

Speech at the Opening Ceremony of the 13th Meeting of INTOSAI WGEA

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Distinguished Auditor General of the People's Republic of China, Mr LIU Jiayi, distinguished Minister of Environmental Protection, Mr ZHOU Shengxian, distinguished Governor of Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region, Mr MA Biao, dear Guests from International Organisations
dear colleagues,

I am very pleased you have been able to come here – to Guilin, People's Republic of China, to the regular meeting of the INTOSAI Working Group on Environmental Auditing. This is the thirteenth in its historical sequence.

I am especially glad that once again so many of us have gathered here. The total number of participants is 127 and it is very important that out of my colleagues – Heads of SAIs – as much as 11 are here. I would like to thank you all for having come to give your dedicated contribution to the success of our next in turn environmental auditing event.

I am also pleased that we meet namely in China. Not only because I personally like China, the richness of its culture and history and that I like Chinese tea very much, but also because China, being the engine of the world economy at the moment, has taken remarkable environmental steps that have a great impact. The Auditor General of China, Mr LIU Jiayi, is chairing Theme two of the twentieth INCOSAI, the Environmental Auditing and Sustainable Development. With our presence and discussions, we are all paying tribute, and with our thoughts contributing, to the elaboration of the important conclusions of the INCOSAI this autumn in South Africa.

For me and the National Audit Office of Estonia the last three years have been a great challenge. I am personally extremely grateful for the trust the members of the INTOSAI have expressed through their support and contribution. Leading this working group has been a big challenge for a small state, but I can confirm that we have done our best. However, neither this event nor the working group itself can exist without the valuable contribution of you all.

I would especially like to thank the projects' leaders of this work plan period - the SAIs of Brazil, Canada, Czech Republic, Indonesia, Norway, South-Africa, Tanzania and the United States. Those SAIs great merit is that today we have seven additional new documents as well as web applications and joint audits to share with you all.

The projects' leaders, the UNEP and all Steering Committee members have worked selflessly engaging sub-committee members and experts to collect the best environmental knowledge and practice.

They have prepared parallel sessions and discussions at this event.

At this meeting we would like to get approval to the documents that were preliminarily sent for all members of the working group for comments. The Steering Committee has in several occasions discussed, improved and finally approved them.

We owe special thanks to the SAI of New Zealand for proof-reading the documents. In the moment they are being finalised and we are soon ready to share the elaborated versions with you and expose them to the INCOSAI. With the support from you all, of course.

In addition to "acquiring and sharing new knowledge" the other keyword of this event is "future and our new work plan". The history of the draft that is presented to you among other meeting materials is long. We took the INTOSAI Strategic Plan as a basis for our draft. As well as our own mission and vision statements and mandate. And the 6th Survey on Environmental Auditing, that was concluded in the end of the last year and in which 106 SAIs expressed their interests, needs and challenges. At the last Steering Committee meeting in Tanzania we had thorough discussions, where we selected different priorities and we have continued the discussions of the draft with Steering Committee members until now.

One thing was clear – there was no doubt about the wish to go on with the activities of the working group.

Our concern was rather the need to leave out part of the important issues in order to keep our common workload within reasonable limits.

Finally the draft was ready and submitted to you. Now the whole working group has the opportunity to improve and approve it so, that I could present our common interests and needs to the INCOSAI.

The third important keyword at this event is the already mentioned “Theme 2 of the INCOSAI” chaired by the SAI of China and co-chaired by the SAI of Poland. On this topic important for us they propose options for recommendations to INCOSAI. You all have an opportunity at this event to contribute to the discussion of the topic and give your valuable ideas and thoughts to our colleagues from China. I would like to draw your attention to the fact that the development and future of environmental auditing in the public sector in the coming decades will very much depend on the INCOSAI recommendations. Our contribution to it is extremely important. I thank the Auditor General of China, the theme chair, for the opportunity given to us.

Finally I would like to thank the National Audit Office of the People's Republic of China for hosting and organising the event. Our cooperation has been wonderful and your contribution extremely remarkable. Thank you very much for your warm and friendly welcome to us.

I wish you all exciting discussions and the best of success.

The number of the working group meeting is the 13th. Sometimes it means bad luck in western culture, however, in Chinese it means „assured growth“. I have no doubts that the decisions taken here mean luck, success and sustainability also for the INTOSAI Working Group on Environmental Auditing.

With this I open the meeting of our working group and hand administrative management over to the Secretary general of WGEA, Mr Tõnis Saar.

Thank you very much and have a successful meeting!