**Country:** China

**Committee:** United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP)

**Agenda Item:** Access to Clean Water Supplies in the LDCs

China, officially the People's Republic of China (PRC), is a country in East Asia. It is the world's most populous country, with a population exceeding 1.4 billion, slightly ahead of India. China spans the equivalent of five time zones and borders fourteen countries by land, the most of any country in the world, tied with Russia. With an area of approximately 9.6 million square kilometres (3,700,000 sq mi), it is the world's third largest country by total land area.

Clean water and sanitation are essential to sustain human life and support economic development. Unfortunately, many regions in China still face challenges in accessing safe and clean water supplies. In this position paper, we will discuss the importance of funding new projects to address the clean water and sanitation problem in China, raising awareness of proper water use, and suggest additional measures to improve the situation.

Access to water and sanitation is the basic rights of the human being. China is the country with the most population in the world. The population in the rural areas supplied by tap water was 370 million. The population in the rural areas supplied by the distributed water sources including the central water sources, hand wells, water pools and water cellars ect., was 520 million. According to the investigation of the health departments and assessment of UN agencies, there are about 34% rural population existed in unsafe drinking water supply, with about 320 million populations. 2002 Water Law (Article 54) defines that “the government at the various levels should implement positive methods to improve drinking water supply”.

China’s water resources are not only scarce, but also hugely impacted by pollution. High economic growth followed by rapid industrialization and urbanization have increased both demand for clean water and water pollution. According to data presented by the Joint Monitoring Program for Water Supply and Sanitation of WHO and UNICEF in 2015, about 36% of the rural population in China still did not have access to improved sanitation.

Decades of poor water and waste management have left much of China’s surface water and groundwater severely polluted. More than 80 percent of China’s water supply comes from surface water, such as rivers and lakes. Lakes in China are also heavily polluted. Lake Tai, in eastern China, is the country’s third-largest freshwater lake and one of the most polluted. In 2007, decades of industrial pollution culminated in a major algae bloom that killed off much of the lake’s animal life and forced millions of nearby residents to drink from bottled water. In terms of “water stress,” which the World Resource Institute (WRI) defines as a ratio of the total amount of water withdrawals to available renewable water supplies. According to the WRI, China suffers from medium-high water stress and is the 56th most water-stressed country in the world.

Water pollution carries serious economic and social costs. In the first half of 2017 alone, China spent an estimated RMB 667.4 billion ($100.2 billion) on nearly 8,000 water cleanup projects. Water pollution in heavily industrialized areas has also been linked to higher rates of cancer. A 2012 study found that the deterioration of drinking water by a single grade (on the MEE’s scale) can increase the death rate of digestive cancer by 9.7 percent.

In 2015, China’s State Council issued the Water Pollution Prevention and Control Action Plan, which set targets for improving water quality by 2030. The National People’s Congress passed major revisions to the Water Pollution Prevention and Control Law in 2018 – the first update to the law in a decade. A key feature of the legislation was the establishment of a system of “river chiefs” and “lake chiefs” that makes local officials responsible for addressing pollution in specific bodies of water. In January 2020, the MEE announced a five-year plan to restrict farming near major rivers, which is aimed at limiting water pollution from agricultural runoff.

Climate change is also expected to increase the occurrence of droughts, flooding, and other extreme weather and rising global temperatures will contribute to the melting of Himalayan glaciers and snowpacks, which are the source of many rivers in China. This will cause greater seasonal volatility of water levels in China’s rivers, and in the long term it will lead to decreased availability of water.

The Chinese government has been investing in water treatment and management systems to improve water quality, but additional funding is required to implement new projects. These projects can focus on upgrading existing treatment facilities, building new facilities, and improving the distribution network for clean water. Private companies can also be encouraged to invest in these projects through tax incentives and other benefits.In this case, we suggest the following measures to further improve the situation:

Participation of NGO’s : Alongside the Chinese government, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in the country have contributed to the fight against water scarcity and unhygienic practices with their own projects, such as the CEPF, have designed their projects to complement the government’s national agenda and its “Green Mountains and Clear Waters” project with Ping An Insurance has installed water purification systems in 10 primary schools and provided more than 2,500 students and teachers with filtered drinking water.

Raising awareness and acknowledging in education : We suggest that educational campaigns be launched to educate people on the importance of water conservation and proper use. China will implement water conservation activities and educational programs in the national education curriculum to support these efforts, as well as continuing publicity activities (such as China Water Week and National Urban Water Conservation Publicity Week).

Encourage the use of modern technologies: Advanced technologies such as nanofiltration and reverse osmosis can be used to remove contaminants from water sources. The Chinese government can incentivize companies to adopt these technologies to improve the quality of water. To make its cities more resilient to water scarcity, China launched the “sponge city” initiative in 2015 to capture and re-use more rainfall.

Develop an effective regulatory framework: The government should strengthen the regulatory framework for water management, which includes setting standards for water quality, monitoring water sources, and enforcing regulations to prevent pollution.

At the national level, China’s State Council issued country-wide water management objectives in 2012 known as the “Three Red Lines.” These include limiting national water use to 700 billion m3 per year, increasing the efficiency of industrial water use, and expanding the share of major water sources meeting national quality standards by the year 2030.

Collaborate with other countries and international organizations: China can collaborate with other countries and international organizations to share knowledge and resources to address water management issues. This includes partnering with countries that have successfully addressed similar challenges. As there are a lot of dams that are associated with the Chinese companies in the South Asia, at which China is specialized in upstream dam building and make investments for renewable energy for climate change.

In conclusion, addressing the clean water and sanitation problem in China requires a multi-pronged approach. Funding new projects, raising awareness, and implementing additional measures such as the use of modern technologies, an effective regulatory framework, and collaboration with other countries and international organizations are essential to ensuring access to safe and clean water for all.