

Progress in China's Human Rights in 2009

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Foreword

The year 2009 was the most difficult one for China's economic development since the beginning of the new century. In 2009, facing the great impact of the international financial crisis, and grave and complicated economic situations, the Chinese government, sticking to the Scientific Outlook on Development characterized by putting people first, combined the countermeasures to the international financial crisis with the maintenance of a stable yet rapid economic development and the promotion of China's human rights, and carried out a series of policies and measures to maintain economic growth, restructure the economy, promote reforms and improve people's livelihood, thus effectively curbing the economic slowdown, becoming one of the few countries making a turnaround in the economy, and promoting new and notable progress in China's human rights.

In 2009 the Chinese government promulgated and implemented the National Human Rights Action Plan of China (2009-2010). This was the first national action plan in China with human rights as the theme. It is a programmatic document for directing and promoting the comprehensive development of China's human rights. The Action Plan applies the Constitutional principle of respecting and protecting human rights to the various fields of politics, economy, culture and social construction, and the various links of legislation, law enforcement, judicature,

governance and administration. The document expressly stipulates the objectives and concrete measures of the Chinese government in promoting and protecting human rights. Over the past more than one year, the National Human Rights Action Plan of China (2009-2010) has been effectively implemented, the Chinese people's consciousness of human rights has been enhanced, and the overall cause of human rights has been promoted in an all-round way.

China is a developing country with a population of 1.3 billion. Due to its inadequate and unbalanced development, there is still much room for improvement in its human rights conditions. The Chinese government is taking effective measures to promote the sound development and social harmony with a view to building a more just and harmonious society and ensuring that the people enjoy a more dignified and happier life.

To help the rest of the world gain a better understanding of the human rights situation in China, we hereby give an overview of the developments in the field of human rights in China in 2009.

I. The People's Rights to Subsistence and Development

In 2009, to overcome the impact of the international financial crisis, the Chinese government invested 4,000 billion yuan in the improvement of the people's livelihood, economic growth and restructuring, and steady yet rapid socioeconomic development. Remarkable results have been achieved in those fields. According to statistics, the country's gross domestic product (GDP) in 2009 exceeded 34,000 billion yuan, an increase of 9.1 percent over the previous year. The grain output hit a historical high of 531 million tons, an increase for the sixth consecutive year. Thus the Chinese people's general standard of living has been further improved on the basis of economic and social development.

The general standard of living of the people continued to rise. In 2009 the per capita net income of rural residents was 5,153 yuan, and the per capita disposable income of urban residents was 17,175 yuan, an increase of 8.5 percent and 9.8 percent respectively over the previous year. The Engel coefficient (i.e. the proportion of food expenditure in the total consumption spending) per rural and urban household was 41 percent and 36.5 percent, respectively. In 2009 China allocated a special fund for construction totaling 55.056 billion yuan, built two million housing units for low-income residents, and renovated 1.3 million housing units in run-down areas in forest and reclamation areas, coalmining regions and part of the run-down urban areas. The housing conditions for urban and rural residents steadily improved over

the past year. By the end of 2009 car ownership had reached 31.36 million, an increase of 28.6 percent over the previous year, among which 26.05 million were private cars, an increase of 33.8 percent. The combined number of fixed and mobile phone users reached 1,061.07 million, an increase of 79.47 million over that at the end of the previous year. There are now 79.9 telephones for every 100 people. The number of domestic tourists last year was 1.9 billion person/times, and the number of Chinese citizens traveling abroad reached 47.66 million person/times, increases of 11.1 percent and 4 percent, respectively, over the previous year.

In the meantime, China is taking further steps to promote agricultural development and construction in the rural areas, and to increase farmers' incomes. In 2009 the state adopted the Opinions on Promoting the Stable Development of Agriculture and Sustainable Increase of Farmers' Incomes in 2009 and the Opinions on Promoting the Stable Development of Agriculture and Sustainable Increase of Farmers' Incomes at Present. The appropriation from the central budget in this regard totaled 725.3 billion yuan, an increase of 21.8 percent over the previous year. The farmers' living conditions have effectively improved. In 2009 China renovated 800,000 dilapidated houses in the countryside, and helped build permanent housing for 92,000 nomadic families. The drinking water problems for 60.69 million rural residents were resolved. From 2000 to 2009, China solved the drinking water problems for 225 million rural residents, and reached the target in the United Nations Millennium Development Goals of "reducing by half the proportion of people without sustainable access to safe drinking water by 2015," six years ahead of schedule.

China attaches great importance to improving the production and living conditions of the impoverished population. In 2009 the state's input of money for poverty reduction programs in rural areas increased by three billion yuan over the previous year to 19.73 billion yuan, with additional input of 25.2 billion yuan in the form of credit funds through interest subsidies for the same purpose. In 2009 the state raised the poverty level to 1,196 yuan per person per year on average, and by this criterion there were 40.07 million people living under the poverty level in China. By the end of 2009 the size of the impoverished population in rural China had decreased to 35.971 million, making up 3.8 percent of the rural population. The per capita annual income of farmers in the counties which are key targets of the government's poverty reduction work increased from 2,611 yuan in 2008 to 2,842 yuan in 2009, a higher increase rate than that of the average level in China's rural areas.

China is also striving to improve the public health care system and the people's health in general. In 2009 the total health care expenditure in China reached

1,720.481 billion yuan, making up 4.96 percent of China's GDP, and the per capita health care expenditure was 1,192 yuan. The state allocated a special fund of 21.7 billion yuan for building the medical services system at the grassroots level, supporting the construction of 986 county-level hospitals (including hospitals of traditional Chinese medicine), 3,549 hospitals in central towns and townships and 1,154 community health service centers. The state also allocated 1.73 billion yuan in subsidies to medical institutions at the grassroots level for the purchase of medical equipment. In 2009, 11.26 million rural pregnant women and women in labor received government subsidies so that they could give birth in hospitals, 11.86 million women in the countryside were provided gratis with folic acid three months before they got pregnant or three months into pregnancy, two million rural women received cervical cancer screening, and more than 28 million children aged under 15 years received vaccinations against hepatitis B. In 2009 more than 210,000 cataract operations were carried out for impoverished patients, and monitoring of drinking water quality was carried out at 30,000 rural water-supply projects. By the end of 2009 HIV/AIDS treatment was available in 31 of China's provinces (autonomous regions and municipalities directly under the central government), and 79,946 AIDS patients and 1,793 children with AIDS had received treatment. Also in 2009, China launched the emergency response mechanism to Influenza A (H1N1) virus, and effectively prevented the spread of the disease. At present, China has 289,000 health-care institutions, 5.22 million medical professionals, 3.96 million hospital and clinic beds and 910,000 beds at township hospitals. The average life expectancy of the Chinese people was 73 years in 2009, and the mortality rate of women in childbirth was reduced to 31.9 per 100,000, with infant mortality rate dropping to 1.38 percent.

China is strengthening legislation and supervision of production safety. In 2009 China issued 12 related departmental rules including the Interim Provisions on Supervision and Administration of Occupational Health at Workplaces, enacted and amended 53 standards of production safety, including special ones for the coal industry, and further strengthened workplace safety protection for employees. In 2009 a total of 18 provinces (autonomous regions and municipalities directly under the central government) assigned special production safety law-enforcement personnel, all prefecture-level city governments and 97 percent of the county-level governments set up production safety supervisory and regulatory agencies, and 75 percent of the towns, townships and sub-districts established full-time or part-time production safety agencies. At the same time, five more coal mine safety sub-bureaus were set up within the supervision system, and nationwide 29,880 people were held

accountable and punished for work-place accidents in 2009. In 2009 the number of workplace accidents and fatalities shrank by 34,930 and 7,980, respectively, down 8.4 percent and 8.8 percent over the previous year. The number of major workplace accidents and fatalities dropped by 50 percent and 56.1 percent, respectively, over the previous year. The number of deaths per 100 million yuan GDP was 0.248, down by 16.7 percent over the previous year. On March 28, 2010, an accident took place at the Wangjialing Coal Mine in Shanxi Province, and 153 miners were trapped underground. After an ordeal of eight days and eight nights, 115 of them were rescued, a remarkable feat in the history of Chinese mine rescues.

II. Citizens' Civil and Political Rights

In 2009 the Chinese government continued to regard the protection of citizens' civil and political rights as an important part of the building of political civilization, and further strengthened democracy and the rule of law. It endeavored to widen the scope of citizens' orderly political participation and to safeguard their rights of being the masters of their own country.

In China the National People's Congress (NPC) and the local people's congresses at various levels are the organs through which the people exercise state power. The NPC and its Standing Committee exercise the legislative power of the state. From January 2009 to March 2010 the NPC and its Standing Committee examined 25 laws and draft decisions concerning laws, and adopted 18 of them. They amended eight laws, including the Electoral Law and the Postal Law, and further guaranteed human rights through legislation. Among the laws newly adopted, the Food Safety Law built a legal protective screen for food safety in an all-round way, and provided legal grounds for guaranteeing food safety, and people's health and security. The Tort Liability Law explicitly prescribed the fundamental principle that whoever infringes upon other people's civil rights and interests will be held liable for the injuries caused, as well as the ways of assuming liability, thus further improving the legal guarantee of Chinese citizens' personal right and property right. The amendments to the Electoral Law adopted at the Third Session of the Eleventh NPC held in March 2009 stipulated that the election of deputies to people's congresses shall be based on the same population ratio in both urban and rural areas, which broadened the representation of deputies to people's congresses. The amendments better embodied the equal rights of all citizens, regions and ethnic groups, and further improved the electoral system and expanded people's democratic rights. Now, China has 234 laws, more than 690 administrative regulations and more than 8,800 local

regulations. A comparatively complete legal system with the Constitution at the core that guarantees human rights is now in place.

The NPC and its Standing Committee have effectively exercised their right of supervision, and their supervisory effect has further been enhanced. In 2009 the NPC Standing Committee examined and deliberated upon 14 work reports of the State Council, the Supreme People's Court and the Supreme People's Procuratorate on the response to climate change, on the promotion of employment and reemployment, on the improvement of enforcement in civil cases, and on the enhancement of supervision of dereliction of duty and rights infringement. It examined the implementation of three laws, including the Food Safety Law and the Trade Union Law. It also carried out special investigations on some major public investment projects of the central government concerning livelihood of the people such as projects of housing for the low-income people, of education and public health construction, and urged the departments concerned to perform their official duties in accordance with the law, ensure an impartial judicature and properly handle issues of general concern and related to the interests of the general public.

Multi-party cooperation and political consultation under the leadership of the Communist Party of China (CPC) are basic to the political system of China, which is a new type of political party system with distinctive Chinese characteristics and conforming to China's actual conditions. This system plays a significant role in China's political life. The National Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC) participates in the discussion of state affairs, puts forward opinions, suggestions and criticisms, and performs its functions of conducting political consultation, exercising democratic supervision and taking part in and managing state affairs through its regular work of making proposals, inspections, carrying out special consultations and investigations, and reporting public opinions. In 2009 the CPPCC National Committee filed 5,820 proposals, of which 5,218 were placed on file; it compiled and reported to the central leadership 267 reports on social conditions and public opinions, and conveyed 1,435 comments and suggestions involving the people's livelihood; it submitted 12 reports on its inspections and investigations on the development of small and medium-sized enterprises and on the economic and social development of areas inhabited by ethnic minorities, communicated with relevant ministries about the adoption and implementation of the inspection results, and endeavored to establish a sound system at the feedback stage. The CPPCC National Committee convened the Standing Committee meetings deliberating special political issues, and consultative conferences on major issues concerning the economy and people's livelihood such as

"focusing on increasing domestic demand and maintaining rapid yet steady economic development," "speeding up the transition of the economic growth mode, the adjustment of economic structures, and enhancing sustained economic development," and "guaranteeing and improving the people's livelihood and promoting social harmony." In 2009 the special committees of the CPPCC National Committee put forward opinions and suggestions for the improvement of China's legislation and law enforcement. For instance, they proposed the establishment and improvement of the legal system and policies corresponding to the Law on Regional Ethnic Autonomy, based on an in-depth investigation of the implementation of the law, in order to better implement the law; they also proposed improvement of relevant laws and regulations, clarification of the legal concept of "abnormal appeals to higher authorities" and the "principal body for liability," so as to bring "appeals to higher authorities for help" within the jurisdiction of the law. In addition, they proposed amendments to drafts of laws and regulations on social construction submitted by the Legislative Affairs Office of the State Council and other government departments.

Self-government at the grassroots level is a fundamental political system that ensures people exercise their democratic rights. In 2009 the State Council issued the Notice on the Strengthening and Improvement of Elections of Villagers' Committees, laying down standard requirements for election preparations, procedures, post-election work, organization and management. The notice was significant for guaranteeing just and orderly elections of villagers' committees, ensuring villagers' direct exercise of democratic rights in accordance with the law and promoting democracy at the rural grassroots level. In 2009 elections for new villagers' committees in 12 provinces and elections for new neighborhood committees in 16 provinces took place. Rural China's 604,000 villagers' committees have a total of 2.3 million members, selected through democratic elections in accordance with the law. China is working to promote the project of "making village affairs known to villagers," improve democracy in villages beset with long-standing difficulties in democratic management, and solve the problems arising from land requisition, house demolition and land contracting that may impair local people's legitimate rights and interests. China is also endeavoring to improve community service systems in both urban and rural areas so as to constantly improve the urban and rural communities.

The Chinese government is working actively to make government affairs public, improve the official spokesman system and information transparency, and legally equip its citizens with more rights to know about, supervise and participate in public

affairs. Since the promulgation and implementation of the Outline for Promoting Law-based Administration in an All-round Way in 2004, China has made great progress in promoting law-based administration. The Chinese government is attaching more importance to legislation concerning social management and public service; it also puts more emphasis on public participation and certifying by experts. Administrative policy-making has become more scientific, democratic and institutionalized. The country is further standardizing law enforcement and promoting the responsibility system of administrative law enforcement in a vigorous manner. In 2009 the people's governments at different levels actively implemented the Provisions on the Disclosure of Government Information, and explored new platforms for government information disclosure by administrative organs. Governments at all levels also improved their press release systems. In 2009 the State Council Information Office, ministries, commissions, and provinces (autonomous regions and municipalities directly under the central government) held a total of 1,646 press conferences, and Chinese media and netizens actively participated in discussions of public policies, and supervised and criticized government actions. In March 2010 eight organs under the central government, including the Ministry of Finance, changed the traditional way of financial operation of administrative departments by disclosing their own budgets for the fiscal year on their websites. The public hailed the new move as an important step towards political civilization.

The Chinese government supports enterprises' and public institutions' efforts to improve the democratic management system with employees' conferences as the basic form, to make known enterprise affairs to employees, and supports employees' participation in management and safeguards their legitimate rights and interests. By the end of 2009 a total of 22 provinces (autonomous regions and municipalities directly under the central government) issued 27 local regulations on making known to the employees the affairs of enterprises or public institutions and on democratic management. By the end of September 2009 there were 1.752 million enterprises and public institutions with trade union organizations and a system of disclosing enterprise and public institution affairs to their employees, involving 127.512 million employees; and the number of enterprises and public institutions practicing the employees' conference system had reached 1.839 million, involving 133.387 million employees. The total number of grassroots trade union organizations had increased to 1.845 million, involving 3.959 million enterprises and public institutions; and the number of trade union members nationwide had risen to 226.3 million. Over the past five years the number of trade union members has been increasing by more

than 15 million per year on average, and the increase in the number of trade unions and members has hit an all-time high.

With their right to freedom of speech on the Internet protected by the law, Chinese citizens can voice their opinions in a wide variety of ways on the Internet. The Internet is given full scope in China, and has become an important channel for people to obtain various types of information and voice their opinions. By the end of 2009 the number of Chinese netizens had reached 384 million, meaning 28.9 percent of the total population had access to the Internet, higher than the world's average level. In the same year there were 3.23 million websites running in China. China's websites attach great importance to providing netizens with services that enable them to express their opinions, with over 80 percent of them providing electronic bulletin service. In China there are over a million bulletin board services (BBS) and some 220 million bloggers. According to a sample survey, each day people post over three million messages via BBS, news commentary sites, blogs, etc., and over 66 percent of Chinese netizens frequently place postings to discuss various topics, and to fully express their opinions and represent their interests. At the same time, the Internet has become a new channel for the Chinese government to get to know the public opinion and amass the people's wisdom, and consequently exercise governance for the people and improve its work in this respect. The leaders of China frequently log onto the Internet to get to know the public's wishes, and sometimes have direct online communication with netizens to discuss state affairs and answer their questions. It has become a common practice for governments at all levels to consult the public via the Internet before formulating policies of particular importance. For each of the past three years, as many as several million items of advice and suggestions have been received through the Internet, providing valuable reference for the government to improve its work.

The Chinese government attaches great importance to the Internet's role in supervision. Governments at all levels are required to investigate and resolve in a timely manner all problems reported to the government by the public via the Internet, and to inform the public of the action taken and the results. The great majority of government websites carry relevant email addresses and telephone numbers, so that the governments can be informed of problems in their work. Over the past few years, a great number of the problems reported through the Internet have been resolved. In order to facilitate the public's reporting of corruption, dereliction of duty, etc., among officials, the central discipline inspection and supervision authorities, the Supreme People's Court, the Supreme People's Procuratorate and other relevant bodies have set up special websites.

Citizens have the right to make criticism and suggestions, bring to the attention of relevant state organs complaints or charges of illegality against any state organ or functionary. Through various channels, such as Green Post, special telephone lines, online complaints and agencies, the Chinese government makes it convenient for the people to petition, report problems and offer suggestions. Leading officials of all levels of the Party and government are required to read and reply to letters from the masses, open their offices to complaints from visitors on a regular basis, take responsibility for the cases they handle and be held responsible for any dereliction of duty, so as to guarantee the people's legitimate rights and interests. In 2009 the General Office of the CPC Central Committee and the General Office of the State Council issued three new documents: Opinions on the Regular Reception by Leading Officials of Citizens Who Come to Make Complaints, Opinions on the Regular Organization of Officials from Central Departments of the Party and Government to Visit Grassroots Localities, and Opinions on the Systematization of the Efforts to Sort Out, Check and Resolve Conflicts and Disputes. In accordance with the new guidelines, people with complaints not only have access to secretaries of county Party committees but also leading officials of departments at all levels. In addition, visits of officials from central departments and state organs to grassroots localities have been standardized, and the efforts to sort out, check and resolve conflicts and disputes have been systematized. In this way, the legal system safeguarding the voicing of public complaints has been further improved. In 2009 the number of letters from and visits of the people for petition dropped by 2.7 percent over the previous year, a decrease for the fifth consecutive year.

III. Judicial Guarantee of Human Rights

In 2009 China took a further step in improving its judicial system to strengthen the protection of human rights in law enforcement and judicial practices.

China has cracked down on various criminal offenses in accordance with the law to protect citizens' life and property and their other human rights. In 2009 China's procuratorial organs ratified the arrest of 941,091 suspects in criminal cases and instituted legal proceedings against 1,134,380 people. The people's courts at all levels settled trials of first instance of 767,000 criminal cases, in which 997,000 criminals received prison sentence, and cleared 3,407,000 old cases. These actions protected the victims' legitimate rights and interests in accordance with the law.

Adhering to the principle of "enforcing law in the interest of the people," China's public security organs have actively adopted measures convenient for and beneficial

to the people as a standard practice of law enforcement. In October 2009 the Ministry of Public Security enacted the Rules on Law Enforcement of Public Security Organs, which clearly specifies the standards for handling administrative and criminal cases by public security organs to prevent abuse of power and infringements upon citizens' rights. In light of their actual conditions, public security organs at all levels formulated law-enforcement standards and laid down specific requirements for human rights protection in law enforcement activities. In December 2009 the Ministry of Public Security issued the Decision on the Amendment to the "Regulations on the Application for and Use of Motor Vehicle Driving Licenses." The Decision loosened the restrictions on the physical conditions of people with lower limb, finger and hearing disabilities so as to meet their demand to drive motor vehicles. The Regulations on the Disciplines for People's Police Forces of Public Security Organs, which went into effect on June 1, 2010, is China's first systematic departmental ordinance regarding punishment of breach of discipline by the public security organs and people's police forces. Disciplinary measures are clearly defined for physical punishment and abuse of suspects and people in custody, and other targeting people of public security work.

The procuratorial organs perform their legal supervision functions conscientiously to protect citizens' rights. In 2009 the procuratorial organs performed their supervision duties by requesting the public security organs to investigate 19,466 additional cases, and to cancel 6,742 cases. They made decisions to arrest 21,232 additional criminals and suspects and cancel the arrests of 123,235 people. They also brought suits against an additional 18,954 people and canceled the prosecutions of 33,048 people. The procuratorial organs urged the correction of unlawful procedures during the investigation of 25,664 cases, protested what they believed to be wrong judgments in 3,963 criminal cases, and put forward rectification opinions for unlawful procedures in 4,035 criminal trials. The procuratorial organs resolutely prosecuted crimes infringing citizens' human rights committed by officials making use of their positions, and investigated 478 state functionaries suspected of illegally taking people into custody, sabotaging elections, retaliation and false accusation.

Judicial transparency has increased. In 2009 the Supreme People's Court issued the Six Provisions on Judicial Openness, which applies the principle of openness to every procedure of trial and law enforcement, improves the regulations on the release of judgment documents on the Internet and live broadcast of court hearings, requires openness of the judicial process and results, adopts a regular press-release system, and expands the scope and depth of judicial openness. In the same year, the Supreme People's Court enacted the Disciplinary Regulations for Staff Members of

People's Courts. On the basis of this ordinance, 795 staff members of people's courts at all levels were investigated and punished for breaches of law or discipline. Among them, 137 were transferred to judicial organs for investigation. A total of 303,000 letters voicing grievances from ordinary people were addressed by the courts and 1,055,000 complainants were received.

The legal aid system has achieved remarkable results, effectively protecting the legitimate rights and interests of people with financial difficulties. In June 2009 the Ministry of Justice organized activities with the theme "Legal aid services for the convenience of the people," and promoted ten measures nationwide to help ordinary people with legal affairs. The coverage of legal aid has been expanded throughout the country, and issues including health care, employment, education, work remuneration and social security which are closely related to the people's well-being have been incorporated as supplements into the coverage of legal aid for the protection of citizens' rights and interests. More and more regions in China have adjusted the "financial difficulty level" to 1.5 to 2 times the minimum living standard of the region in question so that more people with financial difficulties can enjoy the benefit of legal aid. The legal aid network is being continuously consolidated. By the end of 2009 some 3,274 legal aid organizations and 58,031 legal aid service centers had been set up at the provincial, city and county levels nationwide, providing convenient access to legal aid services. In 2009, over 640,000 legal aid cases were handled, and legal consultancy services were extended to 4.84 million people, effectively protecting the legitimate rights and interests of people with financial difficulties.

The role of lawyers in protecting human rights through judicial means has been increasingly strengthened. In 2009 China formulated regulations and rules in this respect, specifying relevant stipulations in the Law of the People's Republic of China on Lawyers. These detailed regulations facilitate the implementation of stipulations in the Law on lawyers' rights to consult with clients, to read case records, and to investigate and collect evidence, advancing the development of litigation on the part of lawyers and creating a strong legal guarantee for lawyers to carry out their responsibilities and play a larger role in judicial procedures. In 2009 lawyers throughout the country undertook over 1.96 million litigation cases of all types, effectively protecting the legitimate rights and interests of their clients and promoting judicial justice.

The legal rights and interests of people in detention and prison are protected by law. In 2009 the Ministry of Justice enacted and implemented the Assessment Measures for the Work on the Rehabilitation of Criminals in Prison to popularize the

performance assessment system of rehabilitation work in an all-round way. It also carried out a campaign focusing on "regulating law enforcement actions and raising the level of law enforcement" in an attempt to solve the problems in law enforcement. A rehabilitation mode of "5+1+1," namely five days of rehabilitation through labor and one day of classroom education, plus one day of rest every week has been widely adopted in prisons. Measures have been taken to ensure that prisoners' standard of living and health care levels always keep up with the country's social and economic development. In 2009 the procuratorial organs urged the correction of the excessive detention of 337 people, and put forward rectification opinions on 22,268 cases of unlawful actions. In the same year the procuratorial organs joined hands with the public security organs in launching a special inspection of supervision and law enforcement at detention houses throughout China. This campaign discovered and punished 2,207 prisoners who bullied other inmates, and 123 of them were prosecuted for their acts involving criminal offences. The procuratorial organs and the Ministry of Justice jointly carried out a campaign to "check for possible hidden dangers of accidents and improve the safety of detention houses and prisons." As a result improvement was made in safety measures and supervision work in order to protect the legitimate rights and interests of criminals. Meanwhile, the people's mediation system has been strengthened. By the end of 2009 a total of 823,000 people's mediation committees with 4,938,000 mediators from among ordinary people had been established throughout China. In 2009 these committees mediated 7,676,000 disputes, prevented 48,000 civil disputes from escalating into criminal cases, and stopped 18,000 people from committing suicide in civil dispute cases.

IV. Economic, Social and Cultural Rights

In 2009 the Chinese government undertook the protection of the people's economic, social and cultural rights as a major task throughout the process of advancing the steady and rapid socioeconomic development of the country. To cope with the international financial crisis, it adopted effective measures, with emphasis on solving problems in such fields as employment, health care, social security, and education which affect the immediate interests of the people, and achieved remarkable results. The right to employment is protected. In 2009 China appropriated 42 billion yuan for the increase of job opportunities, a rise of 66.7 percent over the previous year. In 2009, 11.02 million new job opportunities were created and 5.14 million laid-off workers were reemployed in urban areas of China; the registered unemployment

rate was 4.3 percent in urban areas; the employment rate of that year's college graduates reached 87.4 percent; and the number of rural migrant workers totaled 145 million, an increase of 4.92 million over the previous year. The government helped 186,000 people in earthquake-stricken Wenchuan to find jobs, ensuring that at least one person in each household had a job.

China has developed vocational training to enhance people's employment qualifications. In 2009 the state issued the Notice on Implementing the Special Plan for Vocational Training. In accordance with the Notice, China decided to implement a special plan for vocational training from 2009 to 2010. The plan focused on addressing the employment needs of workers affected by the financial crisis and providing vocational training for four groups of workers, namely employees of crisis-stricken enterprises, rural migrant workers who had lost their jobs and returned to their hometowns, urban unemployed people, and new entrants to the job market. In 2009 the state gave vocational training to over 21.6 million person/times, including vocational training to 2.6 million person/times of enterprises with difficulties in their operation, new-job training to 11 million person/times of rural workers, reemployment training to 4.5 million person/times of urban unemployed people, preparatory training to 2.4 million person/times, and entrepreneurship training to 1.1 million person/times.

The legitimate rights and interests of workers are protected in accordance with the law. In 2009 the state formulated the Guiding Opinions on Responding to the Current Economic Situation and Stabilizing Labor Relations, giving full play to the tripartite labor relations mechanism to keep enterprises afloat, to ensure employment and to maintain social stability. In 2009 labor security supervision organs nationwide conducted inspections of 1.75 million employers, involving 90.298 million workers; investigated and addressed 439,000 cases of law violation regarding labor security; urged employers to sign labor contracts with 10.737 million workers; recovered 8.92 billion yuan of defaulted wages for 5.931 million workers; and demanded that employers pay 4.64 billion yuan in overdue social insurance premiums for their workers. Labor dispute arbitration organs at all levels filed and heard 684,000 cases of labor disputes and mediated 178,000 labor disputes. The settlement rate of such cases in that year was 10.8 percent higher than in the previous year, effectively contributing to the building of harmonious labor relations. In addition, the social security system has been further improved. In 2009 the central treasury put 290.6 billion yuan into social security, 16.6 percent higher than in the previous year. By the end of 2009 the number of people participating in unemployment insurance had reached 127.15 million, an increase of 3.15 million

over that of the end of 2008, while the number of people receiving unemployment insurance benefits was 2.35 million, a decrease of 260,000 from the end of 2008. In 2009 the number of people participating in basic medical insurance topped 1.2 billion, a national coverage rate of over 90 percent. An additional 83.25 million people participated in medical insurance for urban employees and urban residents, bringing the number of people in urban areas with medical insurance to over 400 million. The number of rural residents participating in the new rural cooperative medical service system reached 833 million, an increase of 16.3 million over 2008. The maximum payments by urban employees' medical insurance, urban residents' medical insurance and new rural cooperative medical service system equaled about six times the average wages of local employees, per capita disposable personal income of local urban residents, and per capita net income of rural residents, respectively. Moreover, the reimbursement rate of medical insurance has continued to increase. In 2008 and 2009 the state appropriated a total of 50.9 billion yuan to solve medical insurance problems for retirees of state-owned enterprises that had gone bankrupt or closed down. By the end of 2009 the number of people participating in basic pension insurance had reached 235.5 million, an increase of 16.59 million or 7.6 percent over 2008. The new rural social pension insurance system was implemented on a trial basis in 320 counties (county-level cities or districts) in 27 provinces and autonomous regions, and four municipalities directly under the central government, 11.8 percent of the administrative units of those areas. The pilot program covered 130 million rural residents, including 15.3 million people 60 years old and above. By the end of 2009 over half of the provinces in China were practicing the pooling of funds for work-related injury insurance at city level, and most of the provinces had established the reserve fund system for work-related injury insurance. The number of people participating in work-related injury insurance had reached 148.96 million, an increase of 11.09 million over the previous year. The 2009 figure included 55.87 million rural migrant workers, an increase of 6.45 million over 2008. In 2009 the number of people covered by maternity insurance was 108.76 million, an increase of 16.22 million over the previous year. In 2009 a total of 1.74 million people enjoyed the benefits of maternity insurance.

Citizens' right to education is guaranteed. By the end of 2009 some 99.7 percent of the school-age population had access to nine-year compulsory education, and 99.5 percent of counties in China had provided nine-year compulsory education. In urban areas 96.64 percent of first-year elementary school students had received pre-school education, while in the rural areas the figure was 88.55 percent. In the same year, 99.4 percent of school-age children were enrolled in elementary schools, and 99.31

percent of them completed five years' study at elementary schools. Roughly, close to 99 percent of the children in the 12-14 age group were enrolled in junior high schools, and 94 percent of these children completed their three-year courses at junior high schools. About 79.2 percent of the children in the 15-17 age group were enrolled in senior high schools. In 2009 the enrollment of college students was 6.395 million, an increase of 318,000 over the previous year, and the enrollment of postgraduate students was 511,000, an increase of 65,000 over 2008. China attaches great importance to education in rural areas. In 2009 the central treasury appropriated 58.7 billion yuan as special funds for the promotion of compulsory education in rural areas. The funds included 35.7 billion yuan for public expenses, 13.8 billion yuan for supplying free textbooks, 5.1 billion yuan for the maintenance and renovation of school buildings, and 4.1 billion yuan for living expense subsidies for boarders from poor families. The state exempted 130 million rural students from sundry fees and textbook charges for compulsory education, and earmarked living expense subsidies for 11 million boarders from poor rural families in central and western China at the rate of 500 yuan per elementary school student per year and 750 yuan per junior high school student per year. In all elementary and middle schools in rural areas across China, the annual minimum budgets of public expenses for each elementary school student and for each junior high school student reached 300 yuan and 500 yuan, respectively, in the same year. By the end of 2009 over 6,063 buildings of junior high schools in rural areas of central and western China had been renovated, covering a total area of 12.81 million sq m. An investment of over 11 billion yuan was put into the distance-education network project for rural schools. The money was used to buy equipment for 360,000 rural elementary and middle schools in 23 provinces in central and western China and the Production and Construction Corps of the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region. The equipment included a total of 402,000 sets of audio and visual players, 279,000 sets of TV-computer equipment receiving education programs from satellites and 45,000 computer rooms with multimedia installations.

China has improved the system of providing assistance to poor students. In 2009 the central treasury earmarked 9.28 billion yuan in national scholarships for secondary vocational schools, providing financial aid to nearly 12 million students, or 90 percent of the total number of first- and second-year students in these schools. The central treasury also appropriated 2.4 billion yuan for these schools to exempt poor rural students and students taking agriculture-related programs from tuition for the autumn semester. About 4.4 million students in these schools benefited from this fund. In 2009 the central treasury earmarked 600 million yuan in educational

assistance funds pooled from lottery earnings for public welfare to give financial aid to 600,000 senior high school students from poor families. A 7.05 billion yuan national scholarship fund was assigned to colleges, benefiting 4.6943 million college students nationwide. Student loans became available in 24 provinces, and 22 had extended loans to students in 2009. The same year witnessed an additional of 600,000 students receiving the student loans. When the 2009 autumn semester began, 532,500 poor students were enrolled by colleges through the express "green channels." These students accounted for 95.5 percent of extremely poor students, 36.1 percent of students from poor families and 9.1 percent of all new students.

In the meantime, the people's cultural life is being increasingly enriched. By the end of 2009, China was publishing 43.7 billion copies of newspapers, 3.1 billion copies of periodicals/magazines, and 7 billion volumes of books. The country had 2,478 art troupes, 3,214 cultural centers, 2,833 public libraries, 1,996 museums, 251 radio stations, 272 TV stations, 2,087 radio and TV stations, and 44 radio and TV stations exclusively for education purpose. There were 173.98 million cable TV users, and 62 million users of cable digital TV services. The overall population coverage rates of radio and TV broadcasting were 96.3 percent and 97.2 percent, respectively. In 2009 China made 456 feature films and 102 other films including popular science films, documentaries, animated cartoons and so on. By the end of 2009 China had 4,035 archive institutions, giving the public access to 79.91 million files.

The building of a public cultural service system covering both urban and rural areas has been accelerated, and service capabilities and levels have been markedly enhanced. In 2009 there were 2,850 public libraries and 3,223 art and cultural centers at and above the county level, and 38,736 cultural stations across China. A total of 1,749 museums had offered free access by the year 2009. Since February 7, 2009 the National Library has reduced or eliminated charges for some of its services. The national cultural resources sharing project transforms the country's excellent cultural resources to digital format, and then disseminates them through the Internet, satellite, television and mobile phone networks, enabling the building and sharing of the best of our cultural heritages across the nation. By 2009 some 757,000 service outlets at all levels for cultural resources sharing had been established. The volume of shared digital cultural information had reached 90 TB, including 70,132 hours of video resources, 52,691 titles of e-books and 3,604 e-periodicals. Of these, 1,510 hours of video resources and 1,250 titles of e-books were available in five minority languages, namely, Tibetan, Mongolian, Uyghur, Kazakh and Korean. By the end of 2009 the cultural resources sharing project had provided services to 700 million people.

In 2009 the state invested 407 million yuan in sports-for-all projects. The Regulations on National Fitness, promulgated by the state, was China's first specialized administrative document comprehensively and systematically regulating the development of national fitness undertakings in such aspects as administrative mechanism and national fitness plans and activities. The Regulations on National Fitness was also the first national regulations to stipulate that citizens have the right to participation in national fitness activities in accordance with laws.

V. Equal Rights and Special Protection for Ethnic Minorities

In China, citizens of all ethnic groups enjoy equal rights as stipulated in the Constitution and other laws. Citizens of ethnic minorities also enjoy special rights in accordance with the law.

The state guarantees by law ethnic minorities' equal rights in participation in the administration of state and regional affairs. At present, all 55 ethnic-minority groups have their own deputies to the National Peoples Congress (NPC) and members of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC). Ethnic groups with a population of more than one million have members in the NPC Standing Committee. At each past session of NPC, the proportion of ethnic-minority deputies to the total number of deputies was higher than that of the contemporary ethnic-minority population to that of the total national population. The standing committees of people's congresses in all 155 ethnic-minority autonomous areas have chairs or vice-chairs who are citizens of the ethnic groups exercising regional autonomy in the area concerned. The head of an autonomous region, autonomous prefecture or autonomous county shall be a citizen of the ethnic group exercising regional autonomy in the area concerned. By 2009 there were over 2.9 million ethnic-minority cadres in China, accounting for 7.4 percent of the nation's total number of cadres. About 9.6 percent of China's public servants were from ethnic minorities.

The state intensifies its support to the development of ethnic-minority areas, and the standard of living of ethnic minorities is steadily improving. In recent years, the state has formulated a series of favorable policies which have effectively propelled the socioeconomic development of ethnic-minority groups and regions. The documents include Opinions on Further Enhancing the Socioeconomic Development of Xinjiang, Opinions on Recent Support for Socioeconomic Development in Tibet, Opinions on Further Improving the Socioeconomic Development of Ningxia and Development Plan for the Guangxi North Bay Economic Zone. In 2009 China invested 1.24 billion yuan for the socioeconomic development of the areas inhabited by

ethnic-minority people. In the same year the government invested a total of 780 million yuan, which effectively helped over 80 percent of villages inhabited by ethnic-minority people with smaller population to reach the targets mapped out in the Development Plan for Supporting Smaller Ethnic Minorities (2005-2010). With strengthened efforts for boosting border-region economies, China enlarged the national assistance scope to include 136 border counties and the area of the Xinjiang Production and Construction Corps. In 2009 the state implemented new poverty reduction criteria, enlarged the scope of assistance and carried out comprehensive poverty-alleviation policies for the low-income rural population in the areas inhabited by ethnic-minority people. As a result, the rural population in dire poverty in ethnic-minority areas dropped to over 7.7 million in 2008 from 12.45 million in 2004. In 2009 most of the exceptionally poor villages in ethnic-minority areas had access to roads, power supply, telephones, and radio and TV coverage. They also had schools, clinics, safe drinking water for people and livestock, safe housing, basic farmland or grassland that guarantee adequate food and clothing, and per capita food consumption and per capita net income also reached national poverty-alleviation standards.

Public health care systems in ethnic-minority areas have picked up development speed. From 2004 to 2009 the state invested 4.7 billion yuan in the public health care systems, prevention and control of major diseases, immunization program, health care for women and children, medical personnel training, rural cooperative medical service and traditional ethnic medicine in areas inhabited by ethnic minorities. By the end of 2008 some 681 out of 699 counties in the ethnic autonomous areas had implemented the new system. Five autonomous regions and three provinces of Yunnan, Guizhou and Qinghai with large numbers of ethnic-minority inhabitants realized full coverage. The implementation speed of the system in areas inhabited by ethnic minorities overtook that of the national average.

The education level of ethnic minorities keeps increasing. Ethnic-minority areas have established complete education systems from pre-school to higher education, and the period of education for ethnic-minority population has increased significantly. Ninety-eight percent of school-age children in areas inhabited by ethnic minorities attend elementary schools. By the end of 2009 some 686 out of 699 counties in ethnic autonomous areas had realized nine-year compulsory education and met the target of basically eradicating illiteracy among the young and middle-aged population. The other 13 counties have plans to reach these goals in 2010. By 2009 China had altogether 15 institutions of higher learning for ethnic minorities. The number of full-time students at these schools reached 200,000, of whom 60 percent

were from ethnic minorities. More than 300 universities and colleges had opened preparatory courses and regular classes for ethnic-minority students, with a total enrollment of 31,000.

The traditional cultures of ethnic minorities are protected and encouraged to develop. At the National Ethnic-minority Cultural Work Meeting in June 2009 the State Council issued the Opinions on Further Developing Ethnic-minority Cultural Undertakings, which outlined the major tasks, targets, and measures for the cultural development of ethnic minorities at present and for the years to come. It is a strong guarantee for further development and prosperity of ethnic-minority culture. Cultural facilities construction in areas inhabited by ethnic minorities is being enhanced. During the 11th Five-year Plan period (2006-2010), China is to provide a 3.857-billion-yuan subsidy to the central and western regions of the country, including 913 million yuan to the five autonomous regions and three provinces with large numbers of ethnic-minority inhabitants and the Xinjiang Production and Construction Corps. Through a cultural center construction plan, this subsidy from the government will be used as part of the investment to construct 23,400 comprehensive cultural centers in villages and townships. The state has provided financial aid to renew a large amount of broadcasting and film dubbing equipment for minority languages, has set up 10 minority-language film dubbing centers in Inner Mongolia, Tibet, and Xinjiang, studied and developed state-of-the-art digital technology for film dubbing. The state is strengthening financial support for the maintenance and protection of key cultural relic protection units and the collection of valuable cultural relics in ethnic-minority areas.

A special fund of 400 million yuan has been arranged for the protection of over 20 national key relic protection units and ancient sites in Xinjiang during the 11th Five-year Plan period. Currently the number of national key relic protection units in ethnic-minority areas has reached 366, and the Potala Palace, the ancient city of Lijiang and other cultural sites have been included in the UNESCO's World Cultural Heritage list. The Muqam music of the Xinjiang Uyghur people, the Mongolian Long Song, the Kam Grand Choir of the Dong people of Guizhou Province, the Epic of King Gesar, the Regong art of Qinghai Province, Tibetan opera, the Manas Epic of the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region, the Hoomei singing of the Mongolians, the Hua'er folk songs of Gansu Province, Korean Pungmul dancing, among others, have been included in UNESCO's Masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity. Currently two of the nation's four cultural ecological protection experimental areas feature ethnic-minority cultures. The state has issued the Guiding Opinions on the Experimental Work of Protection and Development of

Ethnic-minority Villages and Stockaded Villages, and carried out experiments on the protection and development of villages and stockaded villages with minority features. In 2009 a total of 50 million yuan was invested in experimental work for the protection and development of 121 ethnic-minority villages and stockaded villages. The ethnic minorities' rights to study, use and develop their own languages are protected. The state effectively guarantees the use of ethnic-minority languages in administrative and judicial work, news media and publications, broadcasting and film, culture and education, and other areas. Examination papers have minority-language versions in the National Matriculation Test. Moreover, China implements bilingual education in areas inhabited by ethnic minorities. At present, over 10,000 schools with a total of 6 million students use 29 languages of 21 ethnic groups in classroom teaching.

VI. Rights and Interests of People with Disabilities

China is working hard to develop services for people with disabilities, to solve their difficulties, and to guarantee their legitimate rights.

The state is actively improving laws and regulations to protect the rights and interests of people with disabilities. The Law on the Protection of Persons with Disabilities, revised on April 24, 2008, strengthened the legal system for protecting the rights and interests of people with disabilities. In 2009 the state issued the Measures for Air Transport of Persons with Disabilities, stipulating detailed measures for the rights of this group in the field of air transport. At present, the Chinese legislature is working on the Regulations on the Construction of Non-barrier Facilities, Regulations on Disability Prevention and Rehabilitation of Persons with Disabilities, and national standards for classifying disabilities. In December 2009, China revised the Regulations on the Application for and Use of Motor Vehicle Driving Licenses, loosening the restrictions on the physical conditions of drivers, and making it possible for some of the disabled to drive motor vehicles. In 2009 China set up the first batch of 56 workstations that provide legal aid to people with disabilities. China has improved the social security and service systems for people with disabilities. In 2009 the state formulated the Guiding Opinions on Accelerating the Building of the Social Security and Service Systems for People with Disabilities, and 30 provinces, autonomous regions and municipalities directly under the central government issued opinions on how to implement the Guiding Opinions. In 2009 a pilot project for a new rural pension insurance system was carried out in China, requiring local governments to pay part or the total amount of the minimum pension

insurance premium for rural people with severe disabilities and other groups with difficulty paying this type of insurance premiums.

China is working hard to improve rehabilitation services for people with disabilities. In 2009 some 6.2 million people with disabilities were rehabilitated to different degrees, and 2,376 municipal districts and counties (county-level cities) carried out rehabilitation in communities, enabling 9.844 million people with disabilities to enjoy rehabilitation services in their communities. In addition, the government provided 1.122 million items of assistance equipment for people with disabilities, including 598,000 pieces of the equipment given for free to those poor people with disabilities. The state invested 711 million yuan in an emergency rehabilitation project for poor children with disabilities, which benefited nearly 60,000 children. Meanwhile, the state carried out a project for training rehabilitation professionals, turning out over 2,200 managerial and technical personnel in this field and nearly 130,000 coordinators for community rehabilitation.

China constantly develops education for people with disabilities. In 2009 the Chinese government issued the Opinions on Accelerating the Development of Special Education. The Opinions states clearly that the government will accelerate the development of special education, particularly high-school education and higher education with focus on vocational education for people with disabilities. This has effectively expanded the scope of compulsory education for people with disabilities. Given the weaknesses in special education, the Opinions puts forward measures such as improving the mechanism for guaranteeing special education funds, strengthening faculty building, enhancing the classroom performance of students, and using all means to eliminate illiteracy among young and middle-aged people. Compulsory education for children and teenagers with disabilities is being steadily promoted. The state has so far provided occupational training sessions for 785,000 persons with disabilities, and institutions of higher learning have enrolled 7,782 students with disabilities.

More and better public services for people with disabilities are provided. By 2009 there were 3,474 homes for people with disabilities in China, where 110,000 disabled people were taken care of. The state helped 1.085 million impoverished rural people with disabilities to shake off poverty, and helped 102,000 poor families with one or more disabled members to renovate their houses, benefiting 140,000 people with disabilities. From 2009 to 2011 the state is to earmark 200 million yuan each year to subsidize agencies that provide services for working-age people with mental or severe physical disabilities. In 2009 the state helped 350,000 urban residents with disabilities to find employment, bringing the number of employed

urban residents with disabilities to 4.434 million. At the same time, the number of employed rural residents with disabilities reached 17.57 million.

China also makes efforts to enrich the lives of disabled people in the cultural and sports areas. In 2009 China held the Seventh National Variety Performance by People with Disabilities, in which 30,000 candidates were selected and 4,000 performers and related staff members took part. In 2009 the state issued the Regulations on National Fitness, clearly specifying disabled people's rights to take part in physical exercises and sporting events. Chinese athletes with disabilities have participated in 19 international events, including the 21st Deaflympics, the 9th Special Olympics World Winter Games, the Paralympic World Cup held in Great Britain, the Tokyo 2009 Asian Youth Para Games, and the World Wheelchair and Amputee Games, and won 158 gold medals. China has held 14 national games for disabled people, involving 5,000 athletes. The Special Olympics has developed steadily in China, and the number of its Special Olympics athletes has reached 900,000.

China is constantly improving the environment for people with disabilities to take part in social life. It has established a special column titled "Services for people with disabilities" on the Central Government's official web portal (www.gov.cn). China has also set up a state-level digital library for people with visual impairment (www.cdlvi.cn). Meanwhile, it has made new progress in constructing non-barrier facilities: 100 cities are working to build themselves into non-barrier cities, making sure people with disabilities have non-barrier access to the main streets, shopping malls, hospitals, hotels, cinemas, museums, airports, bus stations, railway stations and other public buildings, as well as residential buildings, paving the way for people with disabilities to go out confidently and fully engage in social life. The government and all sectors of society are promoting humanitarianism, and urge people to understand, respect, care for and help people with disabilities.

VII. Exchanges and Cooperation with Other Countries in the Realm of Human Rights

China has long taken the initiative to have exchanges and cooperation with other countries in the realm of human rights, endeavoring to promote the sound development of human rights on the international stage.

China is an active participant in the work of UN's human rights agencies, and it plays a constructive role in order to encourage countries around the world to handle human rights issues fairly, objectively and non-selectively.

In February 2009 China received the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) from the United Nations Human Rights Council for the first time. During the review, China, with a serious and highly-responsible attitude, gave a detailed account of its human rights situation, the challenges facing the country and what was needed to be done in the future, and conducted an open and frank dialogue with other countries. China's efforts and progress made in the sphere of human rights have been recognized by many countries, and in June 2009 the UN Human Rights Council verified and approved the report reviewing China's human rights situation. In 2009, a Chinese delegation attended the meetings of the Third Committee of the 64th Session of the UN General Assembly, and the 10th, 11th and 12th sessions of the UN Human Rights Council, and participated in the fourth, fifth and sixth UPR sessions of the UN Human Rights Council. Chinese experts attended the second and third sessions of the Advisory Committee of the UN Human Rights Council, and the fourth and fifth sessions of the Working Group on Communications of the UN Human Rights Council. China played an active part in the Durban Review Conference held in April 2009. When working in the organizations and participating in the meetings mentioned above, China, as always, upheld the basic tenets and principles stipulated in the Charter of the United Nations, performed its duties conscientiously, and proactively participated in reviews and discussions of the human rights issues.

China attaches great importance to the significant role played by international human rights instruments in the promotion and protection of human rights, and has joined 25 international conventions on human rights, including the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. Meanwhile, China is actively working for the approval of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. The Chinese government has taken effective measures to guarantee the implementation of its obligations as stipulated by international human rights conventions it has joined. In 2009 China set about drawing up the second report of its implementation of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the consolidated report of the third and fourth implementations of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and the first report of its implementation of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict, and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. In August 2009 China received a review of its 10th to 13th consolidated report of its implementation of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination conducted by the UN's Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination. The committee affirmed China's policies, measures and achievements made in developing the economy in areas inhabited by

ethnic minorities, enhancing the development of the smaller ethnic minorities, raising people's living standard, promoting health care and education, and protecting the cultures of ethnic minorities.

The Chinese government has been actively involved in formulating international human rights instruments. In 2009 the Chinese government sent a delegation to attend the meeting of the working group to establish an optional protocol for a complaint mechanism to the Convention on the Rights of the Child. China actively recommended its experts to participate in the work of organizations supporting human rights treaties. In 2009 a Chinese expert was elected as deputy chairperson of the newly-organized UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and was reappointed a member of the UN Committee against Torture.

China has been taking the initiative to carry out international cooperation in the realm of human rights, attaching great importance to technical cooperation with the UN's Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR). Since the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding on human rights cooperation between China and the OHCHR in 2000, both sides have carried out a series of cooperative programs on human rights on the principle of mutual respect. China resolutely supports the programs of the OHCHR, and made another donation of US\$20,000 to it in 2009. China highly appreciates the important functions of the UN's Special Procedures of the Human Rights Council in the realm of international human rights, and maintains close cooperation with it. The Chinese government replies to all inquiries from the Special Procedures in a highly responsible manner, and has invited the Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food of the Human Rights Council to visit China. China will continue cooperation in follow-up work with the United Nations Children's Fund office in China on the review of China report conducted by the UN's Committee on the Rights of the Child. An international symposium on the Convention on the Rights of the Child and Its Implementation in China and a symposium on the Report of the Implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child were held in China in 2009.

China upholds the principles of equality and mutual respect when carrying out bilateral dialogues and communication in the field of human rights with related countries. In 2009 China held human rights dialogues and consultations with the European Union, Great Britain, the Netherlands, Australia and Norway, and communicated with countries such as Russia and Laos. Through dialogue and communication with other countries, mutual understanding concerning human rights has been enhanced, gaps have been narrowed and consensus have been reached.

The full realization of human rights is an important goal for China in its efforts to build a moderately prosperous society in an all-round way as well as to build a harmonious society. Working closely with other countries, China will, as always, spare no efforts and contribute its due share to ensure the continuous progress of China's human rights, as well as the healthy development of human rights in the rest of the world and the building of a harmonious world with lasting peace and common prosperity.