

## **Progress in China's Human Rights Cause in 1998**

**Information Office of the State Council Of the People's Republic of China**

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### **Foreword**

The year 1998 is the 20th anniversary of China's initiation of the reform and opening-up policy and also a year when China witnessed continued advances in China's human rights while achieving steady development in its reform.

Despite the profound impact of the Asian financial crisis and the catastrophic flooding in China in 1998, China's national economy maintained steady growth, the people's standard of living improved, the effort for developing democracy and a legal system was notably strengthened, and human rights conditions maintained a good momentum of continuous improvement and promised further progress.

### **I. People's Rights to Subsistence and development**

China is a developing country with a population of 1.25 billion. The protection and promotion of people's rights to subsistence and development has been China's top task in the field of human rights.

Since China's start of reform and opening - up, the Chinese Government has been listing the solving of people's rights to subsistence and development as its top priority.

Great efforts have been made to promote economic growth, consequently, the national economy has maintained continuous and sound development with an average annual growth of 9.6 per cent and the people's living standard has witnessed marked improvement.

In the past 20 years, the gross domestic product (GDP) increased by nearly five times, the per capita GDP went up by 3.4 times and the income of urban and rural residents also rose considerably.

Between 1978 and 1997, the annual per capita income of rural residents increased from 133.6 yuan (US\$16) to 2,090.1 yuan (US\$252). A rise of 3.4 times in real terms after deducting price fluctuations with an average annual increase of 8.1 per cent.

The average per capita disposable income of urban residents rose from 343.4 yuan (US\$41) to 5,160.3 yuan (US\$622) during the same period, up 2.1 times in real terms after deducting price fluctuations with an average annual increase of 6.2 per cent.

The total saving deposits of both urban and rural residents increased from 21.06 billion yuan (US \$ 2.54 billion) in 1978 to 4,627.98 billion yuan (US \$ 557.59 billion) in 1997 and the per capita saving deposits rose from 22 yuan (US \$ 2.65) to 3,744 yuan (US \$ 451), up 218.8 times and 169.2 times, respectively.

People's housing conditions were also remarkably improved. The per capita living space for urban residents expanded from 3.6 square metres in 1978 to 8.8 square metres in 1997, a rise of 1.4 times and that for rural residents augmented from 8.1 square metres to 22.46 square metres, up 1.8 times.

The domestic market has an abundant supply exceeded demand while others achieved a balance between supply and demand.

The number of TV sets among every 100 households in 1998 is higher than that of the world average. With the gradual improvement of communications and telecommunications and other facilities for living, people's life quality witnessed a marked improvement.

The per capita food consumption expenses of residents saw a continuous drop. The "Engel's Coefficient," which indicates the ratio between the expenses of food and other consumer goods, dropped from 59.5 per cent in 1978 to 46.4 per cent in 1997 for urban residents, while that of rural residents decreased to 55 per cent.

According to statistics, a comprehensive calculation in terms of economic development, living standards, quality of the population and quality of people's cultural life and living environment showed that by 1997, 86.52 per cent of Chinese had reached the preliminary standards of a comfortable living.

This indicated that the living standards of Chinese people have exceeded the level of having adequate food and clothing, and is approaching the standards of a comfortable living.

In 1998, China is continuing its efforts on the protection and promotion of people's rights to subsistence and development.

In 1998, China was hit by rare catastrophic floods. Suffering from these were over 200 million people, and the direct economic losses topped 200 billion yuan (US \$ 24.1 billion).

During the fight against the floods, the Chinese Government always gave top priority to ensuring the safety of people's lives in the flood-hit areas.

The government mobilized people all over the country to take every possible effort to ensure that people in the flood-hit areas had food to eat, clothes to wear, clean water to drink, proper accommodation and access to medical care.

All this provided proper arrangements for people in the flood-hit areas and the measures minimized losses of life and property.

The Chinese government also took effective measures to organize rebuilding projects in the flood-hit areas and ensured that no major epidemic diseases prevailed.

It also guaranteed that people in the flood-hit areas spent the winter under safe conditions and ensured a smooth rebuilding of their homes and the resumption of their normal life and production.

The year 1998 witnessed the further spreading of the Asian financial crisis which seriously harmed the economies of many Asian and Latin American countries, resulting in the deterioration of the living conditions of hundreds of millions of people worldwide and had an impact on China's economic development.

The Chinese government positively responded to the Asian financial crisis, Asian financial crisis, successfully protected the country from the effects of the crisis, achieved a relatively rapid growth in the economy and people's living standards have improved further.

In 1998, the GDP rose by 7.8 per cent over the previous year, the per capita income of the rural residents was up 4.3 per cent over the previous year in real terms and per capita disposable income of urban residents increased by 5.8 per cent in real terms.

At the same time, China encountered pressure and endured great economic losses because many neighbouring countries devalued their currencies by a large margin. But China has been maintaining that it would not devalue the renminbi and has been making every possible effort to help other countries.

China made contributions to maintaining the stability of the world economy and reducing the harmful impact of the financial crisis on people's subsistence and development conditions, winning universal praise worldwide.

While seeking universal improvement of the people's overall living standards, China has been paying great attention to meeting the poverty-stricken people's basic needs for food and clothing.

With the common efforts made by the government and people from all walks of life, another 8 million rural poverty - stricken people met their basic needs for food and clothing in 1998.

The country's total poverty - stricken population dropped from 250 million in 1978 to 42 million at present.

China has witnessed a quick decrease in its poverty-stricken population, more than any other country. This is in sharp contrast to other nations. There are still some 1.3 billion poverty-stricken people in the world and the figure is increasing at an annual rate of 25 million.

With the improvement of people's living standards and living environment, people's health conditions also marked a great improvement.

Statistics indicated that the death rate in China has dropped from 33 per thousand before the founding of the People's Republic of China 50 years ago to the present 6.5 per thousand.

At the same time, the life expectancy of Chinese has gone from 35 years 5 decades ago to 70.83 years at present.

The latest figure is 10 years higher than the average of developing countries and reaches the level of intermediate developed countries.

## **II. Guarantee of Citizens' Political Rights**

While promoting people's rights of subsistence and development, China pays great attention to the building of a democratic and legal system, and the guarantee of citizens' political rights according to law.

In China all power belongs to the people, who exercise state power through the National People's Congress (NPC) and people's congresses at all levels.

The deputies to people's congresses at all levels and the members of people's congress standing committees are all democratically elected, responsible for the people and subject to the people's supervision. They are from all ethnic groups and all walks of life, and are widely representative.

A total of 2,979 deputies were elected early in 1998 to the Ninth National People's Congress, of which workers and farmers accounted for 19.8 per cent, intellectuals 21.08 per cent, government officials 33.17 per cent, members of parties other than the Communist Party and people without party affiliation 15.44 per cent, members of the People's Liberation Army 9 per cent, Hong Kong Special Administrative Region representatives 1.17 per cent, and returned overseas Chinese 1.24 per cent.

As the supreme organ of state power, the NPC decides fundamental State policies and principles, and formulates national laws.

In 1998, the First Session of the Ninth NPC heard and deliberated on work reports from the State Council, Supreme People's Court and Supreme people's Procuratorate; and examined and approved the Plan for National Economic and Social Development, as well as the financial budgets. It also elected and decided the new leadership of the nation.

The Ninth NPC and its Standing Committee have deliberated and adopted 24 laws and decisions concerning legal issues over the past year. In March 1999, in particular, the Second Session of the Ninth NPC made amendments to the Constitution, adding to the Constitution, "implementing the principle of governing the country according to law and making it a socialist country based on the rule of law."

The elevation of "governing the country according to law," which is a basic principle in administering state affairs, into a constitutional principle is of great significance to the building of a democratic and legal system, as well as guaranteeing the citizens' human rights according to law.

The legislative work has become more democratic. In 1998, the NPC Standing Committee made public the draft amendments to the Land Administration Law, the drafts of the Organic Law of Villagers' Committees and the Contract Law, and received opinions and suggestions from people from all walks of life. Members of the NPC Standing Committee toured the country to solicit opinions and suggestions about the formulation and revision of many law drafts.

The NPC and its standing committee have remarkably intensified their supervision of the implementation of the laws. In the period 1993-97, the Standing Committee of the Eighth NPC inspected the implementation of 23 laws and decisions concerning legal affairs, including the Law on the Protection of Women's Rights and Interests, and the Labour Law.

In 1998, the Standing Committee of the Ninth NPC organized inspections to check the implementation of six laws and decisions concerning legal affairs, including the Agriculture Law.

And various special committees inspected the implementation of eight laws, including the law on the autonomy of ethnic minority regions. The inspections have effectively prompted the implementation of those laws.

People's deputies have been more enthusiastic in exercising state power. During the First Session of the Ninth NPC in 1998, deputies put forward 830 proposals, a record number. They also put forward 2,782 pieces of suggestions, criticisms and opinions, and replies have been made to each of them by the relevant government departments.

At the Second Session of the Ninth NPC in 1999, people's deputies put forward 759 motions, of which 60 per cent were related to legislation, again a record number. This demonstrated the increased awareness of the deputies of the importance of governing the country according to the law.

The NPC Standing Committee also deals with complaints and advice letters and visits from the people. In 1998, the NPC Standing Committee received more than 60, 000 letters, met over 11,000 ordinary citizens and urged relevant departments to conclude a number of important cases and solve actual problems and difficulties for the people.

The system of multi - party co - operation and political consultation led by the Chinese Communist Party is an important component of China's democratic and political system.

The Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC), comprised of non-Communist parties, people's groups and those without party affiliation, has a wide representation.

The 2,196 members of the Ninth National Committee of the CPPCC come from 24 sectors, of which non-Communist party members account for 60. 1 per cent, and members of China's eight non-Communist parties account for 29.7 per cent.

Various non-Communist parties and the CPPCC are now playing an increasingly important role in political consultation, democratic supervision and the participation in and deliberation of state affairs. In the 1993-38 period, the CPC Central Committee sponsored 62 forms of activities consulting with CPPCC members, who represent non - Communist parties, people's groups and different ethnic groups and different sectors, on state policies, principles, candidates for state leaders as well as all important policies, laws and regulations.

Statistics indicate that nearly 200 non - Communist party members are now acting as prefecture-level officials in provincial governments and more than 6,000 non-Communist party members are working in prefecture-level city governments and provincial departments as division chiefs.

In the 1993-97 period, the CPPCC National Committee put forward more than 100 important proposals, in the fields of politics, economy, social and cultural life of the country, to the CPC Central Committee and the State Council.

In 1998, the National Committee members of the CPPCC submitted many suggestions and opinions to the CPC Central Committee and the State Council on such important issues as the re-employment of laid-off workers from State - owned enterprises, rejuvenating the nation through science and technology, and protecting the farmers' land use rights.

The National Committee of the CPPCC also organized 51 special investigations on such topics as education and poverty-relief work in ethnic minority regions and the reform of state - owned enterprises, as well as the development of environment-friendly industries, and produced 45 special investigation reports.

Meanwhile, the CPPCC National Committee intensified efforts to handle motions and managed to reflect the real situation of the country and genuine opinions of the people.

Since the First Session of the 9th National Committee of the CPPCC, various non - Communist parties, the All-China Federation of Industry and Commerce, people's groups and the CPPCC National Committee members have put forward 3, 041 proposals and put on file 2,664 cases, which were all sent to relevant government departments and institutes for further investigation and solution.

China has made eye-catching progress in promoting democracy in grass - roots units in rural areas. Villages across the country continue to conduct self-management activities that centre on villagers' committee democratic elections, democratic policy-making, democratic management and democratic supervision.

The director, deputy directors and members of the villagers' committee are all directly elected by eligible voters in a village through a secret and competitive election, and they can be removed from their posts if they do not perform well.

All major village affairs in connection with villagers' rights and interests, such as land-contracting plans and use of land for building houses, are all submitted to the villagers' committee for deliberation and approval.

The routine affairs of the village are democratically administered through villagers' meetings and governed by villager self-management regulations and village regulations in a democratic form. The villagers conduct democratic supervision of

the work of the villagers' committee and matters concerning villagers' interests through village budget records and other important information made public by the committee.

By the end of 1997, more than 900,000 village committees had been elected, with a total of 3.3788 million villagers' committee cadres now in place across the country.

To date, the system of village self-management has been established in a preliminary fashion in 60 per cent of China's villages. Villagers' committees have generally conducted three to four elections, with the participation rate of eligible voters standing at over 90 percent.

The practice of open and transparent village affairs has been established in most villages. In 11 provinces and cities, including Hebei, Sichuan, Yunnan, Shanxi and Tianjin, this practice has been introduced in more than 90 per cent of the villages.

In November 1998, the NPC Standing Committee adopted the newly revised Organic Law on Villagers' Committees, which is aimed at perfecting the system of villagers' autonomy, promoting the building of grass - roots democracy in rural China, and providing a firm legal guarantee for the masses to directly exercise democratic rights.

### **III. Judicial Guarantee for Human Rights**

Since 1979, the National People's Congress and its Standing Committee have promulgated 315 laws and decisions concerning legal issues; the State Council has formulated over 800 administrative regulations and ordinances; and local people's congresses and their standing committees have adopted more than 6, 000 local laws and regulations. A relatively systematic legal establishment now provides fundamental legal guarantees for various aspects of the social life and human rights of citizens.

China cracks down on criminal offences in accordance with the law, and guarantees the safety of the livelihood and property of its citizens, as well as various other aspects of human rights.

Public security and judicial departments have consistently cracked down on serious violent crimes such as homicides, robberies, rape and the illegal use of explosives.

People's courts across China handled some 480, 000 cases of the first instance and sentenced more than 530, 000 criminals in 1998.

In addition to investigating and punishing crimes and protecting the rights of victims according to the law, judicial departments have also paid close attention to safeguarding the legal rights of defendants and criminal suspects in terms of legal



aid, defense, applications for withdrawal of judicial personnel, appeals, charges against infringements of legal rights and obtaining compensation.

Various courts in the past year concluded 1,431 cases of state compensation in strict accordance with the State Indemnity Law and ensured the legitimate rights and interests of Chinese citizens.

China has rigorously enforced the letter of the law and strengthened human rights protection efforts in every aspect of law enforcement.

Courts and procuratorates nationwide launched and intensified the education movement last year in an effort to combat judicial corruption, and ensure justice and the legitimate rights and interests of litigants.

The initiative of law enforcement departments to act in accordance with the law has been comprehensively enhanced, a number of misjudged cases have been corrected, and violations of the law and discipline on the part of judicial personnel have been seriously investigated and corrected. Rules and the overall system for rigorous enforcement of the law in a civil manner have been adopted, as well as a mechanism providing checks and balances on the judiciary established.

Statistics indicate that last year courts across the country re-examined 4.56 million closed cases, with misjudgments cited for some 12,000 cases. Over 11,600 have been corrected. A total of 2,512 legal or disciplinary violations on the part of judges and court officials were dealt with during 1998, with some 221 officials prosecuted.

Procuratorial departments re-examined 477,000 cases and rectified 3,773 mishandled cases in 1998. Related departments granted compensation for 161 litigants involved in mishandled cases. Related departments redressed excessive periods of detention for 729 criminal suspects.

A total of 1,641 prosecutors suspected of violations of law and breaches of disciplines were investigated. Some 1,550 have been settled, with 116 people prosecuted.

In 1998, courts at all levels extended great efforts to promote open trial and intensify social and media supervision over court proceedings. Open trials were conducted in all first instance cases, with an exception when the law defines it as inappropriate for a public hearing. In terms of second instance cases, courts adopted open trials and related verdicts or rulings were announced publicly.

Trials of various major cases were televised or broadcast live. The general public has voiced total support for 11 higher people's courts and 58 intermediate courts which have permitted televised cases.

The Supreme People's Court issued its Regulations on Strictly Enforcing the Open Trial System in March 1999. The regulations contain stringent standards for the

scope of trials open to the public. The regulations specifically stipulate that all proceedings and aspects of trial-related activities must be open to the public. They also provide for relevant mechanisms which guarantee implementation of the open trial system.

Procuratorial departments have accelerated efforts to supervise law enforcement and have focused on problems involving lawsuits, including failures to file criminal cases and charges against individuals suspected of criminal offences and various forms of judiciary injustice.

In 1998, procuratorates issued 71,000 corrected opinions on excessive detention periods for criminal suspects, and 9,964 corrected opinions on illegal detentions by police.

Procurators challenged 3,791 criminal judgments which they deemed to be incorrect, and issued corrected opinions concerning 1,211 cases involving irregularities in the judicial process, as well as 9,672 cases involving irregularities by relevant departments in terms of commutations, paroles, temporary decisions allowing individuals to serve sentences outside prison under surveillance, and prisoners released on bail for medical treatment.

Procuratorates fulfilled their supervisory role in civil and administrative cases by focusing on civil, economic and administrative judgments, as well as wrongful rulings. Related departments examined 26,158 appeals and challenged court verdicts for 8,438 cases.

In addition to handling crimes related to official duties, procuratorates investigated and prosecuted 7,067 judicial and law enforcement administrative personnel involved in 5,811 cases of bribery and abuse of power. They also handled 1,467 criminal cases related to illegal custody, forced confessions, retaliation or frame-ups in an effort to protect the legitimate rights of the citizens according to the law.

China's contingent of lawyers has grown rapidly, and has emerged as a major force that safeguards the legitimate rights and interest of the citizens.

The number of law firms jumped from 79 in 1979 to 8,600 at the end of 1998. In the same period, the number of lawyers soared from a mere 212 to more than 100,000. By the end of March 1999, 79 foreign law firms (including 27 from the United States had opened offices in China.

Chinese lawyers handled over 2 million criminal, 1.21 million civil and 1.5 million economic lawsuits, as well as 2.06 million legal investigation cases between 1993 and 1997. Chinese lawyers currently serve as consultants for 250,000 government institutions and enterprises.

The national legal aid system is playing an ever-increasing role in improving the country's legal system, protecting the rights and interests of the citizens and ensuring that justice is served.

The establishment of the Legal Aid Foundation of China and Legal Aid Centre under the Ministry of Justice in May 1997 marked a substantial step in the nation's effort to establish and implement the legal aid system.

In 1998, more than 500 legal aid institutions nationwide handled over 80,000 legal aid cases, offered legal consultations to guarantee that Chinese citizens facing economic difficulties can protect their rights and interests on an equal footing.

#### **IV. Citizens' Economic, Social and Cultural Rights**

China attaches great importance to the protection of the citizen's labour and social security rights. In order to protect the citizens' rights of employment, the State offers employment services and directions through developing various employment agencies, creates jobs, opens job training courses and adopts many other measures to promote the workers' employment and re-employment.

Over the past two decades, with the economic development, China has created non-agricultural jobs for more than 250 million people, and 130 million laborers have been transferred from the agricultural to non-agricultural sectors.

By the end of 1997, China had established over 34,000 employment agencies. With their help, a total of 8.737 million people found jobs that year. The registered unemployment rate in cities and towns was 3.1 per cent in 1998.

A re-employment project aiming at solving the problems of the jobless and the laid-off workers was initiated in 1994, and has been carried out nationwide.

By the end of 1998, all of the State-owned enterprises which laid-off workers had set up re-employment service centres, and 99 percent of the laid-off workers had registered with the centres, with 93.2 percent of them receiving unemployment benefits. With the help of the State-owned enterprises were re-employed in 1997 and 1998.

The State actively promotes the development of job training schemes, improves the workers' job skills and therefore increases their chances for finding employment.

There were 4,395 secondary technical training schools in China by the end of 1997, with nearly 1.932 million students and 699,000 graduates that year. At the same time, 1.37 million workers of various kinds also received training in the schools.

There were also 2,700 employment training centres and over 20,000 non-government training agencies approved by labor departments at various levels by the end of 1997, with an annual training capacity of about 5 million.

The State protects laborers' rights to payment, and their income level has been increasing gradually with the economic development. In 1997, the total income of workers in the country was 940.53 billion yuan (US\$113.32 billion), up 3.6 per cent over the previous year. The per capita annual income of the workers in 1997 was 6,470 yuan (US \$ 780), up 4.2 per cent over the previous year. If taking into consideration price fluctuations, it rose 1.1 per cent in real terms.

In the first half of 1998, workers in China earned a total wage of 446.69 billion yuan (US \$ 53.82 billion), more than the same period in the previous year, up 4.4 per cent in real terms. The per capita monthly salary was 513 yuan (US \$ 61.8), a real term increase of 6 per cent on an annual basis.

The State has implemented a minimum wage system. To date, all provinces, autonomous regions, and municipalities have issued and implemented the lowest standards for wages in their own areas to ensure the minimum wage standard for workers.

To protect the safety and health of workers, the State has promulgated a large number of special laws and regulations, established and improved labour safety and health systems, and strengthened the supervision and examination of workers' safety and health.

In recent years, injury and death from accidents in enterprises and the incidence of occupational illnesses have dropped. More enterprises have had their work environments approved after routine inspections.

In 1997, the incidence of fatal accidents dropped 12.5 per cent over the previous year, with the death toll down 9.8 per cent. The number of major accidents decreased by 15.6 per cent, and the death toll in serious accidents declined 1.8 percent.

Social security work has witnessed rapid development. By the end of 1998, a unified basic pension system for workers had been basically established throughout the country, and most provinces, autonomous regions and municipalities had carried out their own basic pension insurance systems in a unified way.

More than 84 million workers have participated in the pension insurance systems, and 99 per cent of retirees timely receive their full pensions.

By the end of 1998, 79.32 million workers had contributed to the unemployment insurance schemes. Up to the end of 1997, 3.964 million workers and 11.15 million retirees had participated in the reform of the medical insurance system.

About 11.553 million enterprise workers and 2.668 million retirees had joined in the medical cost social pools for major diseases.

At the same time, 26 provinces, autonomous regions and municipalities had implemented social pools for work-related injuries and birth insurances, with 35.078 million and 24.859 million enterprise workers participating in the social pools for the two insurance systems respectively.

Social relief and social welfare work have developed steadily. A system to ensure a minimum standard of living for urban residents had been established in 600 cities and 1,242 counties by the end of 1998, providing more than 3.32 million people with welfare benefits to guarantee a minimum standard of living. Welfare institutions across the country had a total of 1.06 million beds, caring for 800,000 people.

The right of Chinese citizens to receive education has been further protected. The State has increased investment in education, and vigorously created improved educational conditions for its citizens.

In 1997, China's total expenditure on education increased by 11.91 per cent over the previous year, with the government's budgeted expenditure on education augmented by 11.42 per cent.

The State budget expenditure on education accounted for 2.49 per cent of the GDP, higher than the previous year. The funds for education in the budgets of both central and local governments rose by 12.03 per cent over the previous year.

In 1998, an additional 360 counties, cities and districts met the demand to make nine-year compulsory education universal, and basically wiped out illiteracy among the young and adults. This meant that the total number of the counties, cities and districts realizing this goal came to 2,242 covering 73 per cent of the total population, compared with 65 per cent in 1997.

China wiped out illiteracy among 3.2 million youngsters and adults in 1998, reducing the illiteracy rate among the young and adults to 5.5 per cent.

China had 629,000 primary schools in 1997, and the goal that every child could attend primary education was basically realized. There were 66,000 junior middle schools, and 94 per cent of the graduates from primary schools entered these schools.

Half of the graduates from junior middle schools went on to study at the country's 31,000 senior middle schools. The same year, there were more than 2,000 colleges and universities, with an annual enrollment capacity of more than 2 million students. About 45 per cent of the graduates from senior middle schools entered colleges and universities.

In 1997, 6.08 million students were studying in colleges and universities, including 180,000 postgraduates, 2.2 times and 9.6 times the figures of 1979 respectively.

The total enrollment rate of colleges and universities increased to 9.07 percent, higher than the average level of developing countries. According to statistics, 42.5 per cent of China's population aged 25 or above has received secondary education, approaching the level of developed countries, including the United States.

## **V. Legitimate Rights and Interests of Women and Children**

Chinese women have been more and more involved in the administration of State and social affairs. There are 650 women deputies to the Ninth National People's Congress, accounting for 21.82 per cent of the total, up 0.82 percentage points over the Eighth NPC.

There are 341 female members of the Ninth National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference, accounting for 15.5 per cent of the total, up 1.54 percentage points over the Eighth National Committee of the CPPCC.

Currently, there are four female State leaders, 18 female ministers and vice-ministers in China. There are women among the provincial-level Party and government officials in all of the 31 provinces, autonomous regions and municipalities, and the total number of female provincial-level Party and government officials stands at 43, an increase of 46.47 per cent compared with five years ago.

By the end of 1997, the number of female cadres in government departments, enterprises and institutions had climbed to 13.838 million, making up 34.3 per cent of the total number of cadres in China. The number is 8 per cent higher than the figure of 1995.

The number of female employees in China has increased and the proportion of women employed is larger than before. According to a survey of employment conducted by the International Labour Organization in 26 countries including the United States, Russia and India in 1998, the employment rate of Chinese women reached 56 per cent, raking first on the list.

In 1997, female workers accounted for 46.5 per cent of the total number of employed people, up 1.5 percentage points from 1990. And the total number of female employees has increased by more than 36 million compared with the figure of 1990.

There were 5.13 million women employees in non-public businesses in 1997, more than six times the figure for 1990, and female employees in such businesses accounted for 47 per cent of the total number, compared with 36 per cent in 1990. The overall employment rate of female workers is augmenting in spite of the increasing number of female laid-off workers, a result of the structural readjustment of the industries and the change in the enterprises' operating mechanism.

Women's educational level has been greatly improved. It is estimated that in 1997, the average education received by the female population above 15 years stood at 6.41 years, an increase of nearly one year over 1990. And the increase in education has a more rapid growth than that of the male population.

The illiteracy rate among female adults dropped from 31.93 per cent in 1990 to 23.20 percent in 1997.

The discrepancy between the enrollment rate of boys and girls decreased from the 2.91 percentage points in 1990 to 0.21 percentage points in 1997.

By the end of 1997, there were more than 1.18 million female undergraduate students and more than 50,000 female graduate students, which accounted for 36 per cent and 30 per cent of the total, respectively.

The proportions of female students in primary and middle schools have increased from 41.5 per cent and 44.9 per cent respectively in 1978 to 45.5 per cent and 47.6 per cent respectively in 1997.

By the end of 1998, among the more than 1,000 academicians at the Chinese Academy of Sciences and the Chinese Academy of Engineering, there were 62 female academicians, or 6 per cent of the total number, higher than that in any other country.

The health of Chinese women has continuously improved. In 1998, there were 3,207 hospitals for women and children, with 42,002 beds.

Health organizations at all levels have gradually built up a health care network for women and children, and a complete series of health services, which include recording the health condition of women in early pregnancy, ante-natal examinations, medical care for pregnant women with critical cases, hospital deliveries and visits after delivery, have been set up to guarantee safe births.

In 1997, 63.5 per cent of all pregnant women delivered children at hospitals, and the mortality rate of pregnant women and women in labor was 63.6 per 100,000, a one-third decrease from the figure of 1990.

The average life expectancy of women has risen from 36.7 years before the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949 to 73.2 years in 1997, 4.5 years longer than that of male Chinese, and eight years longer than the average of female population

in the world by the year 2000 predicted by the United Nations.

The rights of children are protected in accordance with the law. In 1997, there were 183,000 kindergartens in China, with 25.19 million children. The total enrollment rate of kindergarten children is above 40 per cent, and the enrollment rate of school-age children reached 98.9 per cent, up 1.1 percentage points from the figure of 1990.

In 1998, Project Hope helped 251,800 school dropouts and built 1,855 primary schools, while aiding 53,907 children from poor families.

During the nine years since it was initiated, Project Hope has received domestic and overseas donations totalling 1.611 billion yuan (US \$ 194 million), and has aided over 2 million school dropouts, and helped build 7,111 primary schools.

To settle the problem of the school enrollment of children among the transient population, the then State Education Commission and the Ministry of Public Security issued Temporary Provisions on Transient Children's Schooling in 1998, and asked the government departments responsible for the management of the transient population to provide more school opportunities to children, and guarantee a certain period of compulsory education.

In 1997, there were 1,440 special schools for handicapped children across the country, nearly doubling the figure of 1990. The school enrollment of blind, deaf and mentally retarded children has increased from 6 per cent to 64.3 per cent. The number of children in special education schools has increased from 31,000 in 1978 to 341,000 in 1997. The number of handicapped children who study at ordinary schools totaled 340,600, almost five times the figure of 1990.

The level of children's health in China has been remarkably improved. At present, there are 4,730 infant-friendly hospitals across the country.

Statistics indicate that by the end of 1997, China had achieved or was going to realize 14 out of the 24 goals for the development of children in the world by the year 2000. The infant mortality rate and the mortality rate of children under five years old stood at 33.1 and 42.3 per thousand respectively. The infant mortality rate has dropped 40.9 percentage from the 74 per thousand 20 years ago, and the mortality rate of children under five years has also dropped by about one-third.

In 1997, the mortality rate of children suffering from diarrhea was 141.7 per 100,000, down 67.8 per cent from 1991.

Some 3,271 rehabilitation centres have been built across the country, with 4.16 million handicapped people recovering to various degrees within 10 years. Among them, 90,000 deaf children have been able to speak, 600,000 children suffering from polio have improved their body function through orthopedics.



About 140,000 mentally retarded children have improved their learning ability and ability to take care of themselves through rehabilitation.

The State has funded the building of 91 children's homes in urban areas, which have received more than 20,000 orphans.

China has eliminated the incidence of polio through a planned immunization program.

The project of putting iodine in salt and providing iodine pills to more than 90 million pregnant women and infants under two years old has reduced the incidence of people being handicapped by iodine-deficiency.

## **VI. Protection of the Rights of Ethnic Groups**

China follows the policy that all ethnic groups are equal and all minority ethnic groups enjoy special protection. The people of all minority ethnic groups not only enjoy the same rights offered by China's Constitution and laws as the Han nationality, but also enjoy special rights designated for minority ethnic groups.

The minority ethnic groups enjoy the right to participate in administration the affairs of the country and of their own groups. All the 55 minority ethnic groups have their own deputies to the NPC and members in the Ninth national Committee of the CPPCC. The minority ethnic groups, with their aggregated population accounting for 8.98 per cent of the total of China, have 428 deputies, or 14.37 per cent of all NPC deputies, and have 257 CPPCC members, or 11.7 per cent of the total.

China has instituted a system of regional autonomy in areas inhabited by minority ethnic groups. Sixty-three more such areas have become autonomous in China since 1978.

Today, China has five autonomous regions, 30 autonomous prefectures, 120 autonomous counties or banners, and more than 1,200 townships of various minority ethnic groups.

Among China's 55 ethnic minority groups, 45 have set up autonomous areas of their own. The population of ethnic minority groups in these areas makes up 75 per cent of the total population of China's ethnic minorities.

The system of regional ethnic autonomy has granted all ethnic minority groups the right to fully govern the affairs of the autonomous areas and their respective ethnic groups.

According to the Law on Regional national Autonomy, the chairman or vice-chairman of the standing committee of local people's congress of the autonomous areas should be a member of the ethnic minority group.

Heads of all autonomous regions, prefectures and counties should be members of the respective ethnic group. Other members of the people's government of an autonomous region are also to be made up, as far as conditions permit, by members of a local ethnic group.

The number of officials with ethnic minority background is 2.5 million in China today. In 1998, Tibetan officials made up 74.9 per cent of the total number of officials in the Tibet Autonomous Region.

By offering policy preferences as well as support in funds, technologies and skilled professionals, the central government has promoted economic development and social progress, and improved the living standards in areas inhabited by ethnic minorities.

Statistics show that the gross domestic product (GDP) of the regions mostly inhabited by ethnic minorities across the country increased to 708.7 billion yuan (US \$ 85 billion) in 1997 from 1978's 32.4 billion yuan (US \$ 3.9 billion), a 21 - fold increase and an annual growth rate of 10.9 per cent, which was even 1.1 percentage points higher than the national average.

The 1997's GDP per capita of these regions, 15 times more than that of 1978, increased to 4,053 yuan (US \$ 488.3) from 247 yuan (US \$ 29.8) . The average net annual income of farmers in these areas increased by more than 11 times, to 1,482 yuan ((S \$ 178.6) in 1997, up from 1978s 120 yuan (US \$ 14.5) . The disposable income of urban residents grew by nearly 12 times to 4,818 yuan ( US \$ 580.5) in sharp contrast to 1978's 375 yuan (US \$ 45.2).

In recent years, the fixed financial subsidies to the Tibet autonomous to the Tibet Autonomous Region by the central government surpassed 1.2 billion yuan (US \$ 144.6 million) annually. The central government invested more than 40 billion yuan (US %\$ 4.8 billion) in Tibet during the period from the 1950s to 1997. Meanwhile a great amount of goods and materials were transferred to Tibet.

In 1984 nine provinces and municipalities aided Tibet by undertaking 43 construction projects. The central government and various regions across the country in 1994 again provided free aid to Tibet for 62 projects, with a total investment of 4 billion yuan (US \$ 482million). To date, the construction of 60 the 62 projects have been completed.

The aid and support from the rest of the country has greatly accelerated the economic development in Tibet and remarkably improved the life of the people there.

According to statistics, the economy of Tibet has been developing at an average annual growth of 12.9 per cent over the past five years. And the economic growth rate of Tibet has surpassed that of the national average for the past two years.

Local farmers and herdsmen's annual income reached 1,150 yuan (US \$ 139) on average in 1998. The income per capita of urban residents last year surpassed for the first time the national average and reached 5,130 yuan (US\$ 618).

The average living area for urban residents in Tibet was 14 square metres, almost 5 square metres more than the national average. The figure was more than 20 square metres in rural areas of Tibet, about the same as that in other rural areas across the country.

The population of Tibet grew to more than 2.4 million in 1998, up from around 1 million before the democratic reform of Tibet four decades ago. In this period the average life expectancy has been extended by 30 years.

The ethnic minorities' right to education and culture has been guaranteed. The number of ethnic minority teachers increased to 833,200 in 1997 compared with 433, 000 in 1978. In the same period, the number of ethnic minority students enrolled in schools at different levels increased from 10.248 million to more than 29 million. The proportion of ethnic minority students is, respectively, 6.8 per cent in colleges, 6.7 per cent in middle schools and 8.9 per cent in primary schools.

As high as 97.6 per cent of school - aged children attend primary schools in the Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region and seven other major ethnic minority provinces and regions.

College graduates now come from 55 ethnic groups, and in more than 10 ethnic groups the number of college students per 10,000 persons has gone beyond the national average.

In old Tibet, there were no schools in the modern sense and the illiteracy rate was as high as 97 percent.

By 1998, 4,265 schools at all levels had been set up in the Tibet Autonomous Region and the illiteracy rate has dropped by 47 percentage points.

The literacy rate in the Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region is now above 96 per cent, 2 percentage points above the national average.

China emphasizes the protection of the rights of the ethnic groups to enjoy their traditional cultures and religious beliefs. In China, the rights of the ethnic minorities are guaranteed by the law to both use and develop their languages, to preserve or reform their customs and cultures, and to believe in religions as they wish.

Statistics show that the bilingual education in Chinese and other ethnic languages is practiced in more than 10, 000 schools at all levels. Currently, lessons are given in more than 60 ethnic languages.

There is also bilingual education in middle schools and primary schools in Tibet, and departments or courses in the Tibetan language have been established in colleges and vocational school in Tibet.

The fine Tibetan traditional culture has been carried forward and developed. Currently there are over 50 research institutes nationwide studying Tibetan culture involving thousands of researchers.

The work to systematically investigate, collect, compile and publish the traditional cultural heritage of Tibet on a large scale is continuing.

Abundant traditional Tibetan classics have been compiled and preserved. The Tibetan People's Publishing House has compiled and published classics covering Buddhist scripture, Tibetan pharmacology, the Tibetan calendar, history, biographies and literature.

The Tibetan Library alone has collected and compiled over 100,000 volumes of Tibetan classics. The Tibet Autonomous Regional Government has set up a bureau to compile the Tibetan epic King Gesar. Over 50 million words have been compiled and more than 30 books have been published on this epic.

Large numbers of rare cultural relics have been put under full protection. After renovating Potala Palace, the regional government allocated 26 million yuan (US \$ 3.13 million) to complete a similar project at Gandan Palace in October 1997.

The health care conditions for ethnic minorities have been greatly improved. A basic medical and public health network now covers the whole of the Tibet Autonomous Region.

By the end of 1997, Tibet had 1,324 medical and health establishments, 6,246 hospital beds (2.5 beds per 1,000 people) and 10,929 medical professionals (184 doctors per 100,000 people).

The Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region now has 476 medical and health establishments, averaging 515 doctors per 100,000 people. The government fund for per capita medical care is 19.51 yuan (US \$ 2.35). The rates of growth of medical establishments, the ration of doctors to residents and government fund for medical care compared with the figures in 1957 are 51.59 per cent, 213.41 per cent and 2,923.14 per cent, respectively. The lack of medicine in poor rural areas has been totally eradicated.

## **VII. Foreign Exchange and Co - operation in the Field of Human Rights**

China consistently respects the universal principles of the international community on human rights, advocating to hold dialogues and co-operate with other countries in terms of human rights.

The year 1998 was the 50th anniversary of the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. In January 1998, President Jiang Zemin wrote a letter to UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan, expressing that the Chinese Government fully supported the international community in commemorating this progressive document in the sphere of human rights.

On December 10, 1998, president Jiang wrote a letter addressed to a commemorative meeting marking the 50th anniversary of the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which was hosted by the China Society for Human Rights Studies.

President Jiang highly valued the position and role of the important document, saying that the Chinese people, together with the international community, will make their own contribution to a just, reasonable, peaceful and prosperous world.

In October 1998, China hosted the first international symposium on World Human Rights Towards the 21st Century. Nearly 100 experts and scholars from 26 countries invited to the symposium summed up the practice and experience in the field of human rights protection in the world in the 50 years since the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, studied opportunities and challenges the international community is facing now, and inquired into the development perspective of international human rights in the coming next century.

The vice - premier of the State Council Qian Qichen was invited to speak at the symposium. Qian expounded the principled stand held by the Chinese government for promoting international human rights.

As part of the activities marking the 50th anniversary of the adoption of the Universal Declaration of the Human Rights, the Chinese academic and research circles also organized a series of other symposiums.

In addition, China Central Radio Station in December broadcast various programs on the human rights progress, popularizing the knowledge of human rights.

The Chinese Government always attaches great importance to international human rights covenants, which are regarded as playing an active role in promoting the progress of human rights.

China has so far signed a total of 17 international covenants on human rights and taken various measures to conscientiously implement the covenants which China has joined. On this basis, it signed the International Covenant on Economic, Social and

Cultural Rights in October 1997 and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights in October 1998.

China is now deliberating the covenants in accordance with the constitution and concerned laws.

In agreement with the Joint Declaration between China and Britain on the Question of Hong Kong and the Basic Law of the HKSAR, the relevant provisions in the two covenants applicable to Hong Kong continue to be effective in the region and will be implemented through laws in the HKSAR.

In November 1997, the Chinese Government decided to transmit to the United Nations reports by its Hong Kong Special Administrative Region on the implementation of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, thus making the relevant institutions involving the covenants and the international community better aware of the human rights conditions in the HKSAR.

China has actively co-operated with the United Nations in the field of human rights. In September 1998, the Chinese Government invited the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights Mary Robinson to visit China. The two sides extensively exchanged their views on human rights issues and signed a memorandum of Intent on a technical co-operation program.

In 1999, China invited a concerned expert group from the office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights to visit China. The expert group conducted friendly exchanges and extensively discussed issues on consultation and technological co-operation in the field of human rights and exchanged views with relevant Chinese Government departments, non-governmental organizations and relevant local government departments.

In recent years, the Chinese Government has invited the UN Special Rapporteur on Religious Intolerance (in 1994) and the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention (in 1996) to the country.

In the near future, China plans to invite the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Torture to come for a visit.

China always advocates dialogue and opposes confrontation in the field of human rights. For the past several years, China has conducted dialogues and co-operation in the field of human rights with many foreign countries.

Chinese leaders have extensively discussed and exchanged views in the field during their meetings with foreign heads of state and government, as well as concerned personalities from foreign countries.

In 1997, President Jiang Zemin paid a successful state visit to the United States. In the Joint Statement between China and the United States, the two sides are determined to build a constructive strategic partnership.

They agree that while China and the United States have areas of disagreement on human rights issues, they should carry out governmental and non - governmental dialogues on the basis of equality and mutual respect.

When visiting China in 1998, US President Bill Clinton met President Jiang Zemin and held candid talks on human rights issues. The two presidents reiterated the common ground announced in the Sino - US joint Statement.

In 1998, the European Union and the United States gave up anti - China proposals in the 54th session of the UN Commission on Human Rights held in Geneva, pushing forward the dialogues and co - operation between China and other countries.

After that, China held governmental and non - governmental talks on human rights issues with Norway, Britain, France, Australia, Canada, Sweden, Brazil, Japan, the United States and the European Union.

The bilateral and multilateral talks between them stimulated extensive exchanges and co - operation, improved mutual understanding and made great achievements.

Like the rest of the world, China has many problems which should be solved in the field of human rights. The Chinese Government is willing to learn from other countries' useful experiences in promoting the development of human rights.

China will persistently accelerate the progress in human rights in the country. Meanwhile, it will actively push forward the healthy development of international human rights through dialogues and co- operation.