

China's ecological footprint continues to grow

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People look at crystal ornaments made by the firm Swarovski at a shopping mall in Beijing. The spread of consumerism among China's burgeoning middle class is behind the rapid growth of the Asian giant's environmental footprint, a conservation group said Monday.

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Demand for construction, transport, goods and public services are the key factors behind ballooning carbon emissions, the World Wildlife Fund said in its annual "[China Ecological Footprint](#)" report.

"The growth in the carbon footprint is particularly associated with [lifestyle changes](#) in wealthier provinces," it said.

[Carbon emissions](#) accounted for 54 percent of China's ecological footprint in 2007 and the country needed more than two times its own biologically productive land area to meet demand for resources and to absorb emissions, it said.

"The predominance of carbon as the major component of ecological footprint is not expected to change based on current development patterns," the report warned.

The paper, released in conjunction with the China Council for International Cooperation on Environment and Development, a government-backed advisory body, was based on 2007 data.

It defined "ecological footprint" as the amount of stress a country places on world ecosystems.

The report was released as the United Nations prepares for its annual climate change summit in Mexico later this month, aimed at forging a deal on tackling global warming.

China overtook the United States in recent years as the biggest emitter of greenhouse gases, as its economy has roared ahead to become the world's second biggest.

But China has refused to commit to cutting emissions outright, saying it would unfairly hurt its economic development.

The United States and other developed countries have urged China to commit to emission cut targets as part of a planned post-2012 treaty on global warming to replace the [Kyoto Protocol](#).

[China](#) instead pledged last year to slow the growth in those emissions by reducing energy consumption per unit of GDP by 40-45 percent from

2005 levels by 2020, essentially a vow of greater energy efficiency.

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