China's State Council issued a white paper entitled "China's Policies and Actions for Addressing Climate Change" last week in advance of the climate negotiations in Durban. As several press reports have already pointed out, the white paper offers little new information, but is rather an effort to gather all of China's main climate initiatives in one comprehensive document.

If you are interested in the details, you should read the full report, which can be found here on the State Council's official website (and in Chinese). However, the basic thread of the report is as follows:

- **Climate change will negatively impact China.** Climate change is real and China will be harmed as a result. "In recent years, worldwide heat waves, droughts, floods and other extreme climate events have occurred." "China is one of the countries most vulnerable to the adverse effects of climate change… Climate change generates many negative effects on China's economic and social development." As was the case in its first National Climate Change Program released in 2007, there is no climate denial in China's official pronouncements.
- **But, China is still a poor, developing country.** **"**China is the world's largest developing country, with a large population, insufficient energy resources, complex climate and fragile eco-environment… China's per-capita GDP in 2010 was only a little more than RMB29000. By the UN standard for poverty, China still has a poverty-stricken population of over 100 million." Read: tackling climate change will be very difficult for China to do.
- **Even so, China has done and will continue to do a great deal to combat climate change.** This includes efforts on mitigation (optimizing industrial structure, improving energy efficiency, developing low-carbon energy, and expanding carbon sinks) and adaptation (agriculture, water resources, public health, and so on). China also points to efforts to build basic monitoring, statistics, and information disclosure capacity that has been under such international scrutiny since the Copenhagen negotiations. Moreover, China has involved the public in low-carbon efforts and been a cooperative international player. In China's 12th five-year plan, it has set forth a robust 11-point plan that extends efforts begun in earlier years.
- **Let's not forget though that developed countries created the problem in the first place.** **"**Developed countries should be responsible for their accumulative emissions during their 200-odd years of industrialization, which is the main reason for the current global warming, and they should naturally take

the lead in shouldering the historical responsibilities to substantially reduce emissions.”

- **Therefore, developed countries should take the lead by providing funding and technology to developing countries. “**With regard to capabilities, developed countries have substantial economic strength and advanced low-carbon technologies, while developing countries lack the financial strength and technologies to address climate change, and face multiple arduous tasks of developing their economies, fighting poverty and addressing climate change. Therefore, developed countries should, on the one hand, take the lead in reducing emissions substantially, and, on the other, provide financial support and transfer technologies to developing countries.”

The white paper surfaces two issues that will surely arise (again) in Durban. The first is the question of whether China is doing enough on climate change. The white paper is an effort to present China as a good global citizen on climate change, and indeed the range of climate-related initiatives China has established in recent years is impressive and important. However, given the magnitude and projected growth of China’s GHG emissions, other countries are asking whether China shouldn’t take on more obligations than the average “developing country.” The second issue is whether developed countries (namely the U.S. and E.U.) need to be doing more in terms of commitments, funding, and technology transfer given their historical contribution to climate change. Su Wei, one of China’s chief negotiators famously called the U.S. a “pig preening itself in the mirror” on climate change. The white paper makes the same point (albeit more subtly) by pointing to the West’s 200-plus years of industrialization and cumulative emissions.

Will this latest communications effort from China help to bring us closer to an international climate deal? We will see in the next two weeks, but for now expectations are low.