Keynote Speech from SAI China----Review and Outlook on Environmental Audit in Asia

Dear Colleagues, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good morning!

It is my great pleasure to attend today’s seminar. First, on behalf of Ms. Hu Zejun, Chair of ASOSAI WGEA and Auditor General of China, I would like to extend our warm welcome to delegates from member SAIs of ASOSAI, and to our colleagues from INTOSAI WGEA, as well as reginal WGEAs of ARABOSAI, AFROSAI and EUROSAI, And to express our heartfelt thanks for kind efforts and considerate arrangements of the host, SAI Thailand.Welcome to Khao Yai, a place of warmth in the middle of winter! I sincerely wish that upholding the notions of Green, Openness, Cooperation and Innovation, all of us can take this opportunity to improve mutual exchange, inspire each other so as to make common progress. Guided by our shared devotion to audit, let us exchange views and discuss concerned topics in the field of environmental audit, share experiences, and promote the progress and development of environmental audit with united efforts.

The time-honored friendship between China and other Asian countries dates back to ancient times. CNAO has been keeping exchange, communication and cooperation with all member SAIs of ASOSAI for a long time. In the current era of increased globalization, emerging situations and changes take place in the resources and environment of various countries. It can be said that we SAIs are taking up similar environmental protection duties and shouldering a shared historic mission. To this end, all SAIs shall work together to further improve environmental audit, strengthen exchange and cooperation, make contributions to sustained environmental improvement and sustainable development, so as to benefit the well-being of mankind.

Dear friends and colleagues:

Today, Asia boasts the greatest development vitality and potential in the world. Asia not only represents two-thirds of the global population and one third of the global economic aggregate, but also brings together a multitude of civilizations and ethnic groups. Peace, stability and development of Asia are closely tied with the future of mankind as well as the entire world. However, in recent decades, Asia has been plagued by a series of environmental problems, such as the sharp decline of forests, land desertification, air pollution, water body pollution and the loss of biodiversity. Some of these problems even threaten the very survival and quality of life in various countries. In order to deal with these problems, we SAIs and auditors have made unremitting efforts. In general, most member SAIs of ASOSAI attach great importance to environmental auditing, and have made remarkable achievements through its audit projects.

In October 2017, the Secretariat of ASOSAI WGEA distributed questionnaires to member SAIs. By the end of December 2017, feedback questionnaires were received from 18 member SAIs, namely: Afghanistan, Bhutan, China, Iran, Iraq, Japan, Kazakhstan, India, Indonesia, South Korea, Kuwait, Laos, Malaysia, Nepal, Pakistan, Russia, Thailand and Vietnam. The Secretariat has collected and summarized these feedbacks. Here I would like to share with you an overview of environmental audit carried out by the 18 member SAIs: 14 of them have set up institutions specialized in environmental audit (including those set up by 6 member SAIs in recent years). About 249 auditors dedicate themselves to environmental audit and all of have respective degree of higher education in environment, economics, engineering, law and others. In the past five years (2013-2017), these SAIs conducted at least 457 environmental audit projects in respect of water, solid waste, forest, biodiversity, land, air, minerals, energy, climate change and other fields relating to resource and environment. They issued a total of 225 audit reports, and put forward more than 500 audit suggestions. 4 member SAIs conducted cooperative audits in solid waste, energy, forest and other resource and environment fields.

13 member SAIs have developed strategic plans for environmental auditing in the upcoming years. In the next three years (2018-2020), these member SAIs plan to carry out audits on water, air, solid waste, biodiversity, forest, soil, grassland, minerals, ocean and other resource and environment fields. SAI Russia and SAI Iran have made plans to conduct cooperative environmental audits with other SAIs right in this year.

Dear friends and colleagues:

The Chinese Government attaches great importance to environmental protection and building an ecological civilization. Over the past five years, the Government put forward a people oriented concept of green development, made arrangement and demands for building an ecological civilization, and formed a strategic, systematic and overall top-level design for it. CNAO works hard for the overall goal to promote building an ecological civilization by launching a number of special-purpose environmental audits including nationwide land audit, mineral resources audit, pilot projects of natural resources accountability audit, audit on budget implementation of natural resources and environment administrations, audit on energy saving and environmental protection funds as well as audit on funds to prevent and control water pollution. These audits achieve satisfying effect and gains valuable experience in urging leading officials to fulfill environmental responsibility, making progress in implementing systematic reform of ecological civilization, revealing severe problems and potential risks in related fields as well as safeguarding national ecological security.

Last October saw the 19th National Congress of the Communist Party of China. This Congress lays stress on adhering to the principle of harmonious coexistence between man and nature as an important part of the Basic Policy to uphold and develop Socialism with Chinese Characteristics for a New Era. It defines pollution prevention and control as one of the three battles that need to take tough steps for securing a decisive victory in building a moderately prosperous society by 2020. It realizes building a beautiful China as a significant goal a to build a great modern socialist country In this regard, I want to stress that we must take The Congress calls on the people of all countries to work together to build a community with a shared future for mankind. We should be good friends to the environment, cooperate to tackle climate change, and protect our planet for the sake of human survival.

The Chinese Government upholds the basic national policy of resources conservation and environmental protection, acts on the understanding of “lucid waters and lush mountains are invaluable assets”, and cherishes the environment as we cherish our own lives. It comes up with the initiative for Speeding up Reform of the System for Developing an Ecological Civilization, and Building a Beautiful China. In the near future, CNAO will implement the decisions and arrangements of the Chinese Government to comprehensively carry out the natural resources accountability audit so as to facilitate leading officials to effectively fulfill their responsibility for natural resource assets administration and environment protection. CNAO aims to make sustained contributions in resolving severe environmental problems, promote green development and protecting the environment through audit, so as to facilitate building an ecological civilization.

Dear friends and colleagues:

In 2015, the Sustainable Development Goals were adopted at the United Nations Sustainable Development Summit, aiming to raise comprehensive solutions to development problems at the social, economic and environmental dimensions before 2030 so as to realize sustainable development of mankind. Among these 17 Goals and 169 Targets, many of them are closely related to natural resources and environment, such as “Ensure access to water and sanitation for all and sustainable management”; “Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts”; “Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources so as to promote sustainable development”; “Sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, halt and reverse land degradation, halt biodiversity loss”, etc.

For people all over the world, development not only implies survival and hope, but also symbolizes dignity and rights. In order to deal with various problems and challenges, the fundamental way out lies in realizing sustainable development. Only by development can people’s basic survival and life rights be guaranteed. Only by development can people’s ever-growing needs for a better life be satisfied. We should strive for sustainable economic, social and environmental development, to realize the harmonious coexistence between man and nature.

Dear friends and colleagues:

With bright outlook for the future, SAIs and auditors of all countries shall make efforts to improve the environment and achieve sustainable development. To this end, on behalf of CNAO, I would like put forward the following proposals:

—Each member SAI shall deepen environmental auditing practices. It is proposed that all SAIs shall further expand and advance environmental audit on the basis of the practices at current stage, highlight the characteristics of their own environment, and pay more attention to the fields of natural resources and environment that have significant impacts on sustainable development in respective nations.

—Each member SAI shall explore new technical methods for environmental audit. The resources and environment problems are characterized by extensiveness and complexity. Traditional auditing methods are unable to fully meet the demands of such audits. It is proposed that all SAIs shall explore new technical methods for environmental audit, vigorously utilize IT application and actively explore big data mode for audit, so as to improve the comprehensive use of environmental auditing data, and promote the efficiency and effectiveness of such audits.

—Each member SAI shall strengthen environmental auditing cooperation. The emerging problems are inter-regional so that environmental protection is not confined by national boundary. Therefore, it is proposed that all SAIs shall further intensify cooperation especially in the field of cooperative environmental audit.We would like to make a proposal on conducting parallel audits on the topics of common interest under the framework of ASOSAI WGEA in 2018. In this way, all member SAIs can set unified themes and objectives, take separate actions independently, and issue separate reports, while sharing experience, learning from each other and drawing on others’ strong points in the meantime. At the Seminar and subsequent Working Meeting, the Secretariat will further solicit opinions and suggestions, set up cooperative audit themes, and put forward cooperative plans so as to form a joint force of environmental audit and facilitate governance in this respect.

CNAO is always willing to join our hands with other SAIs to promote in-depth progress in environmental auditing and push forward the sustained environmental enhancement across Asia. Let us do our best to protect the environment so that the everlasting blue sky, white clouds, lush mountains and lucid waters can pass on from generation to generation!

In conclusion, I would like to wish the seminar and working meeting a complete success! May everyone enjoy a happy and memorable stay here in this beautiful country!

Thank you very much!