

ADVANCING SUSTAINABLE COMPETITIVENESS OF CHINA'S TRANSNATIONAL CORPORATIONS

提高中国跨国公司的可持续竞争力

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Executive Summary

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Dr Long Guoqiang is a Senior Fellow and Deputy Director of the Foreign Economic Research Department of the Development Research Center of the State Council, People's Republic of China. His expertise lies in Chinese foreign economic policy (mainly international trade and foreign direct investment), macroeconomic policy, international finance, international economic cooperation, industrial policy, China's auto industry, China's grain issues, regional development, and special economic zones. Dr. Long is a former Visiting Fellow of Brookings Northeast Asia Center from 1998-1999 and former Senior Lecturer and Assistant Chair of Dept. of Urban and Regional Science, Branch Campus of Peking University from 1987-1993. Dr. Long is the winner of numerous awards, including the National Award for Excellence in Foreign Economic and Trade Studies, and the China Development Research Award. His publications include: Transnational Industrial Relocation and Industrial Upgrading (2007), China Commercial Press, Processing Trade: A New Path of Industrialisation (2001), China Development Press, The Opening of Great Nations and Grain Circulation (1999), China Development Press; The Magic Lamp of Arabia (1992), Jinan People's Press; Chinese Service Trade (1995), CITIC Publishing House; and Practical Real Estate Market Operations, (1994) The QunZhong Publishing House, along with numerous articles. He attended BS Peking University, 1987; and gained an MS in management science, Peking University, 1992; and a Ph.D. in economics at Peking University, 1998.



Dr Simon Zadek – AccountAbility

Dr Simon Zadek is Managing Partner of AccountAbility, a Senior Fellow at the Centre for Government and Business of Harvard University's Kennedy School, and an Honorary Professor at the University of South Africa's Centre for Corporate Citizenship. He sits on the International Advisory Board of Instituto Ethos, the Advisory Board of Generation Investment Management, and the Board of the International Centre for Trade and Sustainable Development. In 2003 he was named one of the World Economic Forum's 'Global Leaders for Tomorrow'. Previous roles include Visiting Professor at the Copenhagen Business School, the Development Director of the New Economics Foundation, and founding Chair of the Ethical Trading Initiative. He has authored numerous publications, including The Civil Corporation (2001), which has become a classic in the

field, honoured by the Academy of Management with the Management in Social Issues Award 2006. He works with many businesses in advancing sustainability strategies and practices: recent engagements include Alcoa, The Coca Cola Company, General Electric, and Nestle; and has supported the development of many sustainability standards initiatives, including the Global Reporting Initiative, the Voluntary Principles on Security and Human Rights and the Forest Stewardship Council.



Joshua Wickerham – AccountAbility

Joshua Wickerham is China Representative of AccountAbility. He researches responsible competitiveness in the greater Chinese context, including regional and international strategies and editing of the Chinese version of the State of Responsible Competitiveness 2007 with the WTO Tribune. He is responsible for all aspects of AccountAbility's Chinese operations, including city, regional and national research, such as survey work with Fortune China and regional Responsible Competitiveness with the Zhejiang Provincial Trade and Economic Committee and the Sino-German CSR Project. Joshua has been a visiting scholar at Tsinghua University's School of Public Management and received his Masters degree at the Graduate School of International Relations and Pacific Studies (IR/PS) at the University of California San Diego, majoring in international development. While at IR/PS, he received numerous awards, including Dean's Fellow and Switzer Foundation Fellow for ability to influence environmental change. He earned his undergraduate degree at the University of Michigan. Joshua writes journalistic, academic, and professional works on business, history, and music.

About this paper

This paper examines how the Chinese business community can best use international sustainability standards to enhance their competitiveness in global markets and more effectively place themselves on a sustainable economic pathway.

It highlights the opportunity for Chinese businesses, supported by enabling public policies, to become a force in shaping the next generation of sustainability standards in global markets as a competitive strategy consistent with China's broader interests. Doing so will require deeper engagement in existing standards initiatives, and a more explicit role amongst the communities that have developed and now govern them. Effective engagement in such standards is a means of off-setting competitive disadvantages, and creating competitive advantages when businesses and nations choose a more sustainable development path.

This paper sets out both strategic options for businesses and policy options for the Chinese government to realise sustainable development and competitiveness goals.

This work is part of the research project on China's "sustainable trade strategy" organised by the International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD), the State Council's Development Research Center, and the Chinese Ministry of Commerce. The work is funded by the Swiss State Secretariat for Economic Affairs (SECO) and also partnered with the Chinese Central Party School, the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, St. Gallens University, and the International Centre for Trade and Sustainable Development. The work remains the copyright of SECO and was commissioned by IISD. Research and writing by AccountAbility and the DRC. The full volume of work from this research is published in its entirety and is available for sale or upon request.

Sustainability, Soft Power and Competitiveness

“Responsible competitiveness... blends forward-looking corporate strategies, innovative public policies and engaged and vibrant civil societies. It is about creating a new generation of profitable products and business processes underpinned by rules that support societies’ broader social, environmental and economic aims.”

Pascal Lamy, Director General of the World Trade Organisation¹

For China to maintain a fast pace of economic growth, it must forge international competitiveness strategies, underpinned by increased resource efficiency and ‘harmonious development’. This is relevant both domestically and in relation to the needs and perspectives of other communities and nations.² Chinese business and government roles in promoting sustainable development³ are increasingly important in the global economy and global trade.⁴ Assuring the international community of the consistent and balanced application of this two-fold, interdependent pathway requires its consistent and demonstrably effective practice by China’s increasingly visible business community.⁵ Failure to achieve global recognition of China’s commitment to develop sustainably will accentuate the negative and threatening aspects of the China brand, which will in turn lead to restrictions in the scope of China’s business community in global markets, and so limit China’s economic success and its harmonious development, at home and internationally.

Credible and demonstrable sustainable development practices are, in short, a pre-requisite for China’s transition to a major economic and political global player. This requires the Chinese business community to, at a minimum, demonstrate compliance with environmental and social performance criteria enshrined in both inter-governmental agreements and national legislation of those countries in which Chinese businesses operate. Compliance with international and national law however, whilst necessary, is not sufficient for Chinese transnational corporations (CTNCs) to succeed in global markets, or for China to establish an acknowledged, benign presence and global role. Beyond these traditional legal frameworks are a more complex and dynamic category of rules evolved on the basis of norms, expectations and interests articulated by a wide variety of global citizens, including consumers, employees, investors and those active participants in more formal political processes. These interests are increasingly voiced through blended market signals and political processes that can be unfamiliar and uncomfortable for Chinese business. These blended processes can impact the financial bottom line of a business, in addition to being part of a wider evolution

of the role of business in society, and thus the relationship between business strategy, public policy and citizen action. Pascal Lamy, Director General of the World Trade Organisation, summarises the essence of this new trading environment by saying, “Responsible competitiveness...blends forward-looking corporate strategies, innovative public policies and engaged and vibrant civil societies. It is about creating a new generation of profitable products and business processes underpinned by rules that support societies’ broader social, environmental and economic aims.”⁶

Many of the rules that Mr. Lamy refers to are non-statutory sustainability standards that have been negotiated between businesses seeking to stabilise their operating environment, and civil society organisations seeking ‘civil regulation’ to govern international businesses beyond the scope governments are willing or able to legislate for.⁷ Governments and other public institutions are often involved, but in convening, mediating and financing roles, not as statutory agents overseeing the application of the law. Despite much debate, the WTO Technical Barrier to Trade (TBT) committee agreement has no guidelines on how such voluntary international standards bodies seek to influence market conditions through non-statutory means.⁸ The WTO has so far not reacted to such standards, with some scholars suggesting the WTO and members create “a norm of leaving ‘transnational regulatory space’” for sustainability standard setting.⁹

Most prominent are those sustainability-related standards developed through the International Standards Organisation (ISO), including ISO14000 environmental standards, and the ISO 26000 Social Responsibility Guidelines that are currently in development.¹⁰ But over the last decade, a new generation of sustainability standards has emerged to cover everything from global tea trade to extractive industries, carbon emissions, labour standards and sustainable forestry. The institutions that create and often subsequently steward these standards are mostly governed by coalitions of businesses, civil society organisations and public institutions. Due to their growing scale and wide convening power, these standards bodies increasingly play ‘gatekeepers’ to decide the legitimacy of international businesses that seek to operate profitably in global markets.¹¹ For example, accessing consumer markets, especially higher-value segments; purchasing premium branded foreign companies; and securing natural resources or international capital through public listings or private equity, all depend in no small part on a company’s ability to demonstrate its visible support of, and adherence to these standards. Further, many of these standards have moved out of the margin into the mainstream of global markets. Forestry, fisheries, textiles, mining, pharmaceuticals, finance and

chemicals are but a few of the sectors that now embed such standards in the heart of their respective international markets in pursuit of one or other aspects of sustainability.

Voluntary sustainability standards, often developed and stewarded by business with civil society, labour organisations and the state are, in this sense, a primary route through which businesses, and so the nations they are associated with, exercise ‘soft power’ in global markets in pursuit of international competitiveness and broader societal goals.

This paper focuses on how CTNCs can best engage in these ‘soft’ dimensions of international operations, and specifically how to deal with voluntary sustainability standards in securing competitiveness in global markets and fulfilling China’s broader policy aims. The ‘harder’ dimensions of China’s competitiveness, such as finance, information, technology and infrastructure, are perhaps better researched and understood, and are clearly necessary enablers of success in international markets and in furthering sustainable development objectives. However, these ‘softer’ dimensions, and crucially their relationship to these harder dimensions, are less well understood as a potential for enhanced competitiveness, but also for their potential restrictive impacts.

Avoiding adherence to such standards is the current pathway taken by most Chinese businesses. In many instances, Chinese businesses see these standards as inappropriate or difficult to adopt given the ‘residual’ markets open to Chinese late-comers. Centrally, however, most Chinese businesses do not engage because of unfamiliarity with the rules of the game, weak networks with the relevant organisations, and a lack of guidance from the Chinese Government, especially for state-owned enterprises. Furthermore, these initiatives are perceived by Chinese businesses as barriers to entry to global markets.¹² Indeed, whilst in the main not designed to prevent a new generation of businesses from emerging nations establishing themselves as global players, these standards have been developed and are in the main stewarded by Western businesses, acting with largely European and North American civil society organisations and public institutions. So whilst seeking, for example, to protect workers or forests, or reduce drug prices to poorer communities, they are in practice dominated by incumbent institutions and could become, or in some cases may be, ironically, actual impediments to sustainable development.

Emerging economy companies from other nations are increasingly gaining knowledge and overcoming suspicion about these voluntary mechanisms and the organisations behind them.

For example, Bolivia offers key lessons with its twelve years of using the Forest Stewardship Council standard to enforce its mandatory legal forest management, motivated by robust and credible verification, access to new markets and reputational gains.¹³ South Georgia uses the Marine Stewardship Council to certify the sustainability of its fish products, largely in response to an international campaign by the international NGOs that effectively convinced US restaurants to stop serving fish from this region.¹⁴ Increasingly, some emerging economy companies are becoming players in the design of new sustainability standards, notably in the case of the ISO 26000 standard, but also in the field of sustainability reporting and assurance through their engagement in the development and promotion of the Global Reporting Initiative's G3 Sustainability Reporting Guidelines and AccountAbility's AA1000 Sustainability Assurance Standard. Chinese businesses are, however, at a significant disadvantage to their emerging economy competitors in this regard. Compared, in particular, to companies in Brazil, India or South Africa, Chinese businesses lack experience, domestically, in engaging with civil society and creating active community partnerships that go beyond philanthropy in shaping market conditions.

Overall, avoidance of engagement in such standards initiatives is not a considered strategic option, but a default. As a result, Chinese businesses often automatically adopt immature strategies for themselves and China's broader good.

China's global prominence requires that it makes clear and visible decisions as to how to deal with such standards. But deciding whether to engage in any specific standards initiative must be informed by a broader strategic framing that places each initiative in relation to one of three possible pathways that China pursues in aligning its approach to sustainability, economic growth and associated competitiveness drivers:

- 1. Normalisation (Compliance):** where it serves China's interest to comply with prevailing sustainability standards, indicating a strategy of engagement on terms already established in international markets.
- 2. Exceptionalism (Opting out):** where China's optimal strategy is, in the short or longer term, to avoid compliance with prevailing international standards, relying instead on its own standards tailored to its own needs and preferences.

3. Transformational (Engaging and Influencing): where China's interest are best served by seeking to reshape international sustainability standards, whether by becoming active participants in existing initiatives, or by promoting alternatives as new international norms.

That is, China's response to specific sustainability standards should be based not on pre-conceived judgments, but on each according to their merits in relation to one or more of these pathways.

The paper concludes that:

- ▶ Sustainability standards are a means of off-setting competitive disadvantages or creating competitive advantages when businesses and nations, like China, choose to develop more sustainably.
- ▶ Chinese businesses, supported by enabling public policies, will pursue varied approaches between differing standards, but over time will become a force in shaping the next generation of sustainability standards in global markets as a competitive strategy aligned to China's broader interests.
- ▶ Doing so requires deeper understanding and engagement in existing standards initiatives and the players behind them, and a more prominent Chinese role amongst the communities that have developed and now govern them.
- ▶ Practical means for realising this are set out as both strategic options for businesses, and policy options for the Chinese Government.

The paper has been organised into the following sections:

- ▶ Section two briefly outlines salient aspects of the broader and policy historical contexts of CTNCs.
- ▶ Section three summarises major opportunities and threats that face the Chinese business community as it emerges onto the world stage.

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- ▶ Section four discusses ‘responsible competitiveness’ and the place of sustainability standards in global markets.
 - ▶ Section five presents a framework for strategy and policy analysing specific sustainability standards.
 - ▶ Section six draws out broad conclusions and specific recommendations.

The significance of the topic covered cannot be over-estimated for China and the global community. China’s development will require access to technology and raw materials, and a continued will of the international community to maintain open markets for China’s products, services and international investment flows. Sustaining this will require facets of the international community to overcome perceptions of a ‘China threat’. This in turn requires that Chinese business engages fully in advancing a more responsible competitiveness. For China and the broader global community, the increasingly apparent weaknesses in our inter-governmental, multilateral frameworks pose huge risks to our efforts to secure a sustainable development path for one and all. Sustainability standards developed by state and non-state actors are essential to overcome both this governance failure and the inability of the capital markets to provide adequate market-based solutions.

Footnotes

- 1 MacGillivray, A, S. Zadek and P. Begley (2007) *The State of Responsible Competitiveness 2008*, AccountAbility, London
- 2 These policies have been aptly articulated by the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, National Development and Reform Commission, the State Council. See, for example, Ma Kai, "Strike up And Follow Through A Scientific Concept of Development and Facilitate A Radical Transformation of The Mode of Economic Growth," ed. Wang Mengkui, from "Sustainable Development of China in An All-sided And Well-coordinated Way", The People's Press, August 2004; or, Zhang Junkuo, et al, "Transformation of The Mode of Economic Growth And Pursuit of A Path of New Type Industrialisation," ed. Wang Mengkui, from "Important Issues regarding China's Long-term and Mid-term Developments from 2006 to 2020", China Development Press, 2005. Chairman Hu Jintao's speech in late November 2008 highlights China's need to restore its international competitiveness
- 3 Several publications focus on the importance of sustainable development in specific areas, such as "China Sustainable Development Strategy Report 2007: Water: Governance and Innovation", Chinese Academy of Social Sciences Sustainable Development Research Group, 2007 Science Press; "China Sustainable Development Strategy Report 2008, Policy Review and Outlook", Chinese Academy of Social Sciences Sustainable Development Research Group, 2008 Science Press; "China's Agenda 21: Population, Environment and Development White Paper" 1994, China's Agenda 21 Administrative Center; and many others
- 4 "Strategies to Enhance Adaptability: Technological Change, Sustainable Growth and Free Trade," Indur M. Goklany, Office of Policy Analysis, U.S. Department of the Interior, 1995
- 5 For discussion on talent, see Tung, Rosalie, "The human resource challenge to outward foreign direct investment aspirations from emerging economies: the case of China", *International Journal of Human Resources Management*, May 2007, pp. 868-889.
- 6 MacGillivray, A, S. Zadek and P. Begley (2007) *The State of Responsible Competitiveness 2008*, AccountAbility, London
- 7 Zadek, S (2007) *The Civil Corporation*, Earthscan, London
- 8 Huige, Marinus, Committee chair, WTO Committee on Sanitary and Phytosanitary measures, comments during China Sustainable Trade Strategy meeting in Geneva, November 2008. See also International Centre for Trade and Sustainable Development, "SPS Committee Continues Private Standards Debate," *Bridges Weekly Trade News Digest*, Volume 13, Number 8, March 4, 2009.
<http://ictsd.net/i/news/bridgesweekly/42240/>

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- 9 Bernstein, S. and E. Hannah, *Journal of International Economic Law*, 19 July 2008
Non-State-Global Standard Setting and the WTO: Legitimacy and the Need for Regulatory Space;
 - 10 Conway, T. *ISO 14000 Standards and China: A Trade and Sustainable Development Perspective*, IISD, 1996, www.iisd.org/pdf/isochina.pdf
 - 11 Litovsky, A, S, Rochlin, S. Zadek and B. Levy (2007) *Investing in Standards for Sustainable Development*, Discussion Paper, AccountAbility, London
 - 12 For example, 国外标准制度的特点与思考 www.gjb.com.cn/jybzh/swjx/swjx_detail.jsp?filename=swjx/swjx0101.htm from 军用标准化信息网
 - 13 www.isealalliance.org/_data/n_0001/resources/live/E047_Bolivia_FSC.pdf Governmental Use of Voluntary Standards; Case Study 2; Bolivia and Forest Stewardship Council Standards; September 2008; Trade Standards Practitioners Network; ISEAL Alliance
 - 14 www.isealalliance.org/_data/n_0001/resources/live/E053_SouthGeorgia_MSC.pdf Governmental Use of Voluntary Standards Case Study 8; South Georgia and South Sandwich Islands and the Marine Stewardship Council Standard; September 2008 Trade Standards Practitioners Network ISEAL Alliance

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Any mistakes, omissions or errors are the sole responsibility of the authors.

About the organisations



AccountAbility (www.accountability21.net) works to promote accountability innovations for sustainable development.

AccountAbility, founded in 1995, is a global, not-for-profit self-managed partnership with bases in Beijing, Geneva, London, Sao Paulo and Washington D.C., and country representatives in Brazil, Canada, China, Jordan, Spain, Sweden and the US. AccountAbility is a global network of leading business, public and civil institutions working to build and demonstrate the possibilities for tomorrow's global markets and governance through thought leadership and advisory services. We work to:

- Enable open, fair and effective approaches to stakeholder engagement
- Develop and reward strategies for responsible competitiveness in companies, sectors, regions and nations
- Create and develop effective collaborative governance strategies for partnerships and multilateral organisations that are delivering innovation and value
- Set and influence sustainability standards



The International Institute for Sustainable Development (www.iisd.org), established in 1990, is a Canadian-based not-for-profit organisation with a diverse team of more than 150 people located in more than 30 countries. Through our dynamic portfolio of projects, we partner with more than 200 organisations throughout the world. IISD is in the business of promoting change towards sustainable development. As a policy research institute dedicated to effective communication of our findings, we engage decision-makers in government, business, NGOs and other sectors in the development and implementation of policies that are simultaneously beneficial to the global economy, the global environment and to social well-being.

In the pursuit of sustainable development, we promote open and effective international negotiation processes. And we believe fervently in the importance of building our own institutional capacity while helping our partner organizations in the developing world to excel.



Chinese State Council's Development Research Centre (DRC) (www.drc.gov.cn) is a policy research and consulting institution directly under the State Council of the People's Republic of China. Its main function is to undertake research on the overall, comprehensive, strategic and long-term issues related to the national economic and social development and provide policy suggestions and consulting advice to CPC Central Committee and the State Council.



The State Secretariat for Economic Affairs SECO (www.seco.admin.ch) is, among others, with its economic development division the competence centre of the Swiss Federal Administration for the promotion of the economic development and trade of developing and transition countries. We firmly believe that domestic economies geared towards growth and globalization contribute to sustainable development and efforts to combat poverty.

In addition, SECO supports the principles of the market economy and sustainable economic growth based on private initiative, entrepreneurship and the development of trade. We feel that mobilisation of the know-how, skills and resources of the private sector, both in Switzerland and in partner countries, can make a fundamental contribution to the development process. SECO is active in the following countries: Peru, Colombia, Vietnam, Indonesia, South Africa, Ghana and Egypt as well as in Tajikistan, Kyrgyz Republic, Uzbekistan, Azerbaijan, Serbia, Bosnia Herzegovina, Albania and Macedonia.

Priority areas of SECO supported activities are:

- Sustainable Trade Promotion
- Private Sector Development
- Urban Infrastructure
- Macro-Economic Support
- Cooperation with the World Bank and Regional Development Banks

提高中国跨国公司的可持续竞争力

执行摘要

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隆国强博士现任中华人民共和国国务院发展研究中心对外经济研究部副部长和研究员。其主要研究领域包括中国对外经济政策（主要涉及国际贸易和国外直接投资）、宏观经济、国际金融、国际经济合作、产业政策

中国汽车工业、中国粮食经济等、区域发展以及经济特区。隆博士曾在1998-1999年期间担任布鲁金斯东北亚政策研究中心的访问研究员，并曾在1987-1993年期间担任北京大学分校城市与区域科学系的讲师和系主任助理。隆博士曾获得多个奖项，包括全国外贸研究优秀成果奖以及中国发展研究奖。他的著作包括：《跨国产业转移和产业升级》，2007年，中国商务出版社；《加工贸易：工业化的新道路》，2001年，中国发展出版社；《大国开放与粮食流通》，1999年，中国发展出版社；《阿拉丁神灯》，1992年，济南人民出版社；《中国服务贸易》，1995年，中信出版社；《实用房地产市场操作》，1994年，群众出版社；以及大量的论文等。他于1987年获得北京大学理学学士学位，并在1992年获得北京大学管理学硕士学位；1998又获得了北京大学经济学博士学位。



Dr Simon Zadek – AccountAbility

Dr. Simon Zadek (西蒙·扎德克)博士 AccountAbility的首席执行官、哈佛大学肯尼迪学院政府与商业中心的高级研究员，以及南非大学企业公民中心的荣誉教授。他同时还任职于Instituto Ethos国际顾问委员会、世代投资管理公司的顾问委员会，并是国际贸易和可持续发展中心的委员会会员。2003年，西蒙被世界经济论坛授予“未来的全球领导者”的称号。西蒙曾是哥本哈根商业学院的客座教授、新经济基金会的发展部长、英国道德贸易组织的创始主席。他撰写了大量出版物，包括《公民企业》(The Civil Corporation) (2001)，该书成为这一领域的经典之作，于2006年获得管理研究院的“社会问题管理奖”。他还与多家企业合作，共同推动可持续发展战略和实践：近期的合作方包括美铝公司、可口可乐公司、通用电气、雀巢；他还支持了多项可持续发展标准的开发，包括全球报告倡议组织、《安全和人权自愿原则》以及森林管理委员会认证体系，等等。



Joshua Wickerham – AccountAbility

Joshua Wickerham (乔舒华) AccountAbility中国代表。他研究大中国环境中的责任竞争力（包括区域和国际战略），并负责与《WTO经济导刊》共同编写中文版的《国家责任竞争力》（2007）。他还负责AccountAbility在中国各方面事务，包括城市、区域和国家研究，比如与《财富》杂志（中文版）开展的调研工作以及与浙江省经济贸易委员会和中德企业社会责任项目开展的省级行业责任竞争力研究。乔舒华曾是清华大学公共管理学院的进修生，并在加州大学圣地亚哥分校的国际关系与太平洋研究学院获得了硕士学位，专业为国际发展。在国际关系与太平洋研究学院就读期间，他因其影响环境变化的优秀能力而收获了众多奖项，包括“院长邀请客座研究员”以及“Switzer基金研究员”。他在密歇根大学取得学士学位。乔舒华先生著有商业、历史和音乐类的作品、学术和专业文献。

前言

本文研究了中国企业界应如何充分利用国际可持续发展标准，以便提高其在全球市场的竞争力，并更有效地在一条可持续的经济道路上前进。

本文强调，得到有利政策支持的中国企业在国际市场上有机会成为确立下一代可持续发展标准的一种力量，并将其作为契合中国广泛利益的一种竞争战略。这样将需要它们更加深入地参与现有标准倡议，并在业已发展和如今正管理他们的团体中发挥一个更为明确的角色。有效参与这些标准是当企业或国家选择一条可持续发展之路之时能够弥补竞争劣势、创造竞争优势的一种手段。

为实现可持续发展和竞争力目标，本文为企业提供了战略选择并为中国政府提供政策建议。

本研究是“中国可持续贸易战略”研究课题的一个部分。该课题由中国商务部、国务院发展研究中心（DRC）以及国际可持续发展研究院（IISD）共同组织开展，瑞士联邦经济总局（SECO）提供资金支持。中央党校、中国社会科学院、圣加仑大学以及国际贸易与可持续发展中心（ICTSD）参与了该课题的研究。本研究成果版权归SECO所有，IISD委托课题实施。AccountAbility和DRC进行了研究与报告编写。该项研究的所有成果得以全文发表，承蒙购买或索取。

可持续发展、软实力和竞争力

“责任竞争力把具有前瞻性的企业策略、创新的公共政策和充满活力的公民社会相互交融在一起。它涉及创建新一代的盈利产品和业务流程，以支持社会各界广泛的社会、环境 and 经济目标为基础。”

世界贸易组织总干事帕斯卡·拉米¹

为了保持快速的经济增长，中国必须打造国际竞争力策略，并以提升资源效率与“和谐发展”为基础。这一点既与国内环境相关，又与其它团体和国家的需求和前景相关。² 中国企业和政府在全球经济和全球贸易中推动可持续发展³ 的角色正变得日益重要起来。⁴ 为了向国际社会保证这种双重、互助方式得以一致和平衡的应用，中国崭露头角的企业界需要保持一致而明确有效的作法。⁵ 如果中国对可持续发展的承诺无法获得全球认可，则中国品牌的负面影响和危险形象将会加重，从而导致中国企业界在全球市场中受到重重限制，无论是在国内还是在国际上，无不影响中国经济的成功及其和谐发展。

简而言之，可靠且可论证的可持续发展实践是中国转变为一个主要经济与政治大国的首要条件。这至少需要中国的企业界遵循在政府间协议以及中国企业经营所在国的国家法律中所规定的环境与社会执行标准。但是，遵循国际和国内法律虽然是必要之举，但并不足以让中国的跨国公司在全球市场中取得成功，或让中国树立一个公认的良好形象以及全球角色。除了这些传统的法律框架外，各类全球公民（包括消费者、雇员、投资人以及更正式政治事务的积极推动者）的共同准则、期望和利益又衍生出更多复杂而动态的规则。这些利益越来越多地通过夹杂在一起、并可能对中国企业所不熟悉且不自在的混杂市场信号和政治进程被表达出来。除了构成企业在中国社会中所属角色的更进一步衍生外，这些混杂的进程可能会影响到一家企业的最终效益，进而影响到经营策略、公共政策和公民行动之间的关系。世界贸易组织总干事帕斯卡·拉米（Pascal Lamy）通过下列话语概括了新贸易环境的本质：“责任竞争力把具有前瞻性的企业策略、创新的公共政策和充满活力的公民社会混合在一起。它涉及创建新一代的有利可图的产品和业务流程，以支持各个社团的广泛的社会、环境和经济目标为基础。”⁶

拉米先生所提到的大部分规则指的是自愿性的可持续发展标准，这些标准已在寻求稳定其经营环境的企业之间，以及在寻求通过“公民规则”（Civil Regulation）在政府意愿或立法能力范围之外管理国际企业的公民社会组织之间达成一致。⁷ 政府和其它公

共机构通常有牵涉其中，但都是充当召集人、调解人和资助者的角色，而不是担任负责监督法律应用的法定代理人。尽管多有争议，但WTO贸易技术壁垒（TBT）委员会的协定并没有指导此类自发性国际标准组织如何通过非法令手段来影响市场条件⁸。到目前为止，WTO尚未对此类标准做出响应，而一些学者建议WTO和成员国为了可持续发展标准的设定，不妨创立“为‘跨国规则’留出一个空间的规范”⁹。

最突出的是那些通过国际标准组织（ISO）发展起的、与可持续发展相关的标准，包括ISO14000环境保护标准以及正在编制当中的ISO26000社会责任指南¹⁰。但是，过去的十年里已涌现出新一代的可持续发展标准，其范围涵盖全球茶叶经营到采掘业、碳排放、劳动标准以及可持续林业。设立并管理这些标准的机构大部分隶属于企业联盟、公民社会组织和公共机构。由于其规模的壮大以及广泛的号召能力，这些标准组织正日益成为决定那些设法在全球市场中赢利经营的国际企业是否正当的“看门人”¹¹。例如，进入消费者市场，特别是高端市场；收购顶级品牌的外国公司；通过公开上市或私人股权获得自然资源或国际资本等，这些均在很大程度上取决于一家公司向公众证实其支持并遵守这些标准的能力。此外，大部分此类标准已从边缘地带转移到国际市场的主流区。林业、渔业、纺织品、采矿、药品、金融和化学制品等等，都是目前已将此类标准融入到各自国际市场核心、以寻求可持续发展的几个行业。

自发性可持续发展标准通常是由企业连同公民社会、劳工组织和国家一道制订和管理的；在这种意义上讲，这些标准是企业以及相关国家在寻求国际竞争力以及更广泛的社会目标的过程中，借以在全球市场中运用“软实力”的一条主要途径。

本文侧重于如何让中国跨国公司最好地参与到这些国际运营中的更加“硬实力”的因素中，特别是在全球市场中取得竞争优势以及在履行中国更广泛政策目标的过程中如何应对自发性的可持续发展标准。大家可能已对中国竞争力中的更加“硬实力”的因素（比如金融、信息、技术和基础设施）有过更深入的研究和了解，显然它们是中国在国际市场中取得成功并进一步推动可持续发展目标的必要因素。但是，对于更加“软实力”的因素，特别是它们与这些更硬因素之间的关系，大家对其提高竞争力的潜力及其潜在的限制性影响却了解不深。

目前大部分中国企业所走的一条路子是避免遵循此类标准。在许多情况下，由于对中国迟来者所开放的属于“剩余市场”，故中国企业认为这些标准不恰当或难以采用。但是，大部分中国企业没有参与其中的主要原因是因为不熟悉游戏规则、与相关组织的关系较为薄弱，以及缺乏中国政府的指导，特别是对于国有企业而言。此外，

中国企业将这些倡议视为进入全球市场的壁垒¹²。确实，虽然这些标准的初衷不是为了阻止新兴国家的新一代企业发展为国际企业，但这些标准主要是由西方企业制订和管理的，而它们基本上代表了欧洲和北美的公民社会组织和公共机构。所以，虽然其目的是（例如）保护工人或森林，或让药品价格降至贫困群体可承受的程度，但它们实际上受当权机构所控制，并可能（或有时可能）很具讽刺意义地成为可持续发展的障碍。

来自其它国家的新兴经济企业正在逐渐取得认识并战胜对这些自发性机制及其背后组织的怀疑。例如，玻利维亚十二年以来采用森林管理委员会标准实施其强制性森林经营的经验为我们提供了十分重要的范例：强大而可靠的验证、进入新市场以及声誉上的收获¹³。南格鲁吉亚通过海洋管理委员会来证明其鱼产品的可持续性，主要是为了应对国际非政府组织所发起的国际抵制运动（它们曾成功说服美国餐馆停止供应来自该地区的鱼产品）¹⁴。一些新兴经济公司正逐渐成为新可持续发展标准的参与者。除了ISO26000标准以外，新兴经济公司还通过参加全球报告倡议组织的第三代《可持续发展报告指南》以及AccountAbility的《AA1000审验标准》的开发、修订和推广，积极参与到可持续发展报告和审验(assurance)领域。但是，与其新兴经济竞争对手相比，中国企业在这点上要处于严重劣势。特别是，与巴西、印度或南非的企业相比，中国企业在塑造市场条件过程中缺乏在国内参与公民社会以及从事慈善行为以外的社区合作经验。

总体而言，避免参与此类标准倡议的作法并不是一个考虑周全的战略手段，而是一个默认。于是乎，中国企业通常会为自身和中国的更大利益而自动采取不成熟的策略。

中国的全球显著地位需要其阐明如何处理此类标准的决定。但决定是否参与任何具体的标准倡议则必须通过一个更大的战略框架来考虑。该框架所包含的每个倡议与中国在将其方法与可持续发展、经济增长和相关竞争力驱动因素进行关联之时所寻求的三个潜在途径之一有关：

- 1 **接受规则（遵循）**：它与中国遵循现行可持续发展标准的利益相符，表示按照国际市场中已有条件进行参与的一种策略。
- 2 **规避规则（拒绝接受）**：在短期或长期内，中国的最佳策略是避免遵循现行的国际标准，并取而代之使用其自有的、符合其自身需求和喜好的标准。
- 3 **施加影响（参与并影响）**：中国的利益可以通过重塑国际可持续发展标准而实现，无论是通过成为现有倡议的积极参与者还是通过推动备选方案成为新的国际准则。

也就是说，中国对特定可持续发展标准的反应不应该建立在预想的判断上，而应根据与一条或多条此类途径相关的优点建立在每项标准之上。

本文的结论是：

- 可持续发展标准是一种弥补竞争劣势，或在企业和国家（比如中国）选择一条更为可持续发展的道路之时创造竞争优势的一种手段。
- 在公共政策的支持下，中国企业将在不同标准之间寻求不同的方法，但将来有望成为在全球市场中打造下一代可持续发展标准、并以此做为符合中国更大利益的一项竞争策略的一股中坚力量。
- 实现这一目标，中国需要提高对现有标准倡议以及背后相关组织的了解和参与度，并在制定和统领这些标准的国际组织中树立一个更为突出的角色。
- 为实现这一目标，本文分别为企业和中国政府提供了战略方案和政策建议。

本文由以下几个部分组成：

- 第二部分简要描述了中国跨国公司的相关重要政策及历史背景。
- 第三部分总结了中国企业界走上世界舞台所面临的主要机会和威胁。
- 第四部分讨论了“责任竞争力”和可持续发展标准在全球市场中的地位。
- 第五部分拟定了一个框架，对具体的可持续发展标准进行了战略和政策分析。
- 第六部分进行了总结，并提出了具体建议。

不能高估中国和国际社会的相关话题的重要性。中国的发展需要获得技术和原材料，同时还需要国际社会一直愿意对中国的产品、服务和国际投资开放市场。维持这种状况将需要国际社会在多方面化解“中国威胁论”。这反过来要求中国企业全力推行一种更负责任的竞争力。就中国和国际社会而言，政府间或多边体系的日益明显的薄弱之处，对于我们为所有国家或单个国家所做的确保可持续发展之路的努力，都造成极大的风险。因此，由国家和非国家行为主体制定的可持续发展标准是填补政府失灵和资本市场无力提供市场化解决方案的必要之选。

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国务院发展研究中心是直属国务院的政策研究和咨询机构，主要职责是研究国民经济，社会发展和改革开放中的全局性、综合性、战略性、长期性问题；为党中央，国务院提供政策建议和咨询意见。



瑞士联邦政府经济总局（www.seco.admin.ch）是瑞士联邦政府为提升发展中国家和转轨制国家的经济贸易发展而设立的专门机构。我们坚信国内经济会朝着增长和全球化的方向发展，这会为可持续发展和减少贫穷作出贡献。另外，SECO 支持市场经济和基于私有倡议、企业家精神以及贸易发展的可持续经济增长。我们认为对于瑞士和伙伴国家来说，了解私有部门的技能和资源为发展过程提供了根本性的支持。SECO 在以下国家已经开展项目：秘鲁、哥伦比亚、越南、印度尼西亚、南非、加纳、埃及以及塔吉克斯坦、乌兹别克斯坦、阿塞拜疆、塞尔维亚、波斯尼亚、阿尔巴尼亚、马其顿。

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ADVANCING SUSTAINABLE COMPETITIVENESS OF CHINA'S TRANSNATIONAL CORPORATIONS

提高中国跨国公司的可持续竞争力

Long Guoqiang - The Development Research Center of the State Council
of the People's Republic of China

Simon Zadek, Joshua Wickerham - AccountAbility

隆国强 - 中国国务院发展研究中心

Simon Zadek (西蒙·扎德克)、Joshua Wickerham (乔舒华) - AccountAbility

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY 执行摘要

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二〇〇九年 四月

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AccountAbility, 伦敦

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This paper examines how the Chinese business community can best use international sustainability standards to enhance their competitiveness in global markets and more effectively place themselves on a sustainable economic pathway.

It highlights the opportunity for Chinese businesses, supported by enabling public policies, to become a force in shaping the next generation of sustainability standards in global markets as a competitive strategy consistent with China's broader interests. Doing so will require deeper engagement in existing standards initiatives, and a more explicit role amongst the communities that have developed and now govern them. Effective engagement in such standards is a means of off-setting competitive disadvantages, and creating competitive advantages when businesses and nations choose a more sustainable development path.

This paper sets out both strategic options for businesses and policy options for the Chinese government to realise sustainable development and competitiveness goals.

The full paper can be downloaded at **www.accountability21.net**

本文研究了中国企业界应如何充分利用国际可持续发展标准，以便提高其在全球市场的竞争力，并更有效地在一条可持续的经济道路上前进。

本文强调，得到有利政策支持的中国企业在国际市场上有机会成为确立下一代可持续发展标准的一种力量，并将其作为契合中国广泛利益的一种竞争战略。这样将需要它们更加深入地参与现有标准倡议，并在业已发展和如今正管理他们的团体中发挥一个更为明确的角色。有效参与这些标准是当企业或国家选择一条可持续发展之路之时能够弥补竞争劣势、创造竞争优势的一种手段。

为实现可持续发展和竞争力目标，本文为企业提供了战略选择并为中国政府提供政策建议。

本研究是“中国可持续贸易战略”研究课题的一个部分。该课题由中国商务部、国务院发展研究中心（DRC）以及国际可持续发展研究院（IISD）共同组织开展，瑞士联邦经济总局（SECO）提供资金支持。中央党校、中国社会科学院、圣加仑大学以及国际贸易与可持续发展中心（ICTSD）参与了该课题的研究。本研究成果版权归SECO所有，IISD委托课题实施。AccountAbility和DRC进行了研究与报告编写。该项研究的所有成果得以全文发表，承蒙购买或索取。

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