

Employment and Labor Rights in Xinjiang

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Preface

Work creates the means of existence and is an essential human activity. It creates a better life and enables all-round human development and the progress of civilization. The *Constitution of the People's Republic of China* provides that all citizens have the right and obligation to work. To protect the right to work is to safeguard human dignity and human rights.

China has a large population and workforce. Employment and job security are key to guaranteeing workers' basic rights and wellbeing, and have a significant impact on economic development, social harmony, national prosperity, and the nation's rejuvenation. China is committed to the people-centered philosophy of development, attaches great importance to job security, gives high priority to employment, and pursues a proactive set of policies on employment. It fully respects the wishes of workers, protects citizens' right to work in accordance with the law, applies international labor and human rights standards, and strives to enable everyone to create a happy life and achieve their own development through hard work.

In accordance with the country's major policies on employment and the overall plan for eliminating poverty, the

Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region takes the facilitation of employment as the most fundamental project for ensuring and improving people's wellbeing. It has made every effort to increase and stabilize employment through various channels: encouraging individual initiative, regulatory role of the market, and government policies facilitating employment, entrepreneurship, and business startups. Through its proactive labor and employment policies, Xinjiang has continuously improved the people's material and cultural lives, and guaranteed and developed their human rights in every field. This has laid a solid foundation for ensuring that the people of all ethnic groups in Xinjiang have the opportunity to enjoy moderate prosperity in all respects and achieve long-term social stability together with their fellow countrymen and countrywomen in other parts of China.

I. Employment in Xinjiang

Xinjiang is located in the northwest of China. For historical and a range of natural reasons, it has long lagged behind other parts of the country in development, and there is a large impoverished population. The four prefectures in southern Xinjiang, namely, Hotan, Kashgar, Aksu and Kizilsu Kirgiz, in particular have a poor eco-environment, weak economic foundations, and a serious shortfall in employment carrying capacity. They are identified as areas of extreme poverty. In addition, terrorists, separatists and religious extremists have long preached that “the afterlife is fated” and that “religious teachings are superior to state laws”, inciting the public to resist learning the standard spoken and written Chinese language, reject modern science, and refuse to improve their vocational skills, economic conditions, and the ability to better their own lives. As a result, some local people have outdated ideas; they suffer from poor education and employability, low employment rates and incomes, and have fallen into long-term poverty.

Employment and job security carries great significance for ensuring people’s right to work, improving their living standards, and promoting social harmony and stability.

Especially since the 18th National Congress of the Communist Party of China (CPC) in 2012, Xinjiang has vigorously implemented employment projects, enhanced vocational training, and expanded employment channels and capacity. Thanks to these efforts, the employment situation in Xinjiang has continued to improve, people's incomes and quality of life are rising, and their sense of gain, happiness and security has significantly increased.

Policies have further improved. In recent years, to implement the national policies and strategies for stabilizing and facilitating employment and respond to calls from the public and local conditions, Xinjiang has successively formulated the *Opinions of the CPC Committee and the People's Government of the Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region on Further Facilitating Employment and Business Startups*, the *Opinions of the People's Government of the Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region on Facilitating Employment and Business Startups Now and in the Future*, and the *13th Five-Year Plan of the Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region for Facilitating Employment*. Systematic arrangements have been made in the areas of economic development, governmental financial guarantees, tax incentives, support from the financial sector, and overall

planning of urban and rural areas, different regions, and diverse groups, as well as in supporting flexible employment and helping groups in need to find jobs. All these provide a solid institutional guarantee for facilitating employment and safeguarding the rights and interests of workers.

The scale of employment has expanded continuously.

Xinjiang focuses on areas of extreme poverty and key groups with difficulty finding work. It guides people of all ethnic groups to find work nearby, or to locate jobs or start their own businesses in cities, and encourages the impoverished workforce to seek employment outside their hometowns. From 2014 to 2019, the total number of people employed in Xinjiang rose from 11.35 million to 13.3 million, an increase of 17.2 percent. The average annual increase in urban employment was more than 471,200 people (148,000 in southern Xinjiang, accounting for 31.4 percent); and the average annual relocation of surplus rural labor was more than 2.76 million people, of whom nearly 1.68 million, or over 60 percent, were in southern Xinjiang.

The employment structure has become more rational.

Xinjiang considers supply-side structural reform as a key priority, and endeavors to raise the level of the primary industry, focus on key projects in the secondary industry, and boost the

tertiary industry. It nurtures and strengthens industries with distinctive strengths and labor-intensive industries, and guides the orderly flow of labor to the tertiary industry. In terms of workforce distribution across the three industries, the ratio in 2014 was 45.4 : 16.0 : 38.6, which evolved to 36.4 : 14.1 : 49.5 in 2019. The tertiary industry saw an increase of 10.9 percentage points, making it the most job-intensive sector. In terms of workforce distribution in urban and rural areas, surplus rural labor is increasingly moving to cities and towns, and the ability of these places to absorb workforce has been strengthened. The number of people employed in cities and towns increased from 5.35 million in 2014 to 7.34 million in 2019, accounting for 55.2 percent of the total.

The quality of the workforce has improved significantly. Thanks to the government's education projects, enrollments in preschool education, nine-year compulsory education, senior high school education, higher education and vocational education in Xinjiang have all reached the highest level in history. In 2019, there were 453,800 full-time students studying at universities and colleges (an increase of 146,200 over 2014), and 1.84 million students studying at secondary schools (an increase of 147,600 over 2014). Through vocational training,

Xinjiang has built a large knowledge-based, skilled and innovative workforce that meets the requirements of the new era. Every year from 2014 to 2019 Xinjiang provided training sessions to an average of 1.29 million urban and rural workers, of which 451,400 were in southern Xinjiang. The trainees mastered at least one skill with employment potential, and the vast majority of them obtained vocational qualifications, skill level certificates, or specialized skill certificates, allowing them to go on to find stable employment.

The income of residents and workers has increased steadily. From 2014 to 2019, the per capita disposable income of residents in Xinjiang increased as follows:

- urban residents: from RMB23,200 to RMB34,700 (an average annual nominal growth of 8.6 percent);
- rural residents: from RMB8,724 to RMB13,100 (an average annual nominal growth of 8.9 percent);
- urban residents in areas under the administration of Xinjiang Production and Construction Corps (a special entity entrusted by the state to cultivate and guard China's border area in Xinjiang): from RMB27,600 to RMB40,700 (an average annual nominal growth of 8.5

percent);

- residents of the company residence areas of the Corps: from RMB13,900 to RMB22,000 (an average annual nominal growth of 9.9 percent);
- average annual salary of employees in non-private sectors in cities and towns: from RMB53,500 to RMB79,400 (an annual growth of 8.4 percent);
- average annual salary of employees in private sectors in cities and towns: from RMB36,200 to RMB45,900 (an annual growth of 5.4 percent).

From 2018 to 2019, 155,000 people from registered poor households in southern Xinjiang and in four impoverished regimental farms of the Xinjiang Production and Construction Corps found employment outside their hometowns and subsequently emerged from poverty.

The above statistics show that, in recent years Xinjiang has achieved remarkable results in providing employment services and job security to the residents, and the overall situation is good. However, it should be noted that Xinjiang is still faced with difficulties and challenges including a weak foundation for economic development, a large labor surplus in rural areas, and

a low level of vocational skills. To solve its problem of employment in the long term, Xinjiang must further optimize the industrial structure, improve the quality of the workforce, and change people's outdated mindset.

II. Implementation of Proactive Policies on Employment

In recent years, Xinjiang has formulated and put in place economic and social development strategies conducive to expanding employment, and has improved various policies to facilitate employment, with the goal of helping local people achieve stable, continuous, and long-term employment.

Upgrading the industrial structure to increase employment. Xinjiang has seized the development opportunities brought by the Belt and Road Initiative to diversify its industrial structure, promoting capital-, technology- and knowledge-intensive advanced manufacturing industries and emerging industries, boosting labor-intensive industries such as textiles and garments, shoes and accessories, and consumer electronics, and encouraging modern service industries such as e-commerce, cultural and creative businesses, all-area-advancing tourism, health care, and elderly care, all with a view to expanding the capacity and scale of employment.

In 2012, Xinjiang Zhundong Economic and Technological Development Zone was established, utilizing competitive resources to develop six pillar industries, including new materials and new energy. By the end of 2019, the development zone was providing employment for more than 80,000 people.

Since 2014, the state has given strong support to Xinjiang's textiles industry, which created 350,000 new jobs from 2017 to 2019.

Prioritizing the development of agro-product processing and electronics assembly, Kashgar Prefecture has attracted related enterprises to its industrial development zones (IDZs) and helped them expand their production to rural areas. By the end of 2019, the prefecture had 210 agro-product processing enterprises providing 16,700 jobs, and 1,406 industrial enterprises located in the various IDZs providing 84,100 jobs.

Aksu Prefecture has been integrating industry and vocational education, offering joint education programs by textile and garment enterprises and vocational schools, and has facilitated employment for 32,400 people.

Assisting key groups to obtain stable employment. Xinjiang has adopted a policy to encourage surplus rural labor to work in or near their hometowns, developing “satellite factories” and “poverty alleviation workshops” in light of local conditions to create jobs, supporting rural organizations for labor service cooperation to facilitate employment, promoting IDZs to stabilize employment, and developing tourism to boost employment.

Xinjiang has launched a three-year program to intensify its poverty alleviation efforts in 22 extremely poor counties in its south and 4 extremely poor regimental farms under the Xinjiang Production and Construction Corps. From 2018 to June 2020, the local government helped 221,000 people from registered poor households in southern Xinjiang to find work outside their hometowns. In Kashgar and Hotan prefectures, a three-year relocation assistance program from 2017 to 2019 for both urban and rural surplus labor helped 135,000 people to find jobs outside their hometowns.

Xinjiang has provided dynamic, categorized and targeted assistance to people having difficulty finding work and to zero-employment households in the entire autonomous region – having each and every one of them identified, registered, assisted, and ensured stable employment. From 2014 to 2019, Xinjiang provided jobs for 334,300 urban residents having difficulty finding work, and ensured that zero-employment households found jobs within 24 hours once they were identified.

For university graduates, Xinjiang has implemented a number of plans to facilitate employment and the creation of new businesses, to guide them to work and grow at

primary-level organizations, to encourage them to take up primary-level posts in education, agriculture, health care, and poverty alleviation in rural areas, and to help long-term unemployed youth find jobs. In 2019, the employment rate of university graduates in Xinjiang reached 90.4 percent, and the employment rate of ethnic minorities who graduated from universities in other parts of China and returned to Xinjiang reached 95.1 percent, both figures representing record highs.

Encouraging innovation and entrepreneurship to generate employment. Xinjiang promotes innovation as a new engine for creating jobs, and advances reform to streamline administration, delegate power, improve regulation and upgrade services. To encourage people who are eager and eligible to start their own businesses, the local government eases market access, improves policies in support of business startups, and sees to it that guaranteed loans, interest subsidies, allowances and tax breaks for startups are implemented. Xinjiang fosters platforms for innovation and entrepreneurship, improves capacity building for startups, and develops makerspaces which are market-oriented, professional, integrated and networked, to provide young entrepreneurs with more platforms and equal access to services.

Currently, Xinjiang has 5 business incubation demonstration bases at national level and 27 at provincial and equivalent level, which have fostered 1,412 micro and small businesses and created more than 10,000 jobs. Xinjiang supports innovation-driven startups and entrepreneurs as capable job creators, and encourages Internet plus entrepreneurship to multiply employment opportunities.

In 2019, Hotan Prefecture alone issued RMB910 million guaranteed loans for business startups, which helped 12,500 people to start businesses, including university graduates, rural workers and people having difficulty finding work. Xiao Min and five other women from Changji City, Changji Hui Autonomous Prefecture founded a human resources service company. It has become a leader of the local labor supply chain, integrating human resource services, dispatch of labor, logistics outsourcing, policy consultancy, and IT application. It has more than 4,800 employees from various ethnic groups and serves 318 enterprises and public institutions across the whole of Xinjiang. It has provided jobs for more than 30,000 unemployed and surplus rural laborers, and has created a total value of RMB156 million.

Providing vocational training to facilitate employment.

Based on the market demand for labor, Xinjiang focuses on improving employability of workers and promoting stable employment. It has developed a complete system of vocational education and training, including colleges for higher vocational and technical education, secondary technical schools, technical institutes, job placement training centers, employee training centers, and vocational education and training centers, with the goal of raising the basic quality of trainees and organizing training oriented to specific demands, jobs and employers. In 2019, Hotan Prefecture alone provided vocational training for 103,300 farmers and herders, of whom 98,300 found work, with an employment rate of over 95 percent.

Leveraging institutional strengths to expand employment channels. China has institutional strengths that promote equality and mutual assistance among all ethnic groups towards common development and progress. It has also formed a mechanism in which better-developed provinces pair up with and provide assistance for various parts of Xinjiang. Fully leveraging these strengths and this mechanism, Xinjiang coordinates jobs in and outside the autonomous region, to create favorable conditions for its local residents to work in other parts of China.

Since 2014, 117,000 people in Xinjiang have achieved employment with higher income in other parts of the country. Following the principle of “providing training according to market demand and before dispatching workers”, Xinjiang has organized employment-oriented training on standard spoken and written Chinese, relevant legal knowledge, general knowhow of urban life, and labor skills. Recipients of relocation assistance are provided by their employers with daily necessities and proper accommodation. In some provinces, enterprises provide them with public rental housing, low-rent housing, or housing for couples. Xinjiang provides timely registration and certification services for those who find employment through relocation assistance, to facilitate their medical care in their host provinces. Employers and host provinces help guarantee their children’s access to kindergartens and schools, and help them integrate into local life and share local resources.

Securing employment and public wellbeing in the face of Covid-19. In response to the impact of Covid-19, Xinjiang has coordinated epidemic prevention and control with social and economic development. It has worked hard to stabilize employment, finance, foreign trade, inbound investment, domestic investment, and market expectations, and has put in

place measures to guarantee jobs, daily living needs, food and energy, industrial and supply chains, the interests of market players, and the smooth functioning of grassroots government. The local government has taken multiple measures to alleviate economic difficulties and stabilize and boost employment, and adopted policies offering periodical and targeted cuts in taxes and other employer contributions, aiming to facilitate the resumption of production and business activities, and increase employment generated by investment and industries.

Through all these measures, Xinjiang has achieved significant progress in increasing employment and ensuring public wellbeing while implementing Covid-19 control on an ongoing basis. This can be exemplified by the following statistics as of the end of June 2020:

- cuts of some RMB7.6 billion to old-age insurance, unemployment insurance, and work-related injury compensation insurance paid by enterprises, which represents a 50 percent reduction of RMB1.9 billion for large enterprises, and a complete exemption of RMB5.7 billion for micro, small and medium enterprises.
- approval to 1,237 enterprises in difficulties to postpone the payment of their social insurance premiums,

totaling RMB706 million.

- reimbursement of unemployment insurance premiums of RMB904 million to 83,100 enterprises, benefiting 1.8 million employees.
- provision of various employment subsidies totaling about RMB1.7 billion to 552,400 people.
- creation of 339,700 new jobs in cities and towns, 41,800 new businesses hiring 69,500 employees, and jobs for 31,600 people with difficulty finding work.
- placement of 2.6 million surplus rural workers through relocation, a year-on-year increase of 46.1 percent.

III. Full Respect for Workers' Job Preferences

Workers' job preferences have always served as an important reference for the local government of Xinjiang in designing its employment policies, expanding employment channels, creating jobs, organizing vocational training sessions, and providing placement services. This ensures that the people can make their own choices about work and enjoy a happy life.

Forming a comprehensive picture of the local labor resources. The local government has constantly improved the statistical indicators for measuring employment and unemployment. It has put in place systems for monitoring labor resources in rural areas, employment in enterprises, and supply and demand on the human resource market, and has set up an unemployment monitoring and alert mechanism accordingly. Based on the labor offices at township/sub-district and village/community levels, local authorities have established basic information on the number, age, gender, education level, and employment status of the workforce in their respective jurisdiction. The monitoring and survey results serve as reference for formulating employment policies and plans. Surveys show that by the end of 2019, Xinjiang had a surplus rural workforce of 2.59 million people, among whom 1.65

million were in southern Xinjiang, accounting for almost two-thirds of the total.

Keeping track of the job preferences and needs of workers. The local government conducts regular surveys of the job preferences of workers, to keep track of their expectations in terms of location, position, salary, future prospects, and working and living environment. This allows the provision of more targeted services, aiming for the best possible match between employees and positions and promoting long-term stable employment. According to a survey in early 2020, with a population of 3,540, the Aybagh Village in Gulbagh Town, Shache (Yarkant) County, Kashgar Prefecture, had a workforce of 1,509 people, of whom 1,288, or 85 percent, were interested in working outside their county. Among these people, 923 wished to do factory work in the expectation of an average salary of about RMB5,000; 365 preferred to make a living by making naan bread, engage in catering or the dried fruit business, or pursue a career in the performing arts.

In 2019, a survey in three villages of Baghchi Town, Hotan County, Hotan Prefecture counted a total population of 5,307, with 1,699 people capable of work, of whom, 1,493, or 88 percent, were keen to work outside their home villages. Of the

remainder, 180 preferred to work locally in township enterprises, village factories, or poverty-relief cooperatives offering an average monthly salary of RMB3,000; the other 26 wished to start businesses locally, engaging in transport and logistics, property management and household services, construction, hairdressing, catering or retail stores. These indicators give the government a clearer understanding of the job preferences of workers so it can better satisfy their individual needs, effectively promote the orderly flow of the workforce, and improve employment stability and job satisfaction.

Building employment information platforms. The local government has built an extensive contact network with employers to collect and collate job information, which is released timely with the help of information technology through the human resource market, public placement agencies, online service platforms, radio, TV, village and community bulletin boards, enabling people to look for the jobs that suit them best.

For example, the Aksu Prefecture has released job and candidate information on its public placement service portal and its WeChat account, to build two-way selection platforms for employers and employees. Since 2014, it has organized 621 job

fairs, attracting 4,953 companies, providing over 145,000 job opportunities, and helping 38,600 people to find work. A poor villager named Habibulla Mamut from Aykol Town of Aksu City applied for a position with an electrical appliance company in Hangzhou at a local job fair, was offered the post, and earned RMB55,000 that year, raising himself and his family out of poverty.

Bolstering public employment services. The local government has built a well-defined, dynamic, five-tiered public employment service system for employers and employees, which is well-coordinated at all levels and covers every part of Xinjiang. It has also expanded its services in areas such as policy advice, employment and unemployment registration, career guidance and recommendation, and skills and business startup training. By the end of 2019, there were 144 human resource markets at the county level or above, 149 job placement agencies on the farms of the Xinjiang Production and Construction Corps, and 8,668 primary-level labor offices across Xinjiang, providing employment services to around 21.73 million people that year.

Preventing and punishing any incidents of forced labor. China's *Criminal Law*, *Labor Law*, *Labor Contract Law*, and

Public Security Administrative Punishment Law all stipulate that the following actions are strictly forbidden and will lead to administrative punishments: forcing a person to work by means of violence, threat, or illegal limitation of personal freedom; or affronting, physically punishing, beating, illegally searching or detaining an employee. Should it be established that a crime has taken place, the perpetrator will be subjected to a criminal investigation. Xinjiang strictly observes the relevant laws and regulations of the state, providing information on the law through education campaigns, strengthening the legal awareness of employers and employees, and conducting routine inspections to ensure that labor laws are enforced. The goal is to bring the establishment, management, supervision and arbitration of labor relations under legal scrutiny, and take resolute action to prevent or punish any incidents of forced labor.

IV. Labor Rights Protection

The Chinese government is committed to respecting citizens' right to work, safeguarding their legitimate labor rights and interests, and ensuring them a decent job. Strictly following the above principles as embodied in the *Constitution of the People's Republic of China* and relevant national laws, including the *Labor Law*, *Labor Contract Law*, *Employment Promotion Law*, *Social Insurance Law*, *Law on the Protection of Women's Rights and Interests*, and *Law on the Protection of Persons with Disabilities*, Xinjiang has formulated and implemented a series of autonomous regional regulations based on local conditions, including measures for implementing the national *Employment Promotion Law*, *Regulations on Labor and Social Security Supervision*, *Law on the Protection of Women's Rights and Interests*, and *Law on the Protection of Persons with Disabilities*, as well as the *Regulations of the Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region on the Protection of Labor Rights and Interests*. These laws and regulations provide a solid legal guarantee for citizens in Xinjiang to enjoy equal rights to work.

Guaranteeing workers' equal right to employment. In accordance with the principle of equal protection of civil rights, Xinjiang ensures that there is no discrimination against workers

on the basis of ethnicity, region, gender, and religious belief, and that no individuals' rights are restricted because of their urban or rural status, profession or position. In ensuring women's rights, Xinjiang strives to remove barriers to employment and formulates policies to support women in starting their own businesses. In 2019, 480,900 new jobs were created in cities and towns; 228,100 of these were for women, accounting for 47 percent of the total. To protect the labor rights of persons with disabilities, Xinjiang puts in more efforts on their vocational training, promotes their employment at public welfare enterprises and institutions, offers them flexible and less demanding jobs and public service positions, and advances their proportional employment. It also supports them in finding work through self-employment, starting new businesses or other flexible ways of employment. By the end of 2019, 183,700 of them were employed – almost 60 percent of the total workforce of persons with disabilities in Xinjiang.

Guaranteeing workers' right to remuneration. Xinjiang fully applies the country's policy requirements on establishing a dynamic salary growth mechanism for enterprise employees, and improves the salary guidance systems for enterprises and for the labor market respectively. Each year from 2014 to 2019, it

released a salary growth guideline for enterprises. It established and improved the minimum salary adjustment mechanism, raising the minimum salary by almost 20 percent from RMB1,520 per month in 2013 to RMB1,820 per month in 2018, which was at a high level in the country. Xinjiang has issued the *Regulations of Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region on Collective Salary Negotiation of Enterprises* and other regulations to promote and steadily expand the coverage of collective salary negotiation. The local government has also improved the system for guaranteeing salary payments. It punishes illegal and criminal acts of withholding labor remuneration, and thus ensures that workers receive their salaries in full and on time.

Guaranteeing workers' right to rest and leisure and to occupational safety. Xinjiang strictly applies relevant state regulations and adopts the system of the eight-hour workday and 40-hour workweek. If an employer wishes to extend working hours for operational reasons, it must consult with the trade union and the employees in accordance with the law, and arrange for compensation in the form of additional time off or remuneration. Workers are guaranteed the right to time off on weekends and statutory holidays including the Spring Festival,

Roza Festival (Eid al-Fitr) and Corban Festival (Eid al-Adha). Xinjiang also strictly applies the national occupational safety and health regulations and standards, consistently improves the responsibility system for workplace safety and occupational disease prevention, and carries out inspections over occupational health law enforcement. As a result, the autonomous region has succeeded in preventing or reducing to a minimum all kinds of workplace safety incidents, and established fundamental control over or eliminated occupational disease hazards.

Guaranteeing workers' right to participate in social insurance. Xinjiang has fully implemented the national plan to ensure that everyone has access to social security and all those in need are covered. Workers in micro, small and medium-sized enterprises, and key groups including migrant workers, the self-employed, and people engaged in new forms of business are encouraged to participate in social insurance. By the end of 2019, more than 22 million people were participating in basic pension, unemployment, and work-related injury insurance. Labor and social security supervision bodies at all levels continue to step up law enforcement, address reports and complaints about violations of relevant laws, regulations, and rules in a timely manner, and investigate and correct in

accordance with the law illegal acts where employers fail to register for or contribute to social insurance, resolutely safeguarding the legitimate rights and interests of workers.

Guaranteeing workers' freedom of religious belief and the right to use their own spoken and written languages.

Xinjiang strictly applies the *Constitution* and relevant national laws and regulations, including the *Law on Regional Ethnic Autonomy*, the *Law on the Standard Spoken and Written Chinese Language*, and the *Regulations on Religious Affairs*. The local government fully respects and guarantees the right of workers of all ethnic groups to freedom of religious belief, and ensures that no organization or individual interferes with this freedom. While promoting standard spoken and written Chinese in accordance with the law, Xinjiang fully respects and protects the rights of ethnic minority workers to use their own spoken and written languages, and ensures that workers can choose which languages to use for communication. The customs of workers of all ethnic groups are fully respected and guaranteed and efforts are made to create a good working and living environment for them. Tokhali Turhanbay from Wuqia (Ulughchat) County, Kizilsu Kirgiz Autonomous Prefecture, now works in a shoe factory in Guangdong Province. He belongs to an ethnic

minority and is a religious believer who follows halal diet. Before going to work at the factory, he was concerned that he would have difficulty maintaining his eating practices, and that there would be no place to worship. But when he arrived, he found that the living environment in the factory was comfortable, and the halal food was excellent. He also found that it was convenient to go shopping and video chat with his family during his spare time, and he was able to attend religious activities at a nearby mosque. Therefore, he quickly adapted to the new environment.

Protecting workers' rights and interests and strengthening the relief mechanism. Xinjiang fully implements the labor contract system, which clarifies the rights and obligations of employers and workers. The autonomous region keeps improving the tripartite mechanism of consultation among representatives of the government, trade unions, and business organizations, investigates and solves major problems involving labor relations, and seeks to build harmony in the workplace. Xinjiang also encourages trade unions to play an active role in safeguarding the legitimate rights and interests of workers. It reinforces labor and social security supervision as well as mediation and arbitration of labor disputes, and handles

labor disputes in a timely and appropriate manner. It has taken targeted actions to rectify major violations of labor laws and regulations, and carried out special supervision over the handling of major cases. As a result it is able to effectively protect the legitimate rights and interests of workers concerning job intermediation, labor contracts, working hours, time off and leave, salary payment, social insurance, and special labor protection.

V. Better Jobs for Better Lives

With the implementation of a series of employment policies and measures, the goal that “each household has access to job opportunities, each person has work to do, and each month goes with an income” has been largely achieved. Profound changes have taken place in the life, work and mentality of the people of all the ethnic groups in Xinjiang and particularly in southern Xinjiang – their pockets are better filled, their lives are better, and they are happier.

A marked increase in family incomes. People working either within or outside of Xinjiang all have stable incomes. The annual per capita income of workers from Xinjiang who are working in other provinces is about RMB40,000, roughly equal to the per capita disposable income of permanent urban residents in the places where they work. The local people who left their home to work elsewhere in Xinjiang have an annual per capita income of RMB30,000, much higher than earnings from farming. For example, a villager named Arapat Ahmatjan from Charbagh Township, Lop County, Hotan Prefecture earned less than RMB10,000 per year as a farmer; but when he found work in an electric appliance company in Nanchang City, Jiangxi Province in 2017, he earned more than RMB160,000 in

less than three years.

Likewise, another villager named Mamtimin Turamat from Ushsharbash Town, Yecheng (Qaghilik) County, Kashgar Prefecture earned only a few thousand yuan annually as a farmer, but his monthly income rose to more than RMB4,000 after he began to work for a company in Changji Hui Autonomous Prefecture. His life was much better – he built a new house and got married.

Amina Rahman and her husband from a registered poor household in Ghoruchol Town, Awat County, Aksu Prefecture, applied for jobs after seeing the information released by the township's labor and social security office in March 2018, and were then both hired by a company in Jiujiang City, Jiangxi Province. They now have a monthly income of about RMB9,000, paying off their loans and saving over RMB90,000 yuan.

Notable improvement in living standards. From having their basic needs met to enjoying decent lives, and from traveling by a donkey cart to traveling in modern vehicles, the people in Xinjiang have witnessed tremendous changes in their lives.

A villager called Reyhangul Imir from a poor household in Ojma Township, Akto County, Kizilsu Kirgiz Autonomous

Prefecture sent back more than RMB100,000 to her family in the four years she spent working in Cixi City, Zhejiang Province. With the money, her family upgraded their lives by building a new house equipped with new furniture in her hometown.

Yusan Hasan from Yurungqash Town, Hotan City used to make a living by taking odd jobs, and struggled to make ends meet. In July 2018, thanks to helpful acquaintances, he found a job at a meat-packing plant in Urumqi, the capital city of Xinjiang. Starting as a handyman, his hard work paid off and he soon picked up new skills. He then persuaded his wife to join him, and she found a stable job in a clothing store in Urumqi. They soon settled in the city, buying an apartment in 2020.

Enhanced employability. Through various pre-employment training programs, the local people have greatly improved their employment skills; many have grown into master hands and technical experts, and some have become managers and even started up their own businesses.

After three years of rotating in various positions, Amina Obul from Siyak Township, Yutian (Keriya) County, Hotan Prefecture has become one of the best employees of an energy company. Arzugul Iskandar from Pishan (Guma) County, Hotan

Prefecture works at a textile company in Chaohu City, Anhui Province. She has become a technical expert and a master for young workers with the help of senior colleagues.

After graduating from Beijing Institute of Fashion Technology, Adila Ablat from Kucha City, Aksu Prefecture started a garment company in 2018 in his hometown with the help of the local government. In 2019 his company achieved an output value of over RMB2 million, and created jobs for over 40 women.

A college graduate with disabilities, Jibek Nurlanhan from Altay City, Altay Prefecture, Ili Kazak Autonomous Prefecture returned to her hometown after graduation. The local human resources and social security department arranged for her to take a startup training class, and helped her to raise RMB100,000 to create a store selling Kazak embroidery handicrafts. She now has a monthly income of over RMB6,000.

A change in mindset. In the past, some local people undervalued education, and valued men over women. With outdated employment ideas, some used to rely on government aid and relief for a living. But today, the belief that “only hard work can bring a better life” is widespread, and all ethnic groups here are eager to rely on their own efforts to improve their lives

– full of drive, and ready to start up their own businesses. For example, at a job fair held in Makit County, Kashgar Prefecture, many candidates hurried around gathering information on available opportunities and applying for positions. It was an inspiring scene. Some villagers were motivated to find opportunities outside their villages and give their families a better life after seeing their peers had made some money and were looking more prosperous.

Ablimit Keyum from Kanchi Township, Baicheng (Bay) County, Aksu Prefecture, who is doing business in Xinjiang and other provinces, said, “I’m not satisfied with the status quo, and I want to study and work harder to make my life better.”

Rozinisa Imin from Tusalla Township, Hotan City signed up for work in Jinjiang City, Fujian Province in March 2019. The money she earned helped to support her family’s animal farming. Her brother, who has just graduated from vocational high school, sees her as his inspiration. He plans to seek work in Fujian as well, and dreams of a bright future.

Life dreams realized. Many people find the right jobs through their own initiative. They move from rural to urban areas, and turn from farmers to workers. In this process, they learn skills, increase their incomes, and achieve prosperity; more

importantly, they have broadened their horizons, acquired knowledge and greater abilities, and achieved their potential. Most people are satisfied with their current life and are optimistic about the future.

Mamattohti Imintohti from Hotan County, Hotan Prefecture longed to own his own restaurant. He began to work as an apprentice in a restaurant in Urumqi in 2017 and soon mastered the skills of a pastry cook. With the help of his teacher, he opened a restaurant which has become very popular.

Pashagul Keram from Boritokay Township, Wuqia (Ulughchat) County, Kizilsu Kirgiz Autonomous Prefecture is public-spirited and ready to help – she has led more than 500 local residents to find work in Guangdong, and thereby helped them escape from poverty. She was awarded the national May 1st Labor Medal and the National Award for Efforts in Poverty Alleviation.

Closer communication and bonds between all ethnic groups. Workers of all ethnic groups in Xinjiang have forged profound friendships while working, studying and living together. They care for and help each other like family, demonstrating ethnic unity and mutual assistance built on a close bond towards each other.

An electrical appliance company in Jiangsu Province took on about 200 employees from 16 ethnic groups from Xinjiang. The workers often gather together to enjoy themselves, singing, dancing, having parties, shopping, traveling, and cooking pilaf and kebabs like a family.

You Liangying, an employee of Xinjiang Production and Construction Corps who set up a cotton and fruit planting cooperative, helped thousands of people from different ethnic groups to learn advanced planting skills in her 17 trips crossing deserts stretching hundreds of miles. Her efforts not only helped them out of poverty, but also fostered closer ethnic ties. Over the past decade and more, she has selflessly helped Mamatturup Musak from Pishan (Guma) County, Hotan Prefecture, who chose to repay the favor by giving back to society. Their story is well-known across Xinjiang.

VI. Application of International Labor and Human Rights Standards

Xinjiang implements a proactive employment policy, protects the lawful labor rights and interests of people of all ethnic groups, and strives to provide decent work and a better life for all. This embodies the common values that are championed by the international community, and contributes to safeguarding social fairness and justice and promoting the all-round development of humanity.

Fulfilling international convention obligations. China is a founding and permanent member state of the International Labour Organization (ILO). China has ratified 26 international labor conventions, including four of the ILO's fundamental conventions – *Equal Remuneration Convention*, *Minimum Age Convention*, *Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention*, and *Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention*.

China is also a signatory state to a host of UN conventions, including the *International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights*, the *International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination*, the *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women*, the *Convention against Torture and Other Cruel*,

Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, and the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, Supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime.

China applies international labor and human rights standards in its legislation, policymaking and policy implementation, to effectively safeguard workers' rights. China prohibits child labor, opposes forced labor, employment discrimination, and workplace sexual harassment, takes targeted actions to combat illegal employment, and prevents and punishes all kinds of violations and crimes concerning employment. In fulfilling their responsibilities to secure employment, local governments at all levels in Xinjiang promote full and high-quality employment for people in different areas, of different ethnic groups, and with different economic conditions, to achieve common development and progress among all ethnic groups. Xinjiang has thus become a successful example of practicing international labor and human rights standards in underdeveloped areas with large populations of ethnic minorities.

Finding new approaches to eradicating poverty. Ending poverty has been a lasting goal of humanity and a major component of human rights protection. In the *UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*, “ending poverty in all its forms everywhere” tops all other development goals, expressing a pressing demand by the international community to this end. In implementing the 2030 Agenda, China makes it clear that the goal of achieving moderate prosperity in all respects is for its entire people, and that not a single ethnic group is allowed to be lagged behind. Xinjiang protects human rights through development, and strives to eradicate poverty through education and training, capacity building and employment. It effectively prevents and strikes out at terrorism and extremism, and at the same time maintains social stability and improves people’s lives, with its impoverished population and poverty incidence markedly reduced. From 2013 to the end of 2019, Xinjiang wiped out poverty in 25 poor counties and 3,107 poor villages, and the poverty incidence dropped from 19.4 percent to 1.24 percent. From 2014 to the end of 2019, a total of 2.92 million people from 737,600 households shook off poverty. By the end of 2020, poverty will be completely eliminated in Xinjiang. Xinjiang has worked out a new approach to addressing some of

the global challenges: protecting human rights while combating terrorism and extremism, and pursuing sustainable development while eliminating poverty.

Responding to the ILO's Decent Work Agenda. The ILO has launched an agenda to promote decent work for all, aiming to achieve all-round human development. The agenda, which is integral to respecting and protecting human rights, embodies the consensus of the international community. The Chinese government always puts people first and has actively responded to the ILO's agenda by implementing the *Decent Work Country Program for China (2016-2020)* and incorporating the concept of decent work into national policies and development plans. Xinjiang has put into practice relevant policy measures of the national government, focusing in particular on respecting workers' choices, protecting their rights and interests, improving their workplace environment and working conditions, and recognizing their contributions. This ensures that people from all ethnic groups work in a decent environment with freedom, equality, safety, and dignity. Conforming to the *Constitution*, the *Labor Law*, and the *Employment Promotion Law* of the country, and respecting local conditions, Xinjiang has launched a package of effective policy measures to ensure stable

employment for all residents. In recent years, Xinjiang's registered urban unemployment rate has remained below 3.5 percent. This enables the local people enjoy the right to work to the greatest extent possible, and has laid a solid foundation for raising the human rights to life and development to a higher level across a broader sphere.

Conclusion

Chinese President Xi Jinping, also general secretary of the CPC Central Committee and chairman of the Central Military Commission, has emphasized that employment is pivotal to people's wellbeing. *The Global Employment Agenda* adopted by the ILO states that employment is central to poverty reduction. Having decent work is of vital importance to one's survival and growth, a harmonious and happy family life, and the long-term stability of society. The proactive policies to ensure employment and job security adopted by the local government of Xinjiang have effectively protected all ethnic groups' basic labor rights, greatly improved their living and working conditions, and fully satisfied their aspirations to create a better life.

For years, certain international forces, guilty of ideological bias and prejudiced against China, have been applying double standards in Xinjiang, criticizing "breaches of human rights" while ignoring the tremendous efforts Xinjiang has made to protect human rights. They have fabricated facts to support their false claims of "forced labor" in Xinjiang, and smeared the local government's work on employment and job security. Their acts amount to a denial of the fact that the local people in Xinjiang enjoy the right to work, aspire to move out of poverty and

backwardness and are working towards that goal. Such groundless allegation would be strongly opposed by everyone who values justice and progress.

Respecting and protecting human rights are principles enshrined in the *Constitution* of China. The CPC and the Chinese government have always prioritized the protection of the citizens' rights to work and employment; we have taken a resolute stance against forced labor and eradicated it in any form. Xinjiang's policies and practices concerning employment and job security comply with China's *Constitution* and relevant laws, conform to international labor and human rights standards, and support the will of all ethnic groups to live a better life. They have served to meet the people's needs, improve their wellbeing, and win their support.

Work helps to make a difference and create happiness. Looking forward, Xinjiang will continue its commitment to the people-centered philosophy of development, adhere to the principle that employment is of paramount importance to people's wellbeing, implement the strategy of giving priority to employment, and introduce more proactive policies to boost employment. With tireless efforts it will strive to grow employment in volume and quality, to meet the growing

expectation of all ethnic groups for a better life.