

is the National Environmental Protection Agency (NEPA). It became an independent agency in 1988, but does not have full status as a ministry. The NEPA reports to both the State Council and the SEPC, for which it acts as a secretariat. In practice, the SPC likely plays a dominant role in "balancing" environmental and economic development plans.

The NEPA is responsible for all aspects of environmental policy and management of environmental protection, although it shares authority for certain specific natural resources with other agencies. For example, marine environment affairs are managed primarily by the State Oceanographic Administration and the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries. Authority in conservation issues rests primarily with the natural resources ministries, such as the Ministry of Forestry and the Ministry of Energy. The NEPA has a small staff of about 300 at the national level. But this number is misleading, as several institutions report to NEPA.⁸⁰ Moreover, most environmental protection policy is implemented at the subnational level. Below the national level, the environmental protection network includes provincial, municipal and county environmental protection agencies. Collectively, these bureaus employ about 60,000 people. Additional staff employed in specific ministries would further increase the total number of people engaged in environmental activities. All told, China has a substantial bureaucracy to address environmental issues.

In response to the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development's call for all countries to develop sustainable development policies, the Chinese government tasked the State Planning Commission and the State Science and Technology Commission in consultation with appropriate ministries and agencies to formulate such policies. This work concluded with State Council approval in March 1994 of the "White Paper on China's Population, Environment, and Development in the 21st Century", otherwise known as "China's Agenda 21". A Priority Programme document sets out initial work to support the implementation of China's Agenda 21. The governments intent is that China's Agenda 21 will "function as a guide document for drawing up medium and long-term plans on economic and social development."⁸¹

The White Paper and the Priority Programme are extensive. China's Agenda 21 is set out in 20 chapters which the Chinese have grouped into four major sections. The first section deals with overall strategies for sustainable development, including

⁸⁰ibid., p.64.

⁸¹Government of China, White Paper on China's Population, Environment, and Development in the 21st Century, Beijing, 1994, p.3.