

# Greening Chinese export finance: opportunities and ways forward

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# Policy Brief

## Perspectives Climate Research

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# 1. Key messages

- The **Export-Import Bank of China (CEXIM)**, **China Export & Credit Insurance Corporation (SINO-SURE)** – as China's Export Credit Agencies (ECA) – and **China Development Bank (CDB)** – as an export-related policy bank – are **critical actors in the global energy transition** due to their unique role in de-risking large investments abroad.
- Together with CDB, China's ECAs are the **largest public financiers** for energy sector projects globally, totalling nearly USD 200 billion between 2013 and 2022. Around two-thirds of their finance flowed to fossil fuel projects, while only 27% was directed to clean energy projects (Oil Change International [OCI], 2025).
- Since 2017, the three institutions have been decreasing their official export finance to the energy sector, both in total volume and geographic footprint, echoing the country's **'Small and Beautiful'** approach. In 2023, Chinese ECAs resumed support to Africa with nearly USD 2.5 billion in clean energy finance commitments (hydro and solar), all financed by CEXIM (ibid.).
- Following Xi Jinping's **'No New Coal Overseas' pledge** in 2021, the three institutions have halted support for coal in 2022. However, in 2023 CDB and CEXIM supported one new coal plant in Pakistan – a project signed before the Xi Jinping's pledge under the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (IJ Global, 2023).
- Beyond coal, **comprehensive fossil fuel finance restrictions are yet to be implemented**, as evidenced by the continued inclusion of new oil and gas projects in their portfolios (OCI, 2025).
- Except Brazil and the UK, 13 of the top 15 recipients of energy sector export finance during 2013-2022 are **Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) partners**. Notably, clean energy investments were greatly concentrated in a few countries (Pakistan, Argentina, the UK, Nigeria and Uganda), with large hydro projects dominating the portfolio, followed by nuclear and solar.
- Although China's export finance institutions' portfolios have historically been dominated by fossil fuels, they are **increasingly co-financing** clean energy projects with Chinese state-owned commercial banks and multilateral development banks (MDBs), which should enable them to mobilise capital more significantly (Chen and Emery, 2025).
- The potential of China's export finance institutions could be magnified by **greening their financial instruments**, for example, expanding the political risk insurance coverage in underrepresented renewable energy sectors and geographies, extending repayment tenors or relaxing guarantee requirements for clean technology exporters.
- Overall, while some progress has been made, Chinese ECAs are **not yet aligned with the Paris Climate Agreement** (see Table 1 for a comprehensive overview). Various ways forward exist: from expanding existing restrictions to the oil and gas sectors, providing dedicated financial instruments for clean energy projects, improving transparency and joining international alliances (see Table 2 in Section 5 for a long list).

## 2. Towards Paris alignment of Chinese export finance

Jia et al. (2025) analysed Paris alignment of Chinese export finance using an analytical framework based on the Paris alignment methodology developed by Perspectives Climate Research (Shishlov et al., 2021). The assessment has shown that CEXIM, SINOSURE and CDB have been making some progress towards greening their export finance but are not yet fully aligned with the Paris Agreement. Table 1 provides a summary of this assessment.

**Table 1: Assessment of Paris alignment of Chinese export finance.**

Dimension	CEXIM	SINOSURE	CDB
<b>Transparency: Financial and non-financial disclosure</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>ECAs and policy banks in China are not obliged to make their lending portfolio publicly transparent</b></li> </ul>		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Only three branches published Environmental Information Disclosure Reports so far</li> <li>• The criteria for calculating emissions are not consistent among branches</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No disclosure of any information regarding environmental impacts or GHG emissions so far</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Only the Hong Kong branch disclosed its scope 1, 2 emissions and GHG intensity so far (TCFD report)</li> </ul>
<b>Fossil fuel exclusion policies</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ceased financing for new overseas coal-fired power plants in 2022</li> <li>• Since 2022 excludes all coal-related activities such as coal mining and coal transportation</li> <li>• Continued support for new oil and gas projects</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ceased financing for new overseas coal-fired power plants in 2021</li> <li>• Continued support for new oil and gas projects</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ceased financing for new overseas coal-fired power plants in 2022</li> <li>• Continued support for new oil and gas projects</li> </ul>
<b>Climate impact of and emission reduction targets for all activities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>All declared alignment with China's 'Dual Carbon' goals</b></li> </ul>		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Developed the 'Dual Carbon' roadmap and timeline but it remains unpublished</li> <li>• No explicit GHG emissions reduction targets</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No explicit GHG emissions reduction targets, roadmap or timeline</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Explicit targets: 'Double peak' of both financial and operational activities' emissions by 2030 and 'double neutrality' by 2060</li> </ul>
<b>Climate finance: Positive contribution to the global climate transition</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>All implemented some 'greened' traditional instruments</b></li> <li>• <b>Absence of comprehensive, novel green instruments in their toolkits</b></li> </ul>		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Directed 46% of its energy sector support to clean energy projects in 2013-2022</li> <li>• Distributed across Asia, Africa and Latin America, with Pakistan receiving the most</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Directed 36% of its energy sector support to clean energy projects in 2013-2022</li> <li>• Argentina and Angola were major recipients</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Directed only 14% of its energy sector support to clean energy projects in 2013-2022</li> <li>• Provided UK, Argentina, and Pakistan with significant financing for clean energy projects</li> </ul>
<b>Engagement at national and international levels</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>All actively collaborate with key government bodies, state-owned enterprises</b></li> <li>• <b>Limited engagement with domestic CSOs</b></li> </ul>		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Multilateral fora and bilateral strategic partnerships</li> <li>• Regular dialogues with leading international financial institutions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Member of the Berne Union, but not of its Climate Working Group</li> <li>• Bilateral partnership with ECAs of Japan, Nigeria, Ethiopia, Egypt, etc.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Leading Chinese financial institution for establishing multilateral frameworks</li> <li>• Signed a MoU with BRICS development finance institutions on 'Principles For Responsible Financing'</li> </ul>

Source: Authors, based on Jia et al. (2025).



### 3. Why should Chinese ECAs ‘green’ their export finance portfolio further?

China's ECAs are **among the largest public financiers of overseas energy projects** globally. Between 2013 and 2022, these institutions channeled nearly USD 200 billion into the energy sector, with a substantial share allocated to fossil fuels. Despite recent pledges, such as Xi Jinping's 2021 commitment to ‘No New Coal Overseas’, **fossil fuel projects continued to dominate ECAs’ portfolios**. This is not aligned with the objectives of the Paris Agreement, and goes against China's reputation as a climate leader with ambitions such as the **‘Dual Carbon’ goals** of peaking emissions by 2030 and achieving carbon neutrality by 2060 (Myllyvirta, 2025).

Shifting export finance away from fossil fuels and toward clean energy is both a climate imperative and a strategic opportunity for China. China already leads in clean technology exports, producing over 80% of global solar modules and a significant share of lithium batteries and electric vehicles – the **“New Three”** (Zhang and Nedopil Wang, 2024). ‘Greening’ Chinese export finance can inject further momentum into the **country's economic growth** – China would have missed its 5% GDP growth target in 2024 without the growth from clean technologies (Myllyvirta, 2025). Via incentives to support clean technology exporters, China can double down on clean export finance, aligning with **China's own interests and policy directions**, including the ‘New Quality Productive Forces’ (新质生产力) and ‘High Quality Development’ (高质量发展).

Greening Chinese export finance is particularly important given that low-income countries have been recently left behind as recipients of clean energy export finance (Censkowsky et al., 2025). It would further help **enhance long-term energy security** for recipient countries, particularly in the Global South, by reducing dependence on fossil fuels and promoting resilient energy systems. As a clean energy export powerhouse, China is well-positioned to plug this gap in clean energy support for Global South countries via its export finance.

Still, China's export finance lags in fully leveraging this comparative advantage to drive sustainable energy transitions abroad. While China's ECAs have made some strides, such as **phasing out coal financing**, support to oil and gas projects continues. By expanding fossil fuel restrictions to oil and gas, China can advance the COP28 decision to ‘transition away from fossil fuels’ that it supported in 2023 (UNFCCC, 2023).

Moreover, **Chinese ECAs can foster investments in clean energy** through dedicated financial products. Although **Chinese ECAs have embraced some ‘greened’ traditional instruments** such as longer repayment periods and differentiated underwriting criteria, a comprehensive and innovative instrument toolkit and strategy for clean energy projects is missing. **Aligning Chinese ECAs with international best practices** would enhance China's global credibility and help **‘levelling’ the playing field in global export finance**.

These steps would also support China's leadership aspirations in climate diplomacy, particularly through inclusive cooperation with the Global South via initiatives like the **Belt and Road Initiative (BRI)** and **BRICS+**, leveraging existing mechanisms such as the **Forum on China-Africa Cooperation** and the **China-CELAC Forum**.

## 4. Which initiatives and alliances can support the Paris alignment of Chinese ECAs internationally?

### Government-led platforms

#### (1) Belt and Road Initiative (BRI)

As a strategically significant initiative launched by China in 2013, spanning across Asia, Africa, Europe and Latin America, the BRI has been associated with a large number of overseas projects and financing in the energy sector (e.g., Nedopil Wang, 2024). China has been promoting the '**Green BRI**' since 2017, including the 'No New Coal Power Plant in BRI' policy (de Boer et al., 2023). China could leverage its ownership in BRI to phase-down fossil fuel support until complete phase-out, by further promoting and implementing the BRI-launched initiatives, such as the **Green Investment and Finance Partnership and Green Investment Principles**. Chinese ECAs could also advance cooperation with BRI-Global South partners on co-financing and via leveraging the Beijing-based **Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB)**, to scale up clean energy financing globally.

#### (2) BRICS(+)

The BRICS+ bloc has emerged as a counterweight to Western influence in global institutions rapidly expanding cooperation from trade to geopolitics, energy security, and now climate change. BRICS+ have reiterated the group's commitment to climate action and energy transition (BRICS Brasil, 2025), with the leader China committed to building a '**Green** BRICS+ initiative and collaborating in clean energy, green minerals and green trade (Xi, 2024). Given that developing countries have been left behind as recipients of green export finance (Censkowsky et al., 2025), interested BRICS+ countries could work together to scale up clean energy support for Global South countries via export finance. This could be supported by an immediate phase out of export finance to coal projects followed, as soon as possible, by phasing out support for oil and gas. Chinese ECAs could also initiate pilots with the most progressive BRICS+ partners on innovating export finance instruments with explicit climate links. This could be, for example, climate-resilient debt clauses (such as done, e.g. by UKEF, 2022) or adjusting export finance modalities to the different needs of the clean energy sector, as already spearheaded by the OECD (see further Schmidt et al., 2024). Leveraging the MDB of BRICS – the **New Development Bank (NDB)** – Chinese (and BRICS) ECAs could mobilise more financial resources towards clean energy via scaling co-financing models (see e.g., Chen and Emery, 2025).

#### (3) Group of 20 (G20)

The G20 countries can work together to set guidelines for export finance that are in line with the Paris Agreement. This could encompass fossil fuel exclusion policies, developing criteria for assessing environmental and social impacts, as well as standards for transparency and reporting. In 2009, the G20 countries committed to phasing out inefficient fossil fuel subsidies and developed a voluntary peer review system chaired by the OECD that evaluated over 140 government support measures by 2021 (OECD, 2024). While it did not lead to a phase out of fossil fuel subsidies in G20 countries – they hit all-time highs in 2022 and 2023 (Culbert, 2025) – it helped put pressure on the governments and increased transparency. A similar peer-review process for G20-ECAs could increase transparency and peer pressure for Paris alignment.

Such process can be informed by the annual status reports of the European **Export Finance for Future (E3F) Initiative** (E3F, 2023), which provides data on export finance in the energy sector and related policies. Ideally, the G20 countries should also commit to stopping all support to fossil fuels by their public finance institutions, which would complement the commitment to phasing out fossil fuel subsidies (e.g., Shishlov et al., 2020).

#### (4) **OECD**

The **OECD Arrangement on Officially Supported Export Credits** is the only international framework guiding export finance. It requires due diligence and risk assessment procedures for all projects receiving support to minimize negative impacts and ensure adherence to international environmental and social standards. While the 2021 exclusion of export finance to coal-fired power plants marks a historic progress for integrating climate considerations into the OECD Arrangement, it still lacks significant additional components, including other parts of coal value chains, e.g., mining and transport, as well as the entire oil and gas value chains, for which there are currently no restrictions (OECD, 2023). As the OECD negotiations on phasing out oil and gas support recently failed (Lo, 2025), China as a non-OECD clean energy leader should step up to 'level the playing field' (Schmidt et al., 2025), and be complemented by joining the **Clean Energy Transition Partnership** (CETP), for instance.

### Industry-led initiatives

#### (1) **Berne Union**

SINOSURE has been a member of the Berne Union, which comprises the global export credit and investment insurance industry and has 86 Members, as of May 2025 (Berne Union, n.d.b). Historically, SINOSURE has been an active member of this forum, sharing expertise and engaging in collaborative activities. SINOSURE also held many official positions, most recently the Vice-presidency in 2018-2019, and Vice-chairmanship of the Short-Term Committee in 2024-2025 (Berne Union, 2024). However, it has yet to join its **Climate Working Group** (CWG), an initiative led by one of Sweden's ECAs (EKN) since 2022, to advance innovative financial products for climate-friendly exports (Berne Union, n.d.a). While neither the Berne Union nor its CWG can impose mandatory fossil fuel exclusion requirements on its members, it facilitates ECAs' alignment with Paris Agreement objectives through peer learning and positive peer pressure. Joining the CWG would be a crucial step for SINOSURE in its journey to adopt global best practices and international standards.

#### (2) **Net-Zero Export Credit Agencies Alliance (NZECA)**

CEXIM and SINOSURE – as the institutions with a clear export finance mandate in China – are well-positioned to join the UN-convened **NZECA**, if only as an observer initially, and implement its target-setting protocol (NZECA, 2024). Thus, they would follow the lead of KazakhExport and Etihad Credit Insurance from the UAE to bring in perspectives beyond the OECD countries (NZECA, n.d.)



## 5. Key Recommendations

All the recommendations for the three institutions and Chinese government are summarised per dimension in Table 2 below (for more details please refer to Jia et al. 2025).

**Table 2: Key recommendations for aligning Chinese export finance with the Paris Agreement**

	CEXIM	SINOSURE	CDB	Chinese government
<b>Transparency: Financial and non-financial disclosure</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Transparently report on the energy finance portfolio including fossil fuels and clean energy, as well as by steps of the value chain (following best practices of E3F)</li> <li>Consistently extend GHG accounting to cover portfolio-wide scope 1-3 emissions, across headquarters and all branches</li> <li>Adopt a common climate finance definition</li> </ul>			<p>For the Ministry of Ecology and Environment (<b>MEE</b>):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Quantify China's climate-related export finance contribution for the New Collective Quantified Goal (NCQG) on Climate Finance</li> </ul>
<b>Fossil fuel policies</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Consistently implement the 'No New Coal Overseas' pledge and exclude financing for all new coal projects</li> <li>Re-consider support for controversial oil and gas projects abroad, such as the EACOP project in East Africa</li> <li>Phase out export finance support to oil &amp; gas projects across the value chain</li> <li>Explore the opportunity of financing the early decommissioning of fossil fuel infrastructure (like UKEF)</li> </ul>			<p>For the National Development and Reform Commission (<b>NDRC</b>):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Extend the exclusion of support to coal also to oil and gas projects</li> </ul>
<b>Climate impact of and emission reduction targets for all activities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Consistently apply China's Green Investment Principles and the Green Investment and Finance Partnership</li> <li>Establish science-based, portfolio-wide GHG emission targets (scope 1-3) that go beyond the 'Dual Carbon' goals, in line with international best practices</li> <li>Develop sectoral emissions targets to align with the Paris Agreement (e.g. using the target-setting protocol of NZECA)</li> </ul>			
<b>Climate finance: Positive contribution to the global climate transition</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Diversify export finance support to clean energy exports beyond the 'New Three' (electric vehicles, lithium-ion batteries, and solar panels) to other climate and clean energy solutions</li> <li>Expand support to global 'green' markets through innovative financial instruments tailored to clean energy projects against the backdrop of the return of protectionism</li> </ul>			<p>For the Ministry of Finance (<b>MOF</b>), Ministry of Commerce (<b>MOC</b>), <b>MEE</b> and <b>NDRC</b>:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Integrate concepts of 'Ecological Civilisation' and 'New Quality Productive Forces' into export finance</li> </ul>
<b>Engagement at national and international level</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Join NZECA</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Join NZECA</li> <li>Join the Berne Union-Climate Working Group to collaborate with peers on innovative climate-positive financial products</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Collaborate with OECD peers and join international initiatives such as the Clean Energy Transition Partnership</li> </ul>	<p>For <b>MOF</b>, <b>MOC</b> and <b>NDRC</b>:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Strengthen climate-related cooperation with Global South partners within the BRICS+ and BRI</li> <li>Commence discussions on how to succeed the OECD's International Working Group</li> <li>Explore the possibility of joining or collaborating with E3F</li> </ul>

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