Background to This Research

This research was conducted by a joint research team with experts from the World Bank and China, the first time such research has been conducted in the history of cooperation between the two. The research was organized by China’s Ministry of Finance, the Development Research Center of the State Council (DRC), and the World Bank. The research work and report writing was undertaken by a joint team from the World Bank and the DRC. The joint team formally launched the research at its first working-level seminar held at Fragrant Hills in Beijing on November 23–26, 2010. The seminar set the vision of the research as building a modern, harmonious, and creative high-income society in China by 2030. Five research groups were established to study the subjects of structural reforms, innovation, green growth, social development, as well as China and the world. Over the following year, Chinese and foreign experts wrote background reports and jointly held a dozen seminars. The experts from the World Bank and the DRC also held working level seminars, conducted interviews and field research in relevant government agencies, cities, rural areas, and enterprises in China, and visited countries like Indonesia, Republic of Korea, and the Philippines. After finishing the first draft of the research report, the team solicited opinions from many experts. At a high-level international seminar held at the Diaoyutai State Guesthouse, both renowned domestic and international experts as well as leaders of China’s government departments and high ranking executives of China’s enterprises commented on the draft and raised many critical and constructive ideas. The team also asked for opinions and suggestions of relevant central government departments and local governments during different phases of the project. The team revised the report in line with these comments and suggestions and held a series of special seminars to address some prominent issues. The final report managed to reflect many of these diverse views, but without losing its focus and realism. Needless to say, the research was challenging. This was the first time that joint research was conducted by experts from the World Bank and China, who approached issues from different vantage points, held beliefs shaped by different experiences, and used different ways of organization and coordination. Moreover, China’s challenge over the next two decades will be nothing short of historic—taking 1.3 billion people from middle- to high-income status with the backdrop of an ongoing global financial crisis. While the research was more difficult than expected, it was always stimulating and occasionally fun. It was a good opportunity for sharing knowledge and experience, conducting joint analysis, and learning from Chinese and international experts of different persuasions. The research was a relentless process of identifying and discussing problems, deepening understanding, and attempting to bring forward creative ideas. Second, all members of the team approached the work with an open mind, and solicited opinions and suggestions from experts inside and outside China to push the discussions forward. Hours of debate helped in converging viewpoints and developing a common understanding. Finally, shared objectives and mutual respect between the Chinese and World Bank experts, their professionalism, and their effective collaboration ensured that the research work went smoothly. Hopefully, experience from this research will pave the way for more cooperative undertakings between China and the World Bank in the future.

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