Globalization: What's New? What's Not? (And So What?)", *Foreign Policy*, No.118 (Spring,2000), pp. 104-119.

⁶ United Nations. The Sustainable Development Goals Report 2024. <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/report/2024/The-Sustainable-Development-Goals-Report-2024.pdf>

⁷ SDG Gateway Asia Pacific. <https://data.unescap.org/data-analysis/country-sdg-profiles>

Table 1 *SDG data availability in 2024 (Availability levels, since 2015)*

Country	Sufficient Indicators	Insufficient Indicators	No Data & Not applicable	SDG Goal Top 5
Mongolia	145 (63%)	38 (16%)	49 (22%)	7-8-10-6-17
Republic of Korea	142 (61%)	32 (14%)	58 (25%)	7-6-12-8-9
China*	134 (58%)	31 (13%)	67 (29%)	7-6-17-15-10
Russian Federation	140 (60%)	24 (10%)	68 (29%)	7-8-10-6-17
Japan	140 (60%)	22 (9%)	70 (30%)	12-7-8-9-17
DPR Korea	84 (36%)	22 (9%)	126 (53%)	7-15-2-6-3

Note: Data in parentheses are rates for a total of 232 indicators. * China's data excludes the data from Hong Kong, Macao and Taiwan.

Source: UN ESCAP Data Analysis

2024, merely 17% of the SDGs tracking indicators are currently on track, while over one-third are stagnant or even showing regression.⁶ The persistent impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, escalating conflicts, geopolitical tensions, and the growing concerns regarding climate change are seriously impeding progress towards these goals.

Table 1 presents an analysis of the available indicators for the SDGs in Northeast Asia and the top five goals on which Northeast Asian countries are focusing, based on the data analysis by the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP). The results indicate that all countries in Northeast Asia have more than 70% of the available indicators, with the exception of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, which has 50% of the available indicators. Among them, Mongolia has the highest number of indicators, trailed by the Republic of Korea, China, Russia, Japan, and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

Simultaneously, Northeast Asian countries have placed emphasis on Goal 7. However, the focus on other goals varies among different countries. Japan and the Republic of Korea have focused more on Goals 12, 8, and 9. China, Mongolia, and Russia have concentrated more on Goals 6, 8, 17, and 10. The Democratic People's Republic of Korea has focused more on Goals 15, 2, 6, and 3.

3.2 Existing Cooperation Mechanisms and Platforms

In the process of promoting international cooperation regarding the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), Northeast Asian countries have gradually established a series of cooperation mechanisms and platforms, which offer crucial support for exchanges and collaboration among countries within the region.

Relevant United Nations (UN) forums play a leading role in the international cooperation on SDGs in Northeast Asia. For instance, the UN Multi-Party Forum on SDGs in Northeast Asia, regularly organized by the UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) Subregional Office for East and Northeast Asia (ESCAP-ENEA), creates opportunities for exchanges among stakeholders from governments, academia, the international community, and civil society in East and Northeast Asia.⁸ At this forum, all parties share their experiences and deliberate on key challenges and opportunities concerning specific SDGs of the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. It also provides subregionally

relevant information resources and perspectives for regional and global forums, thereby making significant contributions to the understanding and practice of the SDGs in Northeast Asian countries.

Moreover, several specialized cooperation mechanisms play a pivotal role in specific areas. The Northeast Asian Subregional Programme for Environmental Cooperation (NEASPEC), which is committed to environmental protection and sustainable development in Northeast Asia, has launched a number of collaborative projects in areas such as air pollution reduction, technology demonstration for clean coal-fired power plants, and air pollution data collection and standardized analysis.⁹ Through this programme, countries in the region have enhanced technical exchanges and assistance in the environmental field and have jointly addressed environmental challenges like air pollution, thus providing practical experience for achieving the environmental goals of the SDGs.

These cooperation mechanisms and platforms have facilitated exchanges and cooperation among Northeast Asian countries within the framework of the SDGs at various levels and in different areas, thereby laying a solid foundation for sustainable development in the region.

3.3 Key Areas of Cooperation and Achievements

Northeast Asian countries have engaged in cooperation within several key areas under the international cooperation framework of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and have achieved a series of remarkable accomplishments.

Energy: Countries in the region are actively promoting energy cooperation initiatives to achieve sustainable energy supply and utilization. China and Russia have deepened their cooperation in the oil, natural gas, and other energy sectors. Since the northern section of the China-Russia Eastern Natural Gas Pipeline Project was put into operation and opened to the public in December 2019, the cumulative gas transmission volume of the China-Russia Eastern Line had exceeded 80 billion cubic meters by December 2024. This not only meets the energy demands of certain domestic regions in China but also provides a stable market for Russia's energy exports, thereby promoting the sustainable development of both sides in the energy field. It is estimated that the annual supply of natural gas resources along the China-Russia Eastern Route can reduce carbon dioxide emissions by 164 million tons and sulfur dioxide emissions by 1.82 million tons.¹⁰ Meanwhile, China has cooperated with Japan and the Republic of Korea in the

⁸ ESCAP. <https://www.unescap.org/>

⁹ NEASPEC. <https://neaspec.org/>

¹⁰ 中国国家能源局 (NEA) https://www.nea.gov.cn/2024-12/06/c_1310787439.htm

¹¹ 世界资源研究所 (WRI) <https://wri.org.cn/news/Promoting-Renewable-Energy-International-Development-Cooperation%2C-China-Has-Great-Potential>

research and development (R&D) and application of renewable energy technologies, jointly exploring the efficient utilization of new energy sources such as solar energy and wind energy, and facilitating the optimization and upgrading of the energy structure.¹¹

Environment: The outcomes of cooperation in this area are also remarkable. The Northeast Asian Subregional Environmental Cooperation Programme (NEASPEC) has achieved notable results in alleviating air pollution. Through technical assistance, NEASPEC has assisted countries in the region to upgrade their air pollution monitoring and control technologies, and the air quality has witnessed significant improvement in air pollution control projects carried out in some key cities.¹² In 2024, the Northeast Institute of Geography and Agroecology of the Chinese Academy of Sciences (NIEGAS) signed a Letter of Intent to collaborate with the UNESCO Regional Office for East Asia and also signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on cooperation with the Institute of Geography of the Russian Academy of Sciences, Siberia Branch, and the Sochava Institute of Geography.¹³ These agreements were aimed at addressing the problems faced by Northeast Asia regarding the development and utilization of resources, the environment, and sustainable development.

Moreover, in the area of marine environmental protection, the countries have strengthened joint monitoring and control of marine pollution, jointly protected marine ecosystems, and preserved marine biodiversity. In Northeast Asia, apart from the Northeast Asian Subregional Cooperation Programme (NEASPEC), China, Japan, and the Republic of Korea participate in the Northwest Pacific Action Plan (NOWPAP)¹⁴ and the China-Japan-Republic of Korea Environment Ministers' Meeting (TEEM)¹⁵. The Northwest Pacific Action Plan (NOWPAP) focuses on marine environmental governance, while the Northeast Asian Subregional Cooperation Programme (NEASPEC) and the China-Japan-Republic of Korea Environment Ministers' Meeting (TEEM) are also partly concerned with marine environmental governance. Overall, these three cooperation mechanisms are interconnected, forming a multilateral cooperation mechanism for the marine environment in Northeast Asia.

Education: Northeast Asian countries have promoted the sharing and complementarity of educational resources through student exchanges and academic cooperation. Student exchange programs between China and Japan, South Korea as well as Russia have become increasingly frequent, with a large number

of students traveling to each other's countries every year for further studies. Meanwhile, academic cooperation among universities has been enhanced, with joint research projects and academic symposiums being conducted, and a series of research outcomes have been achieved in areas such as artificial intelligence and environmental science.

The achievements of such cooperation have not only driven the development of Northeast Asian countries in related fields but also made a positive contribution to the realization of sustainable development goals. Through energy cooperation, energy security has been ensured and energy transformation has been promoted; environmental cooperation has improved the regional ecological environment and facilitated sustainable development; and educational cooperation has enhanced the quality of human resources in the region and provided intellectual support for scientific and technological innovation and social development.

3.4 Challenges and Problems of Cooperation

Although Northeast Asian countries have achieved certain accomplishments in international cooperation regarding the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), they still encounter numerous challenges and problems during the cooperation process.

Firstly, the lack of mutual political trust constitutes a significant factor that restricts the in-depth development of cooperation. Northeast Asian countries have complex geopolitical relations and historical legacy issues. Some countries have differences in territorial disputes and historical perspectives, which undermine mutual political trust among them and render it challenging to reach a consensus on certain cooperation projects.

Secondly, the shortage of funds presents a major predicament for cooperation. Many sustainable development projects, such as those in environmental protection and infrastructure construction, demand substantial capital investment. However, the limited economic strength of some developing countries in Northeast Asia makes it arduous for them to shoulder the high costs of these projects. Meanwhile, the restricted channels for international financial assistance and the uneven distribution of funds have impeded the successful implementation of some projects that are in urgent need of financial support.

Finally, difficulties in coordinating interests also impede the further deepening of cooperation. Northeast Asian countries vary in terms of economic development level, industrial structure,

¹² NEASPEC. <https://neaspec.org/>

¹³ 中国科学院 (CAS) https://www.cas.cn/cm/202407/t20240723_5026779.shtml

¹⁴ NOWPAP. <https://www.unep.org/nowpap/zh-hans>

¹⁵ 中华人民共和国生态环境部 (MEE) https://www.mee.gov.cn/ywdt/hjywnews/202409/t20240930_11087260.shtml

and resource endowment. During the cooperation process, each country has its own distinct interests, making it difficult to establish a unified mechanism for coordinating interests. In regional economic cooperation, conflicts of interest arise among countries regarding issues like trade rules and market access, resulting in difficulties in reaching and implementing cooperation agreements. For instance, during the formulation of regional trade agreements, negotiations have frequently reached a stalemate due to the different requirements of countries regarding the degree of market openness for agricultural and manufacturing products, thereby affecting the progress of regional economic cooperation.

These challenges and problems have severely constrained the in-depth development of international cooperation on SDGs among Northeast Asian countries and demand joint efforts to identify effective solutions.

4. China's practice

4.1 Cooperative positions

In the international cooperation on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in Northeast Asia, China has adopted a positive, open, and cooperative stance, as illustrated below:

First, China adheres to multilateralism and win-win cooperation. China advocates that countries in Northeast Asia should jointly promote the achievement of the SDGs through multilateral cooperation mechanisms within the framework of the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. It also emphasizes that all countries should abandon the zero-sum mentality,¹⁶ seek common interests, and attain mutual benefits and win-win results.

Secondly, China advocates openness, inclusiveness, and equal participation. In the cooperation on the SDGs in Northeast Asia, China advocates openness and inclusiveness and welcomes the participation of all countries in the region as well as relevant international organizations, regardless of their size, strength, or economic status. All participants are expected to enjoy equal status and have a say in the cooperation and be involved in the planning, implementation, and supervision of cooperation projects.

Thirdly, China emphasizes green development and innovation. China has integrated the concept of green development into the cooperation on the SDGs in Northeast Asia, stressing the coordination and coexistence of economic development and

environmental protection. It promotes cooperation among countries in areas such as clean energy, energy conservation and emission reduction, and ecological protection. Meanwhile, China also focuses on innovation-driven cooperation, encouraging countries to strengthen exchanges and cooperation in fields like the digital economy and scientific and technological innovation, with the aim of promoting the achievement of the SDGs through innovative means.

Fourthly, China emphasizes the priority of development and a livelihood-oriented approach. China holds that the core of the SDGs is development. In its cooperation in Northeast Asia, it has always given high priority to promoting the economic and social development of all countries and has been committed to facilitating infrastructure construction, trade and investment facilitation, etc., so as to drive the resolution of livelihood issues, such as employment and poverty reduction, with the intention of enabling more people to benefit from the fruits of cooperation.

4.2 Key issues

In the process of China's promotion of international cooperation on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in Northeast Asia, it faces a number of key issues,¹⁷ which are summarized as follows:

Environment: Against the backdrop of global climate change, the issue of carbon emissions has become one of the main focuses of attention. Meanwhile, China is also facing several more complex and urgent ecological challenges. Water pollution, soil degradation, and loss of biodiversity are all intertwined, posing serious threats to China's ecological balance and sustainable development. To address these complex ecological problems, it is necessary to formulate and implement effective measures in a comprehensive and multi-dimensional manner and strive to realize the harmonious coexistence of human activities and the natural environment, thereby ensuring the stability of the ecosystem and the steady progress of the goal of sustainable development.

Social dimension: With the continuous urbanization process, the aging of the population and the profound transformation of the employment structure, China's social infrastructure is at a critical stage of transition. This trend has had a decisive impact on the country's core social issues. In this process, issues such as social security, pension services and employment quality have gradually come to the forefront and become the focus of great attention from all sectors of society.

Moreover, the disparities among different social groups in

¹⁶ 中国社会科学网 (CSSN) https://www.cssn.cn/skgz/bwyc/202410/t20241029_5797214.shtml

¹⁷ 廖天舒, 吴淳, 朱晖, 刘冰冰. 中国可持续发展实践之路: 助力商业向善及更高水平开放 [R]. 2023.03 <https://web-assets.bcg.com/3f/9d/6cf9743740fdb45d9131c752aa30/bcg-china-pathway-to-a-sustainable-future-chn-mar-2023.pdf>

terms of income levels, educational attainment and access to public services have created an urgent need for policy support and effective interventions to safeguard social equity and ensure social stability and harmony, which are essential foundations for the sustainable development of society as a whole.

Governance: China has a large number of state-owned enterprises (SOEs) covering a wide range of areas, and its capital market is still relatively underdeveloped, which places higher demands on the comprehensiveness and effectiveness of domestic governance. As an important pillar of the national economy, SOEs play a pivotal role in economic development. Hence, they need to be guided by a sound and scientific governance mechanism to continuously strive to improve management efficiency, optimize the industrial layout, and enhance the innovation capacity.

On the other hand, the healthy development of the capital market is of great significance for optimizing the allocation of resources and promoting the growth of the real economy. Therefore, strengthening the construction of the capital market and further improving its regulatory system have become the key measures to cope with the challenges of economic governance and ensure the smooth and healthy operation of the entire economic system.

4.3 Path exploration

The Global Development Initiative (GDI) is an important concept and action strategy put forward by China to promote the cause of global development. Adhering to the people-centered principle as well as the concepts of inclusive and balanced development and harmonious coexistence between human beings and nature, the GDI focuses on eight areas, namely poverty alleviation, food security, anti-epidemic and vaccine, financing for development, climate change and

green development, industrialization, digital economy, and interconnectivity, with the goal of promoting stronger, greener and healthier global development. Figure 1 is a road map of China's Global Development Initiative for realizing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Against the backdrop of global development initiatives, the exploration of an effective path for international cooperation on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in Northeast Asia needs to focus on five key elements: strengthening policy communication and coordination, deepening cooperation in the economic field, enhancing cooperation in science, technology and innovation, promoting cooperation in the social and humanistic fields, and constructing an enterprise-led participation and cooperation model.

I. Enhancing Policy Communication and Coordination

-Establishing a Regular High-Level Dialogue Mechanism

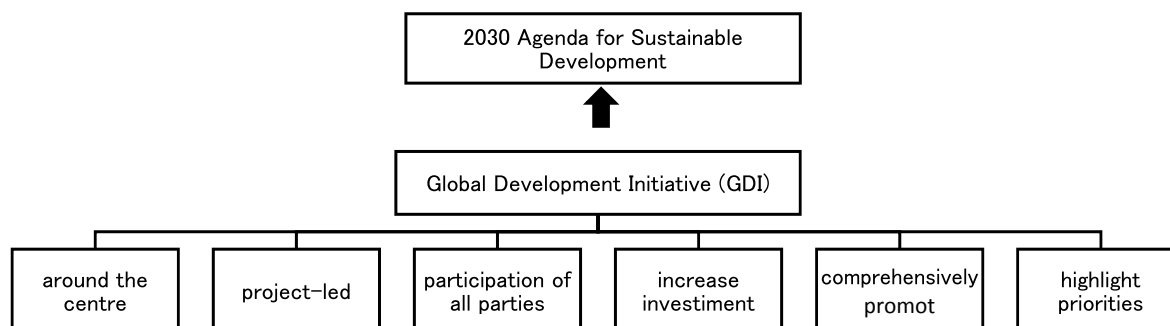
Northeast Asian governments need to set up a regular high-level meeting mechanism. This mechanism should mainly focus on issues related to the cooperation on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Through it, in-depth communication and coordination can be carried out regarding strategic planning, policy formulation, and the implementation of major sustainable development projects in the region.

For example, when it comes to climate change policies, these governments can jointly discuss and establish regional carbon emission targets and energy transition timetables. Such collaboration helps build a unified policy framework. By taking these steps, the synergy of policy orientations among different countries can be ensured, and obstacles to cooperation caused by policy differences can be effectively avoided.

-Improving the Policy Connection and Mutual Recognition Mechanism

It's crucial to conduct a systematic review of existing SDGs-

Figure 1 *Pathway map for the implementation of global development initiatives*



Source: China International Development Knowledge Center, National Development Initiative Implementation Progress Report 2023.¹⁸

¹⁸ 中国国际发展知识中心(CIKD). 全球发展倡议落实进展报告[R]. https://www.mfa.gov.cn/web/wjlb_673085/zzjg_673183/gjjs_674249/xgxw_674251/202306/P020230620670372006993.pdf

¹³ 中国科学院(CAS) https://www.cas.cn/cm/202407/t20240723_5026779.shtml

¹⁴ NOWPAP. <https://www.unep.org/nowpap/zh-hans>

¹⁵ 中华人民共和国生态环境部(MEE) https://www.mee.gov.cn/ywdt/hjywnews/202409/t20240930_11087260.shtml

related policies and regulations in each country. Then, active efforts should be made to promote the docking and mutual recognition of policies in core areas like trade, investment, environmental protection, and social welfare.

Take the construction of a green product certification mutual recognition system as an example. Under this system, products meeting the green standards of one country can enter the markets of other Northeast Asian countries without hindrance. This reduces enterprises' trade costs and stimulates the development of green industries, contributing significantly to achieving the goals of Sustainable Consumption and Production (SDG12).

II. Deepening Economic Field Cooperation

-Expansion of Green Trade, Green Supply Chain Building, and Trade Barrier Removal

Deepening economic cooperation calls for focusing on expanding green trade, constructing green supply chains, and eliminating trade barriers. The building of a green supply chain integrating raw material supply, production, logistics, and sales terminals should rely on each country's industrial strengths in the region.

For example, using Russia's rich timber resources as a starting point, green processing and manufacturing can be done in China. Then, leveraging Japan and South Korea's efficient logistics networks helps introduce green furniture and related products to the market. This realizes green and sustainable development across the supply chain and fosters a positive interaction between regional economic growth and ecological protection.

Through bilateral or multilateral negotiations, efforts should be made to gradually cut and even remove tariff and non-tariff barriers for green products and sustainable services. Simplifying customs clearance and enhancing trade facilitation are also vital. These steps will boost the scale of green trade in the region and drive the regional economy towards a sustainable model.

-Strengthening Cross-Border Investment, Guiding Green Investment, and Establishing an Investment Guarantee

Governments are key to strengthening cross-border investment cooperation. They should introduce preferential policies to guide domestic and foreign enterprises to invest in regional sustainable sectors like renewable energy, environmental protection, and the recycling economy.

Encouraging Japanese and South Korean enterprises to invest in China for new energy auto parts production bases is significant. By leveraging China's market and industrial support advantages, the competitiveness of the region's new energy auto industry can be jointly enhanced, contributing to achieving goals like clean energy (SDG7) and industrial innovation (SDG9).

Moreover, building a comprehensive cross-border investment protection mechanism, including agreements and dispute settlement, is essential. It safeguards investors' rights, boosts

enterprises' confidence in cross-border investment, and attracts more funds for sustainable projects in Northeast Asian countries.

III. Reinforcing Cooperation in Science, Technology, and Innovation

-Implementation of Joint Scientific Research Projects

Conducting joint scientific research projects is crucial for strengthening cooperation in science, technology, and innovation. Focusing on key SDGs-related scientific issues like marine ecological protection, resource sustainable utilization, and climate change responses, we should organize scientific research institutions, universities, and enterprises from various countries to jointly carry out such projects.

Establishing a joint research fund for financial support is necessary. Also, a rational mechanism for sharing intellectual property rights and transforming research achievements should be formulated. This ensures prompt application of research outcomes to sustainable development work, enhancing the regional collaborative innovation capacity in science and technology.

-Construction of a Platform for Scientific and Technological Exchanges

The establishment of a scientific and technological exchange platform is significant for promoting cooperation. We should organize international seminars and academic conferences, and build an online cooperation platform.

Regularly arranging Northeast Asian sustainable development-related seminars and forums, and inviting experts and representatives from different countries to participate is essential. Through sharing the latest findings, advancements, and experiences, it facilitates information exchange, stimulates innovative thinking, and promotes interdisciplinary and cross-regional cooperation.

With the Internet's help, the online platform enables research entities from different countries to release requirements, seek cooperation, and conduct exchanges. It breaks time and space limitations, creates a continuous cooperation atmosphere, and accelerates the popularization and application of achievements in the region.

IV. Facilitating Cooperation in the Social and Humanistic Spheres

-Strengthening Educational and Cultural Exchanges

To boost cooperation in social and humanistic aspects, intensifying educational and cultural exchanges is vital. This includes implementing student exchange programs, joint training, and arranging diverse cultural activities.

Specifically, expanding student exchanges among Northeast Asian universities is needed, along with increasing quotas for majors related to sustainable development. Also, actively promoting joint postgraduate cultivation is key, which involves

formulating plans together, integrating educational strengths of each country, and cultivating professionals with an international vision and understanding of regional sustainable development. Through these, human resources can be reserved for future cooperation.

Moreover, organizing cultural festivals, art exhibitions, etc., showcases unique cultural charm, deepens mutual understanding, and promotes sustainable concepts in traditional cultures, thus stabilizing the cultural foundation for sustainable development.

-Promoting Cooperation between Civil Organizations and Volunteers

Fostering cooperation between civil organizations and volunteers is another crucial part. It means supporting cooperation among civil environmental protection groups and setting up a volunteer service exchange platform.

Encouraging such organizations from different countries to enhance cooperation and conduct activities like environmental protection publicity is important. For example, jointly launching bird migration route protection activities and organizing volunteers for monitoring. This gathers civil society strength to protect the ecological environment and increases people's participation and recognition of the SDGs.

The Northeast Asia volunteer service exchange platform allows volunteers from various countries to join sustainable development projects abroad, facilitating learning from different experiences and promoting exchanges and cooperation at the civil society level.

V. Business-Led Engagement and Cooperation

-Establishing a Clear Direction for Development

Enterprises in sustainable development must set a clear growth direction by precisely defining visions, strategies, and road maps. This helps them identify the path for sustainable growth, enabling pursuit with clear goals and plans, and steady, orderly progress along the set route.

-Reshaping Business Processes

Enterprises should focus on building a strong supply chain and comprehensively apply sustainable concepts to reshape core processes like procurement, production, and manufacturing. Thus, they can achieve core business transformation, ensuring strict compliance with sustainable principles and laying a solid foundation at the process level.

-Innovating in Investment and Financing Management

Enterprises are to proactively manage sustainable investment and financing, explore innovative business and operation paths, and develop new segments in related fields. This proactive stance brings diverse opportunities, promotes overall sustainable development, and enhances market competitiveness and sustainable achievement ability.

-Strengthening Multi-Party Collaboration and Information

Management

Enterprises need to intensify sustainable data analysis and disclosure for timely, accurate, and transparent presentation. Also, vigorously promote multi-party cooperation, establish extensive relationships, and adjust the talent mechanism timely to have a suitable talent team.

Implementing these initiatives empowers enterprises' all-round sustainable transformation, helping them adapt to changes and realize sustainable growth.

5. Conclusion

In the current context of deepening globalization, with the world confronting unprecedented global challenges, the traditional model relying solely on economic growth to drive development is obsolete. Nowadays, the concept of sustainable development has swiftly emerged and is globally recognized as a core development trend. Its importance is evident as it closely ties to human society's ability to attain long-term well-being and stable, healthy progress in the future.

International cooperation has always been crucial in realizing the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). It serves as a solid bridge connecting different countries and regions, offering a vital platform and mechanism for resource pooling and concerted action. Notably, highlighting the irreplaceable significance of further strengthening international cooperation on the SDGs in Northeast Asia is essential for more efficient and comprehensive global development. The Northeast Asian region hosts numerous countries with distinct economic, cultural, and technological features. Deep and extensive cooperation among them would surely create a potent development synergy, significantly impacting the global sustainable development pattern.

From the perspective of the practical implementation of the SDGs and related methodology, proactively learning from countries' past experiences and meticulously exploring cooperation potential in sustainable development is of great practical value. It injects a stronger and more enduring impetus into economic and social transformation. This helps participants avoid risks and detours when facing complex global challenges and accelerates global sustainable development, enabling mankind to reach a more ideal and balanced state in resource utilization, environmental protection, and social equity, thus laying a solid foundation for humanity's long-term future.

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北東アジアにおけるSDGsの国際協力： 中国の実践と模索(要旨)

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2015年に国連で採択された17の目標を指す「持続可能な開発目標(SDGs)」は、経済、社会、環境の3つの側面から、地球規模の持続可能な開発を推進することを目的としている。北東アジアの重要な大国として、中国は世界の持続可能な開発に積極的に参加し、自国内で持続可能な開発戦略を推進する上で目覚ましい成果を達成しており、北東アジアにおけるSDGsに関する国際協力において重要な役割を果たしてきた。現在、北東アジアの持続可能な開発協力が直面している地政学的対立やその他の困難に鑑みれば、北東アジアのSDGs国際協力における中国の実践的な道筋を深く研究することは、中国が地域協力において自国の優位性を十分に活用し、責任を果たし、相互利益とウィンウィンの結果を達成するのに役立つだけでなく、北東アジアの持続可能な開発に関する問題の解決に向けた新たな視点を提供し、北東アジア地域における各国間の協力を促進し、北東アジアにおける「持続可能な開発のための2030アジェンダ」の実施を促進することが可能となる。