

Kubuqi model offers solution to desertification

China's success in reforesting the once barren Kubuqi Desert has seen the region gradually prosper in the development of the green economy, while the country seeks to share and promote the model worldwide.

The sixth Kubuqi International Desert Forum kicked off Saturday in the Kubuqi Desert in northern China's Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region, attracting delegates and experts from home and abroad to discuss desertification.

Kubuqi is the seventh largest desert in China, covering an area of 18,600 square kilometers. It was once the source of frequent sandstorms hitting Beijing.

Over the past three decades, farmers and herdsmen in Kubuqi planted Chinese medicinal herbs, such as liquorice, to improve soil, built photovoltaic power stations for electricity and fostered tourism.

These efforts not only contributed to the greening of more than 6,000 square kilometers of Kubuqi, but also lifted 102,000 people out of poverty.

The core of success at Kubuqi is its sustainable business model, and the establishment of a system that incorporates policy instruments, private sector investment and active participation of locals, according to a policy report from the United Nations Environment Programme.

The greening project in Kubuqi has offered a model for the world to tackle desertification, said representatives of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification.

China has made great progress in the fight against desertification in the past few years, with shrinking degraded land and reduced poverty in desertified areas.

The area of desertified land in the country now shrinks by an annual average of over 2,400 square km, compared with an annual average expansion of over 10,000 square km at the end of last century, making China the first country in the world to achieve desert shrinkage, according to Chinese Vice Premier Ma Kai, who addressed the forum's opening ceremony.

China will keep innovating taxation, investment and financing mechanism for desertification control, bring more parties to join efforts in the endeavor and improve local people's income by developing related industries, Ma said.

For the 2016-2020 period, China aims to rehabilitate 10 million hectares of desertified land and turn more than half of the country's reclaimable desert into green land.

In early September, China will host a United Nations meeting on fighting

desertification in Inner Mongolia, which is expected to draw a roadmap to end desert expansion by 2030.

China is willing to uphold the Silk Road spirit and work together with the international community to build a greener world and contribute to global sustainable development, Ma added.