

**INSTITUTIONAL RESTRUCTURING
OF CHINA'S ENVIRONMENTAL
AND ECOLOGICAL PROTECTION
EFFORTS IN 2018**

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Executive Summary

1. One of the most important changes in China's institutional reform initiated in 2018 is the formation of the Ministry of Natural Resources (MNR) and the Ministry of Ecology and Environment (MEE).
2. This change is to integrate China's decentralised ecological environmental protection responsibilities, unify the supervision and administrative enforcement duties on ecological and pollution discharge, strengthen environmental pollution control and safeguard national ecological security.
3. The establishment of the two new ministries can also better distinguish between owner-related and supervisory functions. MNR will function as a natural resources asset management agency while MEE is a natural ecology regulatory agency.
4. MEE integrated many functions of other departments, expanding environmental protection to ecological and environmental protection, including the protection of the air and aquatic ecological environment, soil and groundwater, agriculture and rural ecological environment as well as the marine ecological environment.
5. The establishment of MEE is to realise "five unifications" for achieving the proposed 2020 targets of China's ecological environmental protection work: ecological environment quality improvement, total pollutant emission reduction and environmental risk management and control.
6. The "Five Unifications" are to unify (i) the ground and underground; (ii) the shore and water; (iii) land and sea; (iv) the city and countryside; and (v) carbon monoxide and carbon dioxide control.
7. With the establishment of MEE and the expansion of environment protection responsibilities, China's environmental policies and legislation will be more coordinated and unified.

8. The environmental supervision and protection implementation will be more effective. Environmental information will be more open and transparent in China. Enterprises in China will also face broader and stricter ecological environment quality requirements.
9. However, there are still challenges in China's future ecological environmental protection work. The ownership and management duties of resources of central and local governments still do not match. This has affected the enthusiasm of local governments in protecting ecological resources and the environment, and even caused the loss of assets.
10. On the other hand, institutional reform is not simply "moving" functions and responsibilities between departments. Some departments are difficult to adjust due to their overlapping functions. MEE and MNR still need inter-ministerial coordination for natural resource protection and pollution prevention.