

Progress in China's Human Rights Cause in 1996

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Foreword

The year 1996 was the first year of implementation of the Ninth Five-Year Plan for National Economic and Social Development, and also a year that witnessed continued advances in China's human rights cause. Last year, China's national economy maintained steady, rapid and sound growth, the efforts to build up democracy and a legal system were notably strengthened, and the human rights conditions maintained a good momentum of continuous improvement and promised further progress.

I. People's Rights to Subsistence and Development

In 1996, China's national economy continued its rapid growth. The gross domestic product (GDP) reached over 6,779.5 billion yuan, representing an increase of 9.7 percent over the previous year, calculated in terms of comparable prices. Based on

this, the people's rights to earn a living and develop recorded a marked improvement.

The standards of living for urban and rural people improved nationwide with the steady increase of people's income. In 1996, the average per capita income for living expenses reached 4,377 yuan for city and township dwellers, an increase of 3.3 percent over 1995 in real terms. The average per capita net income of rural residents came to 1,926 yuan, a rise of nine percent over 1995 in real terms -- the biggest increase of the past few years. Savings deposits of urban and rural residents topped 3,850 billion yuan at the end of 1996, over 880 billion yuan more than the year before. New housing for urban and rural residents totaling 1.1 billion square meters of floor space was completed, and people's housing conditions were significantly improved. The market was brisk, with the supply of a wide variety of consumer goods at fairly stable prices. The volume of total retail sales of consumer goods reached 2,461.4 billion yuan, increasing by 12.5 percent in real terms. According to a sample survey of the State Statistics Bureau, the per capita consumption expenses of urban dwellers reached 3,919 yuan in 1996. Of that amount, 1,905 yuan was spent on food. The "Engel's coefficient," which indicates the ratio between the expenses of food and other items of consumption, came to 48.6, or 1.3 percentage points lower than the previous year and a step closer to the goal of 45 percent set for the year of 2000. The drop of the "Engel's coefficient" signified a new improvement in people's quality of life.

While seeking universal improvement of the people's overall living standard, China has been paying great attention to meeting people's basic need for food and clothing. Since the initiation of reform and opening-up, the Chinese government launched vigorously a nationwide operation to seek development and provide assistance for the people in poverty-stricken areas, which helped reduce the poverty-stricken population in great numbers for many successive years. In 1996, an additional seven million rural poverty-stricken people met their basic need for food and clothing. The country's total poverty-stricken population had dropped from 250 million in 1978 to 58 million. In the past 18 years, nearly 200 million rural people had shaken off poverty. By the end of the 1970s, the number of China's poverty-stricken people accounted for one-fourth of the world's total, while the ratio is now less than one-twentieth. After more than 10 years' efforts in development-oriented poverty-relief programs in the underdeveloped areas, the drinking water problems for 39.61 million people and 46.29 million head of cattle have been solved in the poverty-stricken areas. In addition, 258,000 kilometers of highways have been built, 274,000 kilometers of power transmission lines installed, and more than 50,000 rural

enterprises established. In the meantime, the poverty-stricken areas also made substantial progress in cultural, educational and public health undertakings. In 1995 alone, 2,504 primary schools and 587 clinics were built in these areas. A number of poverty-relief campaigns were launched by people in all walks of life and have played big roles in poverty relief. They include the "Happiness Project," designed to help poverty-stricken mothers; the "Hope Project," aimed at helping dropouts in poverty-stricken areas; the "Spring Bud Program," specially to aid girl dropouts; and the "Love of Humanity Project," meant to improve health care for children in the poverty-stricken areas.

Statistics show that China is the country which has witnessed the quickest decrease in its poverty-stricken population. In the past 20 years, however, the number of seriously underdeveloped countries in the world has increased from 27 to 48. In the past five years, the total number of the world's poorest population has risen from 1 billion to 1.3 billion, and the figure is climbing by 25 million each year. In the developing countries, more than 10 million people die from hunger or malnutrition every year. In contrast, China's poverty-stricken population decreases by 10 million every year. China is also working to enable all of its poverty-stricken people to shake off poverty by the end of this century. Although China is still facing great difficulties, the Chinese government and people are determined and confident of their ability to achieve the goal of lifting all of the nation's poor people out of poverty on schedule. China's development-oriented aid-the-poor work and achievements in poverty-stricken areas have been universally praised by international organizations and noted figures concerned. The World Bank believes that "the Chinese government has made painstaking efforts toward poverty alleviation in the most backward rural areas. These efforts proved to be much more successful than those made by many other developing countries."

II. Citizens' Democratic Rights

While developing its economy, China has made energetic efforts to promote the building of a socialist democratic and political system, consolidated and perfected the people's congress system and the system of multi-party cooperation and political consultation under the leadership of the Chinese Communist Party, and improved democracy at grass-roots units, thus further guaranteeing citizens' democratic rights. The people's congress system serves as China's fundamental political system. The National People's Congress (NPC), the supreme state power organ, decides fundamental state policies and principles, and formulates basic national laws. In

1996, the NPC heard and deliberated the work reports of the State Council, the Supreme People's Court and the Supreme People's Procuratorate; and examined and approved the Ninth Five-Year Plan for National Economic and Social Development and the Outline for the Long-Range Objective Through the Year 2010. It also deliberated and adopted 20 laws and decisions concerning legal issues, and strengthened legal protection of citizens' rights. In the meantime, the NPC has tightened inspection of and supervision over law enforcement. To date, the Eighth NPC Standing Committee has inspected the enforcement of 17 laws. Various special NPC committees have examined the implementation of 13 laws. In 1996, led by eight vice-chairmen of the NPC Standing Committee, 21 law-enforcement inspection groups were organized to tour the country to supervise and inspect the enforcement of laws, including the Agriculture Law, the Education Law, the Environmental Protection Law, the Labor Law and the Decision on Strengthening Comprehensive Management of Social Security, thus playing a supervisory role in implementing relevant laws. The NPC pays close attention to safeguarding the rights of its deputies, and earnestly and promptly handles proposals and suggestions made by its deputies. During the Fifth Session of the Eighth NPC held in 1997, 700 motions proposed by the deputies were received, 140 of which were submitted to relevant special committees for examination in accordance with the decision of the session's presidium. The other 560 motions and the 1,289 proposals and suggestions made by the deputies were submitted to relevant departments and units, which are responsible for replying to the deputies.

The system of multi-party cooperation and political consultation led by the Chinese Communist Party is an important component of China's democratic and political system. Various non-Communist parties and Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC) organizations are playing an increasingly important role in political consultation, democratic supervision and the participation in and deliberation of state affairs. From the Fourth Plenum of the 13th Chinese Communist Party Central Committee, which was held in 1989, to the end of 1996, the Party Central Committee conducted more than 100 consultative activities of various forms on various fundamental state policies and principles, on the candidates for state leaders, and on various important policy decisions, laws and regulations with the central committees of various non-Communist parties, the All-China Federation of Industry and Commerce and personages without party affiliation. In 1996, 41 investigation reports or proposals were made by the CPPCC National Committee on implementing the fundamental policies and principles for the Ninth Five-Year Plan, reducing farmers' financial burdens, developing animal husbandry on grasslands,

reforming public health undertakings, and promoting ethical and cultural progress and the building of democracy and a legal system. The reports and proposals were adopted either by the Party Central Committee or the State Council in formulating relevant policies and regulations. Meanwhile, the CPPCC National Committee took effective steps to do a better job of putting forward proposals and actively reflect social conditions and popular feelings. Members of the CPPCC National Committee have actively aired views and offered advices, and increased the number of their proposals year by year, from 1,900 during the First Session of the Eighth CPPCC National Committee to 2,426 during the Committee's Fifth Session. Within this period, more than 10,000 proposals were put forth. During the Fourth Session of the Eighth CPPCC National Committee, members put forward 2,380 proposals. By February 14, 1997, 2,334 proposals had been handled, or 98.1 percent of the total. Of those handled, 1,937 proposals, or 83 percent of the total, have been solved or will be solved according to plan. With regard to the problems that cannot be solved promptly because of constraints, various executive units have offered explanations.

China has made vigorous efforts to promote the building of democracy in grass-roots units in urban and rural areas to guarantee the democratic rights of the residents there. In rural areas, efforts have been made to continue to conduct rural grass-roots mass self-management activities that focus on villagers' democratic elections, democratic policy-making, democratic management and democratic supervision. In 1996, rural villagers' committees in most provinces, autonomous regions and municipalities directly under the central government carried out a new round of elections by adopting the method by which villagers could directly cast votes to elect the committees. Many places adopted the method by which every eligible voter in villages has the right to nominate candidates, and the villagers' congresses or representatives of villagers select formal candidates by secret ballot and through preliminary elections. Candidates must run for elections. Voters will mark their ballots in specially-designated rooms. Villagers' committees regularly or periodically make public the affairs of the village to the villagers. For example, by the end of 1996 in Hebei Province, 50,191 of the 50,430 villages throughout the province had made public village affairs in various forms and to varying extent, including six items such as financial expenditures at the village level, grain purchased by the state and the accumulation and retention of common funds by the collective, the granting of plots for housing construction, electricity rates and charges, family planning and objectives of village cadres during their terms. Publicizing village affairs has increased the rights of villagers to exercise democratic management of and democratic supervision over villagers affairs. In cities, urban neighborhood

committees and their subsidiary organizations continued to be set up and perfected. More than 98 percent of the residential areas all over the country have established neighborhood committees in accordance with legal procedures. In 1996, the overwhelming majority of neighborhood committees carried out, according to law, elections of new committees by adopting the method of directly casting votes by residents. Neighborhood committees have further perfected the residents' meeting system. Important affairs concerning the residential areas are decided by residents' meetings. A sample survey of 127 cities shows that on average, every neighborhood committee holds at least ten residents' meetings a year. The building of democracy at grassroots levels serves as an important reflection of democracy enjoyed by the Chinese people. All the overseas people who have no prejudice but have a good understanding of China's actual situation have fully acknowledged the building of democracy at grassroots levels in China.

III. Judicial Guarantee for Human Rights

During the past year and more, China has revised its Criminal Law and Criminal Procedure Law, promulgated and enforced new laws such as the Lawyers Law and the Law on Administrative Punishment, and taken many other measures to strengthen the judicial guarantee for human rights.

China has cracked down on serious criminal offences in accordance with law, and earnestly guaranteed the people's human rights and safety of lives and property. In 1996, public security and judicial departments launched, according to law, a severe nationwide crackdown on criminal offences seriously endangering public security, such as homicides, robberies, rape, kidnapping and blackmail, and major theft, with emphasis placed on crimes involving the use of guns, crimes with gangster connections and characteristics, and crimes committed by rogues and vicious social forces. These criminal activities have endangered public security, gravely infringed on the citizens' personal safety, lives and property, and are abhorred by the people across the country. In accordance with law, public security and judicial departments have punished a number of criminals guilty of the most heinous crimes. Statistics show that in 1996, courts throughout the country sentenced 322,382 criminal offenders who had seriously endangered public security by committing crimes of violence, crimes involving the use of guns, and gang-related crimes. The severe crackdown on crimes has safeguarded social stability and the human rights of the people all over the country, and won the heartfelt support of the general public.

In March of 1997, the Fifth Session of the Eighth National People's Congress made amendments to the Criminal Law enacted in 1979. The amended Criminal Law has 452 articles, an increase of 260 over the previous 192 articles. The amended Criminal Law has further defined three basic principles, namely, "conviction and penalty according to law," "equality of everyone before the law," and "punishment commensurate with the crime." It stipulates: "there should be no conviction or penalty if an act is not explicitly defined as a criminal act by the law," "all criminal offenders are equal in applying laws," and that "the severity of penalty should be commensurate with the offender's crime and due criminal liabilities." These three principles have further improved China's principle of rule of law, and are conducive to judicial fairness and to the protection of the legitimate rights of the litigants. Meanwhile, the amended Criminal Law has made explicit stipulations in accordance with reality on some new crimes not defined previously. For instance, the previous offence of indecent activities has now been classified into four crimes, namely, molestation of women, gang-bang, gang brawls, and provoking fights and quarrels and making trouble, while new crimes including mafia crimes, instigation of hatred among people of ethnic groups, securities frauds, and endangerment of the interests of national defense have been added into the law. Moreover, the "counter-revolutionary crime" has been revised into "the crime of jeopardizing state security," while it is stipulated that all those offences, which used to fall under the category of "counter-revolutionary crime" but virtually have the nature of ordinary crimes, should be punished as ordinary criminal offences. The amendment and enforcement of the Criminal Law have provided a more powerful legal weapon for punishing crimes, safeguarding national security, and protecting human rights of the people.

China has paid close attention to standardizing the practice of administrative and law-enforcement departments, so as to protect citizens' legitimate rights from any infringement. Following the promulgation and enforcement of the Administrative Procedure Law and the Law on State Compensation, in March of 1996 China promulgated the Law on Administrative Punishment, thus standardizing in terms of system the act of administrative punishment by the governments. The procuratorial bodies have attached great importance to the investigation and handling of criminal cases involving leading organs of the Party and the governments, administrative law-enforcement departments, judicial departments, and economic management departments. Statistics reveal that in 1996, the procuratorial bodies put on record and investigated 34,879 major criminal cases that involved embezzlement, bribery

and misappropriation of public funds, as well as 4,864 major cases of malfeasance and infringement of citizens' personal and democratic rights.

To strengthen the protection of human rights in various links of the public security and judicial work, China in 1996 made significant revisions to the Criminal Procedure Law enacted in 1979, thus perfecting the criminal judicial procedure and adding stipulations on protecting citizens' rights. First, the amended Criminal Procedure Law has protected in a more specific way innocent people from criminal penalties, by stipulating that "no one should be convicted guilty before the people's court passes a ruling according to law," and that the people's court should pass a ruling of "not guilty" and should decide that the charges are to be dropped if it doesn't have sufficient evidence to convict the defendant. Second, the law has abolished the system of detention for interrogation as a mandatory administrative measure, and further standardized mandatory measures such as summons, summons for detention and holding in custody. It explicitly stipulates that "the longest time for summons and summons for detention shall not exceed 12 hours," and that "it is forbidden to take criminal suspects into custody in disguised forms through continuous summons or summons for detention." Third, the law has increased lawyers' involvement in the criminal procedure with the stipulations that "after being interrogated for the first time or from the date when the investigative organs take any mandatory measures, criminal suspects can hire lawyers as their legal consultants and representatives of appeals and charges," and that "a criminal suspect in a case of public charge has the right to entrust defenders from the date when the case is transferred for examination and prosecution." Fourth, the law has intensified the guarantee for the rights of the victims, by listing them as the litigants and granting them a series of rights. These include a certain right of prosecution, the right to ask for putting their cases on record and supervision, the right to apply for a withdrawal and to entrust a legal representative, and the right to plead for an objection to the court's decision, as well as procedural rights during court hearings.

Courts at various levels, focusing on studying the amended Criminal Procedure Law and promoting the reform of court trial procedures, have comprehensively reformed and improved the country's trial system. They have intensified the functions of court hearings, the duty and responsibilities of intercollegiate benches and individual jurors in accordance with the law, and strengthened the protection of legitimate rights and interests of the people. In the meantime, procuratorial bodies have stepped up their efforts to supervise law enforcement, especially to investigate and punish a small number of public security and judiciary personnel who abused power and did not act in accordance with the law. In the supervision over crime

investigation, emphasis has been placed on redressing the problems of refusing to register existing cases or to investigate offenses, and of replacing punishments with fines. In 1996, 15,565 rectification opinions were put forth against the conduct of violating laws in investigating crimes. In the supervision over criminal proceedings, 2,422 correction opinions were put forth against the conduct of violating laws. Procuratorial bodies also protested 2,405 court decisions and rulings according to law, which they regarded as really wrong. Procuratorial bodies have in their work paid close attention to the protection of legitimate rights of criminal suspects, defendants, other litigants and even criminals who are serving a jail term, and to earnest investigation and punishment of such crimes as forced confession and illegal custody committed by judicial and law enforcement personnel. Procuratorial bodies, in accordance with law, also changed 570 wrong decisions on arrest warrants, exemption from prosecution and case withdrawal. They handled 379 cases of criminal compensation according to law, concluded 110 of them, and decided to grant compensation to the victims in 44 of the cases.

China's contingent of lawyers has grown rapidly, and has become a major force in safeguarding the legitimate rights and interests of citizens. The Lawyers Law of the People's Republic of China, adopted on May 15, 1996, explicitly stipulates that "lawyers are professionals who, with a lawyer's license obtained according to law, provide legal services to society." It contains relevant provisions on the qualifications for working lawyers, their business lines, rights, obligations and other areas. The promulgation and implementation of the Lawyers Law is of great significance to the safeguarding of lawyers' legitimate rights and their operation according to law, protection of the legitimate rights and interests of litigants and the correct implementation of laws. According to statistics, the number of employees in the lawyers profession nationwide exceeded 100,000 in 1996, 12,000 or 12.6 percent more than in the previous year; and the number of lawyers' offices reached 8,265, up 1,065 or 14.8 percent. In 1996, lawyers across the country served as consultants for 254,000 government institutions and enterprises, 8.7 percent more than in the previous year; served in 251,000 criminal cases as defending lawyers or agents ad litem, up 23.1 percent, the biggest increase in recent years. They also handled 389,000 civil lawsuits, an increase of 23.2 percent; more than 381,000 economic lawsuits, up 17.2 percent; 23,000 administrative lawsuits, up 28.4 percent; 455,000 cases involving non-lawsuit legal matters, an increase of 0.8 percent.

China is a country with a relatively low crime rate. In 1996, its crime rate dropped 5.4 percent from the previous year. The number of major categories of crimes such as

homicides, injuries to human bodies, robberies and thefts all dropped from the previous year.

IV. Protection of Workers' Rights

China attaches great importance to protection of workers' rights. In the past year the government has made new efforts to safeguard the rights stipulated by China's Labor Law, such as equal access for employment, salary, rest and vacations, work safety and health protection, job training, social security and welfare.

China now has 31,000 employment agencies, 2,716 job service centers, and more than 2,000 unemployment insurance bodies. And more than 200,000 labor service enterprises have been established throughout the country, employing more than nine million people. In 1996, about ten million people found jobs with the help of employment agencies, and the unemployment rate in cities and towns was around three percent.

To ensure the minimum wage standard for workers, the government has in recent years issued the Regulations on Minimum Wages for Enterprises, and a notice on implementing the system to ensure minimum wages, which clearly stipulate the fixing and adjusting of the minimum standards of wages, the payment of the wages, and the legal liabilities for those who violate the regulations. To date, all the provinces, autonomous regions, and municipalities except Tibet have issued and implemented the lowest standards for wages in their own areas, thus establishing, by and large, a minimum-wage guarantee system that complies with China's actual conditions. Moreover, the government has also promulgated the Provisional Regulations on Wage Payment and a set of additional regulations to ensure the workers to get their legitimate payment on time and in full.

To protect workers' safety and health, China has issued the Regulations Regarding the Implementation of the Mine Safety Law, and the Regulations Regarding Management of Hidden Causes for Accidents, and increased funding in the improvement of working conditions. More than 20 million yuan has been invested each year in upgrading enterprise labor protection techniques, and in researching and developing new labor protection products. In the meantime, the government has increased supervision and management of labor safety by urging enterprises to continuously improve work conditions to create a safe and hygienic work environment for laborers. In recent years, the incidence of fatal accidents, especially major and extraordinarily big accidents, has declined.

The Chinese government puts much emphasis on the development of workers' job skills and on job training, and vigorously promoted the development of senior secondary technical training schools. At present, there are 4,467 secondary technical training schools across the country, which admit more than 700,000 students each year. Meanwhile, social sectors have been fully mobilized to help train personnel in various fields. In 1996, more than 1.1 million people received training, including 18,000 ex-servicemen who were trained for civil jobs, 169,000 pre-employment trainees, and 45,000 township enterprises employees.

The social security work is making constant progress. More than 87.5 million workers and 22.5 million retirees have participated in pension insurance mutual assistance programs. Meanwhile, a mechanism for regular adjustment of basic pensions has been established nationwide, which has enabled the basic pension of enterprise retirees to grow for two consecutive years by 40 to 60 percent of the rate of the salary increase of local enterprise employees in the previous year, thus helping ensure the basic livelihood of enterprise retirees. The government has also promulgated the Provisional Measures on Insurance for Enterprise Employees Suffering from Industrial Injuries to ensure that workers get due compensation if hurt in the course of industrial production.

To guarantee the implementation of various laws and regulations that protect the legal rights and interests of workers, the government has increased supervision over enforcement of labor laws and regulations of work units by carrying out various forms of supervisory activities. According to statistics, labor administration departments at all levels reviewed 178,000 work units in the first half of 1996, and dealt with 76,834 cases involving the violation of labor laws and regulations. They also investigated and determined the legal liabilities of the violators, thereby protecting the legal rights and interests of the workers.

Attaching great importance to the protection of the legal rights and interests of the elderly, China passed the Law on Protection of the Rights and Interests of the Elderly in August 1996, which sets clear stipulations for family support and social security for the elderly, their participation in social development, and the legal liabilities of activities that infringe upon their legal rights and interests, standardizing and legalizing the state protection of this special social group. According to the law, the state has established a pension insurance system to ensure the basic livelihood of the elderly, and their pension and other treatment are protected by laws. The government increases the pension in line with economic development, improvement in people's living standards, and rise in workers' salaries; in rural areas, local economic organizations should provide adequate food and clothing, housing and

medical service, and proper funeral arrangements for the elderly people who are unable to work, who have neither sources of income nor family support, or whose family supporters do not have the ability to support them. In urban areas, local governments should provide relief for elderly people who are unable to work, have neither sources of income nor family supporters, or whose family supporters are unable to support them.

V. Citizens' Rights to Receive Education

Over the past few years, Chinese citizens' educational level has continued to rise. Statistics show that by 1996, there were 646,000 primary schools nationwide, with an enrollment of 136.15 million pupils, an increase of 11.2 percent over 1990; there were 80,000 middle schools with a total enrollment of 57.397 million, a jump of 25.2 percent over 1990; there were 1,032 universities and colleges, with a total of 3.021 million students, up 46.4 percent; universities and colleges for adults numbered 1,138, with the enrollment standing at 2.656 million, a leap of 59.5 percent; and the number of secondary vocational schools in various forms at various levels stood at 18,600, with 10.879 million students, an increase of 66.7 percent. We may say that China has established an educational system which can basically guarantee citizens' rights to receive an education.

China has in place a set of legal systems to guarantee citizens' rights to get an education. After the Education Law of the People's Republic of China was promulgated in 1995, the Law for Vocational Education of the People's Republic of China was promulgated in May of 1996, stipulating that citizens have the legal right to receive vocational education, thus further perfecting the legal educational system. Based on this, the government adopted various measures to ensure that the citizens enjoy their right to get an education. According to figures from the State Statistics Bureau, in 1995, there were 18.36 million children between the ages of six and 14 who did not study in schools, a decrease of 14.51 million compared with the number in 1990 when a census was taken. The rate of children in the 6-14 age group who did not study in schools dropped from 18.62 percent in 1990 to 8.38 percent in 1995, a decrease of 10 percentage points. Primary education is now universal in more than 90 percent of China's populated area, and the enrollment rate for children at primary school age is 98.81 percent. The rate of graduates of primary schools entering junior middle schools is 92.62 percent. By 1995, the number of illiterates had dropped to 145 million, and the rate of adult illiterates had dipped to 16.48

percent. The rate of young and adult illiterates had dropped to 6.14 percent. In 1996, an additional four million young and adult illiterates learned to read and write.

The Chinese government attaches great importance to the need to help university students with financial difficulties complete their study. It has adopted measures to aid these students through scholarships, loans, funding for part-time work and part-time study program, allowances and exemption or reduction of tuition fees. The central government has allocated special funds to aid students with financial difficulties. From 1994 to 1996, the allocation reached more than 440 million yuan. Many regions and departments have earmarked special funds to aid these students. To guarantee citizens' rights to receive education and improve the scientific and cultural quality of the nation as a whole, the country has planned to make the nine-year compulsory education universal and basically wipe out illiteracy among the young and adults by the year 2000. To do so, the Chinese government has actively adopted a number of measures. In 1996, an additional 457 counties, cities and districts in 26 provinces and autonomous regions, having a population of 190 million, or 16.4 percent of the population of the whole country, met the demand to make the nine years of compulsory education universal and basically wipe out illiteracy among the young and adults. So far, an accumulative total of 1,482 counties, cities and districts, covering 50 percent of the population of the whole nation, have reached the goals.

Since 1983, the Chinese government has established, in succession, four special government subsidy funds to make compulsory education universal in old revolutionary base areas, areas inhabited by minority ethnic groups, remote areas and poor areas, and to support vocational education, teacher-training and the education of national minorities. In addition to the government-controlled added city education fund, which is some 300 million yuan each year, the funding has been mainly used to support the development of education in poor regions. The government has decided to allocate a special fund of 3.9 billion yuan from the central budget between 1995 and 2000 to focus on poor counties recognized by the "National Plan for Poverty Relief." Also, supplementary government allocations will come from local budgets at various levels. An estimated 10 billion yuan in total will be poured into the program. The fund will be mainly given to poor counties recognized by the Plan and part of the money will go to provincially recognized counties with economic difficulties and poor development of primary education. The priority will be given to ethnic minority regions in using the fund. Moreover, the "Hope Project," which has been enforced for many years, showed marked new progress in 1996. Statistics show that the project received nationwide donations

totalling 286 million yuan in 1996, which helped build 1,560 "Hope" primary schools and aided 290,000 dropouts. Over the past seven years, the "Hope Project" has received an accumulative total of 978 million yuan of donations, which has been used to build 3,634 "Hope" schools and aided 1.549 million dropouts.

The Chinese government has made great efforts to develop education for the disabled. By the end of 1996, the country had built 1,426 compulsory special education schools, with an enrollment of some 321, 100 blind, deaf and retarded students. The number of such schools and the number of disabled students increased by 91.15 percent and 345.97 percent over the 1990 figures respectively.

VI. Legitimate Rights and Interests of Women and Children

China has made active endeavors in promoting equality between men and women and safeguarding the legitimate rights and interests of women. Women enjoy equal rights with men in state political life in accordance with the law. By the end of 1996, the number of women cadres in government departments, enterprises and institutions had climbed to 13.28 million, making up 33.8 percent of the total number of cadres in China. The number was over 200 times that of women cadres in the early period after the founding of New China. There are 626 women delegates to the Eighth National People's Congress, accounting for 21.03 percent of the total. The number of women holding leading posts at the various government departments has also increased. The number of female vice provincial governors increased from 18 in 1994 to 21 in 1996, that of women mayors and vice mayors grew from 174 to 225, and female county magistrates and vice magistrates from 1,329 to 1,540.

The economic, social and cultural rights of women have also been guaranteed. In 1995, female employees made up about 44 percent of the total employed people in China, higher than the world average rate of 34.5 percent. The number of women workers in cities and towns increased from 54.65 million in 1994 to 57.55 million in 1995, accounting for 38.6 percent of the total workforce in the country's cities and towns. The number of women scientists and technicians jumped from 8.097 million in 1993 to 9.881 million in 1995, making up 36.91 percent of the total. China implements the principle of men and women enjoying equal pay for equal work. Women's work is under special protection: women enjoy special care during the menstrual period, pregnancy, maternity leave and breast-feeding, and women workers who give birth can take a three-month leave of absence with pay.

Women's rights to receive education have further been protected. In the four decades and more since the founding of New China, the country has helped 110

million illiterate women learn how to read and write, cutting down the ratio of illiterate women from 90 percent in 1949 to 32 percent in 1995. In 1996, the ratio of school attendance for girls across China soared to 98.63 percent from 80 percent in 1990. The gap in the ratio of school attendance between girls and boys decreased from 2.9 percent in 1991 to 0.35 percent in 1996. The ratio of female students in middle schools and colleges and universities increased from 42.2 percent and 33.7 percent respectively in 1990 to 45.5 percent and 36.4 percent in 1996. By 1995, China had built 1,679 women's secondary vocational schools and three women's vocational universities and opened 60 specialities suitable for women. More than 13 million women had been enrolled by adult schools across the country.

Women's health conditions have improved considerably. Health care networks for women and children have been built in both urban and rural areas. By 1995, China had built 349 hospitals and 2,832 clinics for women's and children's health care, 49 obstetrics and gynecology hospitals and 35 children's hospitals. The mortality rate of pregnant women and women in labor was reduced from 67.3 per 100,000 in 1993 to 61.9 per 100,000 in 1995. The average life expectancy of women climbed from 36 years in 1949 to 72 years in 1995, three years longer than average life expectancy for men in China, and seven years longer than the average life expectancy of 65 years for women set by the United Nations for the year 2000.

China attaches importance to protecting the interests and rights of children. It has built a relatively complete legal system for protecting children's rights and interests, with the Law on Protection of Minors as the mainstay. Since the Outline on Development for Chinese Children in the 1990s was promulgated in February 1992, 30 provinces, autonomous regions and municipalities as well as 80 percent of the prefectures and cities and more than 50 percent of the counties and districts in China have worked out their own development plans for children. To effectively guarantee the healthy growth of children, the legislative, judicial and relevant government departments and social organizations in China have built institutions which take charge of coordinating and promoting government departments concerned to do a good job in safeguarding the interests and rights of women and children. The State Council has set up the Women and Children Work Committee. Thirty provinces, autonomous regions and municipalities have also set up committees to work for women and children or committees for the protection of children and adolescents. The majority of prefectures, cities, counties and districts have also established women and children work committees.

The conditions for Chinese children's development have been remarkably improved and the mid-term goals for children's development in the 1990s set by the State

have been attained. Since 1991, China has been conducting a large-scale baby-friendly campaign. By the end of 1995, China had built 2,957 baby-friendly hospitals. The mortality rates of infants and children under five have declined year by year, dropping to 36.4 per thousand and 44.5 per thousand, respectively, in 1995. During the 1991-95 period, the mortality rates of infants and children under five dropped annually by 7.7 percent and 7.6 percent, respectively, on average. According to a multi-index household survey in 1995, the rate of malnutrition in the moderate and worst degrees, judging by the internationally accepted standards, among children under five in China was 15.8 percent, 23.83 percent lower than the 1990 rate of 20.74 percent. China started a universal immunity program for children in 1978. Reports show that in 1995, 92.3 percent of the children in China were vaccinated, 92.1 percent were inoculated against diphtheria, whooping cough and tetanus, 93.8 percent against polio and 92.9 percent had measles shots.

The Chinese government attaches great importance to the convalescence needs of disabled children. By 1995, over 2,000 convalescence centers for disabled children had been set up in large and medium-sized cities throughout the country. By the end of 1995, more than 60,000 deaf children had received training in hearing and speech courses, and 100,000 mentally-handicapped children had improved their abilities to care for themselves and to learn through training. Over 30,000 children with poor sight had received eyesight-aiding devices to improve their vision. Children who suffered from sequelae of infantile paralysis and congenital cataracts have received medical treatment with more than 200,000 disabled children restored to health in the 1991-95 period.

China's social welfare institutions mainly take in orphans who have lost their parents and have no legal guardians. To provide guarantee for the orphans in living and medical care and convalescence, local governments funded welfare institutions with a total of 515 million yuan between 1990 and 1994. During the same period, the central government allocated 740 million yuan of special funds for improving the living conditions of children in welfare institutions. In recent years, many children's welfare institutions have raised funds to have restorative operations for disabled children in welfare institutions. In 1995, the country launched a nationwide project for the convalescence of disabled children, urging hospitals above grade three to operate on disabled children living in welfare institutions. As a result, over 200 disabled children in welfare institutions were restored to health.

The Chinese government devotes energetic efforts to developing health care undertakings for women and children and raising the health care and educational levels of nurseries and kindergartens. At present, there are a total of 187,300

kindergartens throughout the country. The demand for kindergartens in large and medium-sized cities has been basically satisfied.

VII. Guarantee of the Rights of Ethnic Minorities

In China, all ethnic groups are equal and the state guarantees the legal rights and interests of all ethnic minorities, safeguards and promotes the relationship of equality, unity and mutual assistance among all ethnic groups. A national minorities regional autonomy system is practiced in places where ethnic minorities gather and live. Minority nationals take the posts of chairmen of the autonomous regions, commissioners of the autonomous prefectures and the autonomous counties magistrates. As many as possible of the other leading posts in the autonomous governments are also taken by the nationals or other minorities. The ethnic minorities in the autonomous areas are entitled to use and develop their own languages, keep or reform their folk customs, and be free in their religious beliefs.

The state continues its assistance policy toward the economic growth in ethnic minority areas, by providing funding, technology and personnel to accelerate these regions' economic progress and to upgrade the people's living standard. In 1996, the overall growth rate of the five autonomous regions of Inner Mongolia, Tibet, Xinjiang, Guangxi and Ningxia was noticeably higher than the country's average, with the GDP rising by over ten percent and the income of the regions' urban and rural residents rising markedly. The regions' per capita income of the farmers was also increasing at a far quicker pace than the country's average. Inner Mongolia's GNP reached 98.3 billion yuan in 1996, a 12.4 percent increase over 1995. The per capita income of the region's farmers and herdsmen was 1,602 yuan, a practical increase of 14.8 percent, while the urban per capita income was 3,101 yuan. Last year, Tibet's GNP was registered at 6.453 billion yuan, ten percent higher than in 1995. The per capita income of the region's urban dwellers was 5,036 yuan, 25.9 percent higher than 1995, while the rural people's per capita income reached 960 yuan, an increase of 9.3 percent. The 1996 GNP for Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region was 97.9 billion yuan, an increase of nine percent over the previous year. The urban dwellers' per capita income was 4,250 yuan, an increase of 10.6 percent, while the farmers' and herdsmen's per capita income was 1,300 yuan, a rise of 14.4 percent. The savings deposits of the region's urban and rural residents reached 57.579 billion yuan, an increase of 20.8 percent.

The Ninth Five-Year Plan for National Economic and Social Development and the Outline for the Long-Range Objectives Through the Year 2010, passed in March 1996,

decided to accelerate the development in the central and western parts of China, which are home to most of the country's minority population. Measures in these plans include: giving priority to arrangement of the resource exploration and infrastructure projects in the central and western regions; readjusting the locations of processing industries, and shifting the resource processing and labor-intensive industries to the central and western regions; readjusting the prices for products of a resource nature and enhancing the self-development capability of the central and western regions; gradually increasing the financial support to the central and western regions; accelerating the reform pace of the central and west; increasing the ratio of the country's policy-oriented loans in the central and western regions; continuing to organize various departments of the central government, all walks of life and the eastern coastal areas to provide more assistance in various forms to aid Tibet and other minority areas. In 1996, numerous key projects were completed or launched in minority areas. For instance, the Liangjiang international airport in Guilin, a major city in Guangxi, has been completed and put into operation. Work on a three-billion-yuan irrigation project was started last May in Ningxia which aims to give one million poverty-stricken people of the Hui ethnic group enough food and clothing, while construction started last September on the western section of the Southern Xinjiang Railway line. The state has continued to give Tibet special assistance. In 1996, the 62 aid-Tibet projects designated by the state in 1994 were given another 1.4 billion yuan in funding. The state also added 151 more relief projects for Tibet, involving a total investment of 490 million yuan. Ministries and commissions of the central government and some provinces and cities sent more than 150 work teams to Tibet on investigative missions and worked out a 10-year assistance plan for the region. At present, 56 out of the 62 assistance projects have been completed and put into operation, involving 3.53 billion yuan. This has improved the backwardness of transportation, energy, telecommunications and other infrastructure facilities in Tibet and directly benefitted the more than one million people there.

The Chinese government has, as always, paid great attention on the educational and cultural development of the ethnic minority areas, and respected and safeguarded the traditional culture of the minorities. Last year, Tibet focused more of its investment on its education programs, and set up or renovated 87 primary and middle schools, with the school enrollment rate reaching 73.5 percent for school-age children, 3.1 percentage points higher than that of 1995. In 1996, 98.16 percent of the school-age children in Guangxi entered school, bringing the total number of the region's primary school pupils to 6.395 million. Also last year, the large, modern and

multi-functional Tibet Autonomous Region Library, the world's highest in altitude, was completed and opened to the public. The translation into Chinese of the Manass, one of China's three great epics and an epic of the Kirgiz people in Xinjiang long known as a ``national treasure," was nearly completed.

The progress China made in its human rights undertakings in 1996 has once again proved that China always places top priority on its people's right to subsistence and development. Under the conditions of reform, development and stability, strengthening the democratic and legal systems and giving human rights a comprehensive push are in line with the Chinese circumstances and in the fundamental interests of the Chinese people. This has turned out to be a great success in practice.

The improvement of human rights is a continuously developing process along with the political, economic and cultural progress. China, as a developing country, is restricted by its historical and realistic conditions, and the country's human rights conditions still have room for further improvement. The Chinese government and people will continue to try every means possible to help the people enjoy human rights in a broader space and at a higher level.