

China admits Three Gorges Dam caused 'host of ills'

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A worker cleans up trash along the banks of the Yangtze River near the Three Gorges Dam in Yichang, in central China's Hubei province in August 2010. Layers of trash floating in the Yangtze river are threatening to jam China's massive Three Gorges hydroelectric dam.

China's Three Gorges Dam has caused a host of ills that must be "urgently" addressed, the government has said, in a rare admission of

problems in a project it has long praised as a world wonder.

The State Council, or cabinet, acknowledged the environmental, social and geological problems in a statement issued late Wednesday after a meeting on the hydroelectric project's future presided over by Premier Wen Jiabao.

"While the Three Gorges project has brought great and comprehensive benefits, there are problems that must be urgently resolved in the smooth relocation of residents, ecological protection and preventing geological disasters," it said.

The dam also had "impacted" downstream shipping, irrigation and water supplies, the statement said.

Construction began in 1993 on the \$22.5 billion dam on the [Yangtze River](#) -- the world's largest [hydroelectric dam](#) -- and the project in central China began generating power in 2008.

Authorities have hailed it as a major new clean energy source and a way to tame the notoriously flood-prone Yangtze, China's longest river.

But critics have long warned of its environmental, social and other costs.



File photo shows a couple living on the shores of the Yangtze River face having to move as the waters inch higher in Gaoyang, in southwest China's Chongqing Municipality. China relocated 1.4 million people to make way for the controversial Three Gorges dam development, the world's largest hydroelectric project.

About 1.4 million people were displaced to make way for the dam and its huge reservoir, which has put several cultural heritage sites deep underwater.

Chinese experts and officials have warned of the potential for seismic disturbances -- including landslides and mudflows -- caused by the massive weight of the reservoir's water on the region's geology.

Environmentalists have cautioned the reservoir would serve as a giant catchment for China's notorious pollution, ruining water quality.

The government said last August that billions of dollars would be needed to address environmental damage along the river, including [sewage treatment](#).

The statement from the State Council said the government would step up efforts to ensure prosperous new lives for the displaced and address [water pollution](#) and geological risks, but gave no specifics of any new policies.



File photo of the Three Gorges Dam in Xiling, central China's Hubei province. China's Three Gorges Dam has caused a host of ills that must be "urgently" addressed, the government has said, in a rare admission of problems in a project it has long praised as a world wonder.

Torrential rains and resulting flooding in the summer of 2010 washed huge quantities of trash and other debris into the river, sparking a major

clean-up effort.

State media reports said the garbage was so thick in places that it could be walked on and threatened to clog the [dam](#).

China is relying on hydroelectric power as a major component in its energy mix as it seeks to meet soaring power needs. It has dozens of dams either under construction or on the drawing board, according to state media reports.

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