

New Rule to Improve UNESCO Global Geoparks in China

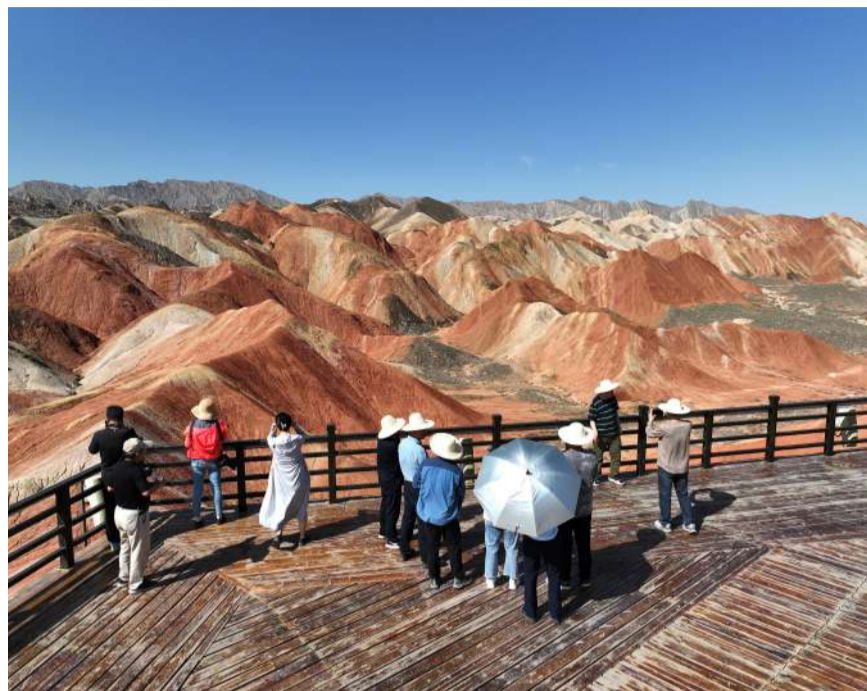
Policy

By ZHONG Jianli

China's National Forestry and Grassland Administration (NFGA) has issued a regulation to enhance the conservation and management of the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) Global Geoparks in the country and promote their sustainable development.

Global geoparks are single, unified geographical areas where sites and landscapes of international geological significance are managed with a holistic concept of protection, education and sustainable development.

Up to now, there are 195 UNESCO Global Geoparks in 48 countries, with China having 41, the highest number in the world. They include landmarks such as the Xiangxi UNESCO Global Geopark in Hunan province, Yimeng Mountain UNESCO Global Geopark in Shandong, as well as the Shennongjia UNESCO Global Geopark in Hubei, which is also a UNESCO World Natural Heritage Site and a Man and the Biosphere Reserve.



Tourists visit the Colorful Danxia Scenic Spot in Zhangye city, northwest China's Gansu province. The site was approved as an UNESCO Global Geopark in 2020. (PHOTO: VCG)

An NFGA spokesperson said the regulation provides a framework for the declaration, revalidation, zone modification and daily management of these geoparks, standardizing their management and filling a gap in domestic regulations,

playing an important role in promoting their high-quality development in China.

The regulation stipulates the conditions and applying procedures for an area to become a global geopark, as well as the documents required at different stages.

To better align with international standards, the NFGA is expected to compile a list of the areas in China that could qualify as UNESCO Global Geoparks based on applications from such areas. The areas included in the list should operate in accordance with UNESCO Global Geopark standards for at least one year to be eligible for domestic recommendation.

If any of the existing geoparks want to alter their size, the regulation outlines the application procedures and documents required for two types of modifications: those requesting to change their size by less than 10 percent and those wanting changes equal to or greater than 10 percent.

The administrations of the UNESCO Global Geoparks in China should establish conservation and management systems, set up websites, databases and archives, and work with research institutions and communities to enhance public awareness of these areas. In addition, they should fulfill their responsibilities as members of the Global Geopark Network, participate in global and regional conferences, establish sister parks, and strengthen international exchanges in the field of geoparks.

Case Study

Traditional Chinese Medicine Thriving in Hubei

By LI Linxu

Thanks to strong sci-tech support, the development of Traditional Chinese Medicine (TCM) is gaining new impetus in Hubei province.

By the end of 2025, the output value of Hubei's TCM sector is expected to reach 100 billion RMB, according to a development plan for the province's TCM industry released in 2022.

Under the plan, Hubei will cultivate three leading enterprises in the sector with an output value exceeding five billion RMB.

To achieve such goals, the province is laying out an all-round, multi-tiered and high-level sci-tech innovation platform system.

Focusing on the health of an aging population, the province kicked off the construction of Hubei Shizhen Laboratory last year, which has enlisted six academicians as its chief scientists.

Leveraging Hubei's TCM resources and advantages, the lab has made significant progress in tackling the R&D bottlenecks of TCM since its establishment.

Besides the lab, Hubei has estab-

lished 83 innovation platforms and bases in the fields of basic research and clinical research of TCM, including eight provincial key labs, three provincial clinical medicine research centers, three industrial technology research institutes, and a technological innovation consortium.

Now, the province's coordinated innovation platform system is pooling the concerted efforts of innovation, talent, capital and industries.

Meanwhile, the Department of Science and Technology of Hubei Province and other relevant departments are rolling out corresponding support measures to spur innovation and high-quality development of its TCM industries.

With such strong support and favorable environment for TCM, Hubei is making great strides in new drug discoveries of TCM. In 2023, six research findings in the TCM sector won the province's sci-tech awards.

In recent years, Hubei has been among the leading provinces in the country in the number of new drug approvals for the production and clinical research in category 1 of TCM, according to official statistics.



A medicinal herb grower dries Poria in Luotian county, Hubei province. (PHOTO: XINHUA)

Measures to Boost Offshore Trade

By LI Linxu

In its latest move to promote high-standard opening up, China has rolled out a new preferential policy in the China (Shanghai) Pilot Free Trade Zone (FTZ) and the zone's Lingang Special Area.

Offshore trade in these areas will be exempt from stamp tax during trial, effective from April 1, 2024 to March 31, 2025, according to a circular jointly issued by the Ministry of Finance and the State Taxation Administration.

Entities registered in these areas conducting offshore trade business will

benefit from the new policy.

Offshore trade refers to services associated with the trading of goods which are purchased from a non-resident enterprise and then sold to another non-resident enterprise without the goods ever entering or leaving the country.

The development of offshore trade, an important business model in FTZs, reflects an FTZ's competitiveness in international market, as well as its capability in global market resource allocation.

In recent years, offshore trade has been booming in China's FTZs. In Lin-

gang Special Area, its offshore trade scale doubled each year in the last two years, according to the latest statistics.

Notably, in 2021, Lingang Special Area rolled out 24 measures to support offshore trade, focusing on cultivating offshore trade industrial clusters, facilitating international settlement and financing, and innovating regulation models.

Last December, the State Council approved a general plan for advancing institutional opening-up of the China (Shanghai) Pilot FTZ in alignment with high-standard international economic

and trade rules.

In response to the plan, Shanghai issued a detailed implementation program in January, and released its latest version of an action plan to build a world-class business environment in February, vowing to build Lingang Special Area into an institutional innovation highland for business environment.

The exemption of stamp tax in the pilot areas is an important step to align with high-standard international economic and trade rules. It will cut costs for offshore trade and attract more investors to do offshore trade in these areas.

Key Tasks Unveiled to Uplift Public's Digital Literacy

By LI Linxu

As part of efforts to build a digital powerhouse, China is trying to promote the public's digital literacy and skills

this year.

This year marks three decades of China officially gaining access to the Internet. A document, jointly issued by four government bodies, including the Office

of the Central Cyberspace Affairs Commission and the Ministry of Education, calls for making new progress in uplifting the digital literacy and skills of the public.

By the end of this year, the public's digital literacy and skills in China are expected to rise to a new level, with a more complete training system, and a more convenient digital life, said the document.

As the construction of a digital barrier-free environment goes full-steam ahead, the digital divide among various groups will be further narrowed.

To achieve the goals, the document laid out a series of key tasks in six areas, including training high-caliber personnel, bridging digital gaps, and promoting digital economy.

Expanding more scenarios for digital life, building a healthier cyberspace, and enhancing relevant guarantees and coordination are also among the key tasks.

Efforts will be made to boost the digital literacy and skills of teachers and students, and more high-level digital craftsmen, village digital talents and industrial digital personnel will be cultivated.

Efforts will also be made to accelerate the digital transformation of enterprises, enlarge the supply of high-quality resources and expand the demand space for digital consumption.

Relevant parties are urged to actively take part in international cooperation and exchanges.

In recent years, significant achievements have been made in the country's digital push to boost its citizens' digital literacy and skills.

As of June 2023, China had 1,079 million netizens, up 11.09 million over December 2022, and its Internet penetration had reached 76.4 percent, up 0.8 percentage point over December 2022, according to the latest statistics.



Students make VR practices in a vocational education center. (PHOTO: XINHUA)

Green Development Gains Momentum in Beijing's Sub-city Center

By LI Linxu

With the approval of an implementation plan for building a national green development demonstration zone, Beijing's sub-city center is gaining new momentum.

Dedicated to speeding up building a new development paradigm, the zone, part of Beijing's sub-city center, should strive to save and recycle resources, according to a circular recently released by the State Council.

Aiming to achieve carbon peak and carbon neutrality, it should focus on the key sectors of construction, transportation and industries, said the circular.

The supporting role of energy, ecology and culture will be greatly strengthened in the zone.

Efforts will be made to coordinate the industrial structural adjustment, pollution control, ecological conservation and climate response.

The zone will also promote concerted efforts to cut carbon emissions, reduce pollution, expand green development and pursue economic growth.

Green development philosophy should be integrated into all areas and processes of the economic and social development of Beijing's sub-city center, as per the circular.

The Beijing municipal government is urged to reinforce organization and leadership, improve work mechanism, formulate corresponding policies and implement responsibilities, ensuring that the goals will be reached and tasks will be fulfilled in time.

The circular stressed that major policies, projects and programs should be submitted for approval as per procedures. Supporting measures will be rolled out later by the relevant ministries and departments to facilitate policy implementation, institutional innovation and project construction.

By 2025, Beijing's sub-city center will basically have the functions of a green city, forest city, sponge city, smart city, cultural city and livable city, according to a document on supporting the high-quality development of the sub-city center released by the State Council in 2021.



The Grand Canal Forest Park in Tongzhou district, Beijing. (PHOTO: XINHUA)

Understanding China's New Quality Productive Forces

From page 1

It is necessary to accelerate the improvement of underlying institutions in areas such as property rights protection, market access, fair competition and social credit to build a high-standard socialist market economy system.

China, after years of rapid growth, is shifting toward an economy characterized by high-quality development and industrial upgrading.

By fostering new quality productive

forces, it hopes to transform traditional industries, making them more advanced, intelligent and environmentally friendly. This transition is vital for improving productivity, efficiency and global competitiveness.

For example, China's push toward intelligent mining exemplifies this shift. By introducing advanced technologies in the coal mine industry, China aims to enhance production safety and efficiency while reducing pollution.

The impact of new quality productive forces on China's economic structure is already evident. According to the National Bureau of Statistics, there has been significant year-on-year growth in sectors like new energy vehicles, solar cell production, and service robots. China's global standing in R&D investment and innovation indices further underscores its commitment to these new forces.

Looking to the future, these new forces are expected to drive growth in

emerging sectors. The rapid adoption of technologies like AI and blockchain demonstrates this trend. The government plans to spearhead development in future industries such as quantum technology and life sciences, while establishing high-tech zones dedicated to these cutting-edge sectors.

New quality productive forces are poised to become a major driver of China's economy, playing a crucial role in China's high-quality development.