

Gender Equality and Women's Development in China

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Foreword

Gender equality and women's development is a lasting theme of mankind's pursuit of equality and justice, a scale for measuring social progress and an important goal in realizing sustainable development in our world.

China has always upheld the constitutional principle of equality between men and women, which is also a basic state policy for promoting progress in the country and in society. Over the years China has progressively improved its laws and regulations,

developed public policies, worked out development plans and pressed forward steadily with gender equality and women's development.

Twenty years ago, the UN' s Fourth World Conference on Women was held in Beijing. On its anniversary two decades later, the Chinese government is publishing this white paper to provide a comprehensive overview of China' s policies on gender equality and women' s development, as well as unremitting efforts made and measures implemented in this regard.

Chinese women make up one fifth of the world' s total female population. Gender equality and women' s development in China not only give expression to China' s own progress, but also constitute a historical contribution made to global equality, development and peace.

I. The Institutional Foundation for Gender Equality and Women's Development

China's national mechanism for promoting the status of women, fully utilizing government resources and effectively mobilizing social resources, lays an important foundation for promoting gender equality and women' s development. Over the past two decades, the mechanism has been constantly improved to allow it to play an increasingly prominent role.

The state has kept improving government organs for promoting the status of women. In 1990, the State Council established the National Working Committee on Children and Women (NWCCW), which has been commissioned the responsibilities to organize, coordinate, guide, supervise and urge departments concerned in promoting gender equality and women's development. Composed of leading ministerial-level members from relevant government organs, the Committee is chaired by a member of the State Council leadership. Over the previous 20 years, the Committee has expanded its member units from 19 to 35, now including government organs such as the National Development and Reform Commission, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Civil Affairs, Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Human Resources and Social Security, Ministry of Agriculture, and the National Health and Family Planning Commission, in addition to six mass organizations. The Committee has a general office doing day-to-day work by full-time staff with specially allocated funds. Relevant organizations have been set up under people' s governments above the county level in 31 provinces, autonomous regions and municipalities directly under the central government, forming a multi-dimensional and well-coordinated network for promoting gender equality and women' s development.

The state has developed and implemented national plans and programs for promoting women's development. Women's development was included in China's 10th, 11th and 12th five-year plans for economic and social development, each time with greater emphasis, clearer goals, and more effective measures for promoting coordinated development between Chinese women and China's economy and society. The State Council has issued three programs covering different periods for the development of Chinese women, clearly defining the overall goals, key areas and policies and measures to be adopted for women's development at different stages. People's governments at and above the county level in the 31 provinces, autonomous regions and municipalities have worked out similar programs for women's development for areas within their respective jurisdiction, thus forming a top-down framework for promoting women's development at all levels. Adopting the target management responsibility system, the working committees on children and women at various levels resolve and allocate the main targets to the related functional departments of the governments and see to it that they are included in corresponding plans and implemented. They also established an appraisal system and carried out assessments of the implementation results of the programs at the end of every year, and in the middle and at the end of the implementation of the programs, ensuring that the targets set in these programs were met as scheduled.

The state has established a working mechanism featuring leadership by the government, multi-departmental cooperation and participation of the whole of society. The State Council and local governments at various levels hold working meetings on children and women on a regular basis to discuss and make plans. Every year, the State Council and local working committees on children and women hold special meetings to hear reports from all their member units, analyze progress made in the implementation of the current program for women's development, and work out measures to address matters of pressing concern for the smooth implementation of the program. Guidance has been given to local governments in actively exploring the establishment of an assessment system of laws and policies related to gender equality, so as to provide at the source a solid institutional guarantee for promoting gender equality and women's development. The state supports the women's federation organizations in representing and safeguarding women's rights and promoting gender equality. As the organizational system of women's federations is better established, it has been playing an increasingly

prominent role in conducting theoretical studies and carrying out publicity, education and training programs in relation to gender equality.

The state has gradually improved the gender statistics system. A comprehensive statistics system has been established on women's development and it has been included in the routine statistics and statistical surveys undertaken by the state and relevant departments, and women's health, well-being and development indicators and gender-disaggregated indicators have been standardized and improved. The state has gradually established a monitoring system for women's conditions at the national and provincial (autonomous region, municipal) levels, worked out a statistical monitoring and indicator system, and established a system in which local governments and relevant departments produce comprehensive statistical reports and submit reports for review on a regular basis. In 1990, 2000 and 2010, China carried out three surveys, which fully and objectively reflected the conditions and changes in Chinese women's social status, providing valuable reference for the government to formulate policies and measures to promote women's development and gender equality. The state published *Women and Men in Chinese Society - Facts and Statistics* in 1995, and updated it with new data in 1999, 2004, 2007 and 2012; and has published annual releases of *Statistics on the Status of Chinese Women and Children* since 2008.

II. Women and the Economy

Equal participation in economic activities and equitable access to economic resources are the basic conditions for the well-being and development of women. While pressing forward with a strategic adjustment of its economic structure and reform and innovation of its growth model, China fully protects the economic interests of women, promoting women's equal participation in economic development and equal access to the fruits of reform and development.

Significant progress has been made in alleviating poverty among women. During the implementation of comprehensive poverty reduction strategies, China has given overall consideration to the impact of urbanization, aging, climate change and other social and market factors on poverty among women, and strengthened efforts to address such poverty. China has implemented a program for poverty alleviation through development in rural areas, making women a key focus of attention and giving priority to poverty alleviation projects for women when all other conditions are equal, striving to improve the development capacity of women and bringing more benefits to them as a group. The number of impoverished women has dropped by an enormous margin, and the severity of poverty of women has been

continuously alleviated. In the 592 poorest counties which are made the main targets of national poverty alleviation and development work, the poverty rate of the female population decreased from 20.3 percent in 2005 to 9.8 percent in 2010. The state has established a new-model social relief system, increasing efforts to protect impoverished women. In 2014, the numbers of women covered by subsistence allowances for urban and rural residents were 7.92 million and 18.26 million respectively, increasing by 2 million and 15.91 million, as compared to 2006. The state has actively implemented a number of public welfare and charity programs for impoverished mothers, such as the program of relief for mothers suffering from breast cancer and cervical cancer, the comfortable housing project for impoverished rural single mothers, and the mother health express program, bringing help to sick women, poor single mothers and various other groups of mothers in need.

The state ensures equal employment right for women. Employment has a vital bearing on people's quality of life. The state has promulgated and improved laws and regulations to promote fair employment and eliminate gender discrimination in employment. The Employment Promotion Law of the People's Republic of China has a chapter specially dealing with fair employment, emphasizing gender equality in employment right. The Labor Contract Law of the People's Republic of China has clear provisions under which businesses are required to create collective contracts for protecting female workers' rights and interests, providing a legal basis for protecting the legitimate rights and interests of female workers. To create favorable conditions for women's employment and career development, the state has also developed, amended and implemented the Special Regulations on Labor Protection of Female Employees, along with policies that enable women in positions as middle-ranking officials, senior professionals and technicians at state organs and public institutions to retire at the same age as their male counterparts, and policies to facilitate the growth of female scientists and promote equal employment opportunities for female college graduates.

The state helps women who are seeking employment and starting businesses. The state has introduced supportive policies and measures to address the difficulties of women in seeking employment and starting businesses. To engage women in employment and entrepreneurship, the state has introduced the small-sum guaranteed loan with financial discount. Since 2009, a total of 222.06 billion yuan has been issued in small discount loans to women, helping millions of women with their new businesses and careers. The state vigorously promotes the development of housekeeping services in urban areas and handicrafts, such as weaving and knitting,

in rural areas, in order that women in cities and countryside can find employment locally and close to their homes, and also to promote employment transfer. It supports female college graduates in seeking employment and starting businesses, providing training in employment, guidance in starting businesses and internship opportunities, and it has implemented the Sunshine Project, improving the quality and skills of the rural female workforce and creating conditions to promote the transfer of rural female workforce to non-agricultural sectors and urban areas. There are now more than 200,000 training schools for women nationwide, providing training sessions to a total of nearly 200 million women in new agricultural technologies and new crop species. A total of 1.5 million women have obtained titles and qualifications as agricultural technicians, and 53,000 women's professional cooperatives have been founded. Following the launch of an employment promotion project for the disabled in urban areas in 2011, about 100,000 disabled women have joined the workforce each year.

The state improves the employment structure for women. In 2013, the total number of women employed nationwide was 346.4 million, accounting for 45 percent of the total employed population. The latest survey of the social status of Chinese women shows that women in secondary and tertiary industries grew by 25 percentage points in comparison with 10 years ago, and that female heads of various departments, professional and technical personnel, and clerical and related personnel increased by 13 percentage points. In 2013, the number of middle-ranking and senior female professional and technical personnel reached 6.61 million, or 44.1 percent of the total in this category, an increase of 9 percentage points from that of 2000. The number of female entrepreneurs keeps growing, now accounting for one quarter of the total number of entrepreneurs in China. The government has initiated an action plan to promote entrepreneurship and innovation among women, encouraging women to seek employment in emerging industries. About 55 percent of new Internet businesses are being founded by women.

The state protects the rights and interests of rural women in relation to land. China is a large agricultural country, and women living in rural areas account for about 70 percent of the total agricultural labor force. While forging ahead with deeper all-round reform and promoting village-level self-government in rural areas, the state has implemented and improved laws and policies on protecting the land rights of women in rural areas, established various systems for managing rural collective funds, assets and resources, corrected any village regulations and folk conventions

for villagers that are in conflict with statutory regulations and the principle of gender equality, so as to ensure that women in rural areas enjoy equal rights of land contract and management, use of homesteads and distribution of collective income. In the verification, registration and certification of land contract and management rights, it is clearly ruled that women's rights and interests in relation to land must be given expression to in the registration book and land right certificate, so that women in rural areas are ensured access to the resources necessary for survival and development at source.

The state improves the level of social security for women. The Social Insurance Law of the People's Republic of China has a separate chapter for maternity insurance, clearly stipulating that women equally enjoy social security rights. In the Program for the Development of Chinese Women (2011-2020), a section titled "Women and Social Security" was added, defining the main goals, policies, and measures to enable women to enjoy equal access to social insurance, relief, welfare and assistance. The number of women participating in old-age insurance, medical insurance, unemployment insurance, industrial injury insurance, and maternity insurance keeps rising. In 2013, the numbers of women covered by old-age insurance and medical insurance for urban workers reached 146.12 million and 126.57 million, growing by 67.43 million and 72.82 million as compared to the figures in 2005, and the number of women participating in maternity insurance reached 71.17 million, an increase of 48.44 million as compared with 2005. In April 2012, the Special Regulations on Labor Protection for Female Employees was promulgated and put into effect, extending statutory maternity leave from 90 days to 98 days and increasing the level of maternity protection for women.

III. Women and Education

China actively promotes equality in education, adjusting the structure of education, adhering to the principle of gender equality, and working hard to guarantee equal rights and opportunities for both men and women to access education.

The gender gap in education has been markedly narrowed. The state implements the Compulsory Education Law of the People's Republic of China and other relevant laws, regulations and policies, and takes practical measures to improve women's education. It has implemented a special policy to ensure school-age girls enjoy equal access to compulsory education. In 2014, the net primary school enrolment rates of boys and girls were both 99.8 percent, meaning that China has achieved the United Nations Millennium Development Goals ahead of time. Women now enjoy greater

opportunities in junior high school education and above, particularly further education. In 2014, the proportion of female students in junior high schools was 46.7 percent and that in high schools was 50 percent; in institutions of higher learning women accounted for 52.1 percent of undergraduate students, 51.6 percent of postgraduate students, and 36.9 percent of students studying for Ph.D. degrees.

The state has set up special funds to reduce the number of illiterate women. In 2013, the illiteracy rate for females at and over the age of 15 was 6.7 percent, 17.4 percentage points lower than in 1995; and the population of illiterate women fell by more than 70 million as compared with 1995. Women's average years of schooling have increased, and the gender gap has narrowed. The Sixth National Census showed that the average years of schooling for women over the age of six were 8.4 years in 2010, 1.3 years more than in 2000, and the gender gap had narrowed by 0.2 year as compared with 2000.

More and more women have been receiving vocational education and skill training. The state has enacted and improved laws and policies on vocational education, allocating more funds in this regard, improving student aid policies and increasing the number of women receiving vocational education. In 2014, the number of women receiving secondary vocational education was 8.05 million, accounting for 44.7 percent of the total, and the number of females studying in technical secondary schools was 3.97 million, making up 53 percent of the total student body in similar schools. Around the country, 3.46 million women had received non-degree higher education and more than 20 million had received non-degree secondary education. The state launched a project to train farmers in new technology, a plan for cultivating highly skilled personnel, in addition to a number of training programs for improving the vocational skills of migrant workers, such as the Spring Tide Action and Sunshine Project, to meet the needs of different groups of women for their vocational development. In 2013, women who participated in skill training programs organized by government training institutions accounted for 43 percent of the total number of trainees.

Women of ethnic minority groups, girls in remote poverty-stricken areas and other female groups now enjoy equal access to educational resources. The state has adopted proactive policies to set up vocational schools specially catered to ethnic minority students, and introduced preferential measures for targeted enrolment, substantially expanding ethnic minority women's access to educational resources of various types and at all levels. The state has developed special education programs for poor girls and schoolgirls, ensuring girls in remote and poor areas equal access to education. It has been accelerating the construction of boarding schools in rural areas, thereby improving the study and living conditions of rural girls. Specific policies have been introduced to provide education for migrant children where they move. China also attaches importance to special education, increasing disabled

women' s access to educational resources of various types and at all levels; as a result, disabled women have improved access to education.

Principles and concepts of gender equality are gradually extending into teaching and scientific research. More and more schools have begun to introduce the idea of gender equality in educational content and teaching methods, and some primary and high schools are now offering courses in gender equality, directing younger students to relate to the idea of gender equality. Gender equality has also been introduced to some teacher training programs and normal school courses, in order to enhance teachers' awareness of gender equality. More women now occupy positions of decision-making and management in schools and educational administrative departments of all types and at all levels, greatly improving women' s participation in teaching, management and some other areas of higher education. In 2014, the proportion of female teachers in institutions of higher learning was 48.1 percent, an increase of 18.1 percentage points over 1995. Women' s studies continues to strengthen as a discipline in institutions of higher learning. Currently, more than 100 colleges and universities offer in excess of 440 courses on women' s studies and gender equality, and the number of master' s and doctoral programs on women' s studies continues to grow. The state has also included gender equality in the national plans of philosophy and social sciences to support research in gender equality and women's issues.

IV. Women and Health

China has set up a medical and health service system covering urban and rural areas, and has been working hard to enhance disease prevention and control capabilities, expand the overall coverage of medical insurance, improve laws and policies on maternal and child health as well as the service system in this regard, implement maternal and child healthcare programs, and endeavor to make maternal and child health services more equitable and accessible. As a result, women' s health has significantly improved.

A relatively sound system of laws and policies on maternal and child health has been established. The state has enacted, revised and implemented the Law of the People's Republic of China on Maternal and Infant Health Care, the Law of the People's Republic of China on Population and Family Planning in addition to a number of other laws and regulations, and introduced a series of supporting regulations and normative documents, to provide a legal framework for maternal and child health work. The state has included women's health indicators in the overall plans and

special plans of the national economy and social development, made maternal and child healthcare a key element of the provision of national basic public services, and incorporated medical treatment of breast and cervical cancers into the medical security and assistance system for major diseases, thus improving women's healthcare.

A network of maternal and child health services has been put in place. A network of maternal and child health services covering both urban and rural areas has taken shape in China, with maternity and child care institutions as the core, community-level health care institutions as the foundation, and large or medium-sized medical institutions and relevant research and teaching institutions as the support. By the end of 2014, there had been 3,131 maternity and child care institutions throughout the country. The state has worked hard to improve community-level maternal and child health services and managed to provide full life-cycle health services for women. The state has also established and improved a system of annual reporting on maternal and child health, and a monitoring network. It has optimized the allocation of health resources, and increased funding for maternal and child health in rural and remote areas. It has accelerated personnel training in this regard and strengthened staffing for those institutions.

Maternal and child health services have become more equitable and accessible. The state has implemented basic public health service projects and major public health service projects on maternal and child health, doing all it can to improve the systematic management of pregnant and lying-in women, regulate service behavior, improve service quality, and make access to maternal and child health services more equal. By 2014, 90 percent of pregnant and lying-in women had access to basic public health services. The state has implemented major projects to subsidize hospital childbirths for rural pregnant and lying-in women, benefiting 57.12 million. The national hospital birth rate increased from 72.9 percent in 2000 to 99.6 percent in 2014, and the same rate in the countryside grew from 65.2 percent in 2000 to 99.4 percent in 2014.

In 2009, the state launched a program of free cervical and breast cancer check-ups for rural women, providing free cervical cancer check-up for 42.87 million and free breast cancer check-up for 6.13 million, in addition to extending medical treatment to 31,077 women having financial difficulties. The state has carried out major projects on AIDS, syphilis and hepatitis B, preventing mother-to-child transmission; 60.53 million pregnant women have benefited from the examination or treatment. It

has also held women's health programs such as the Chinese Women's Health Initiative, while extending support to social organizations in organizing various forms of activities promoting women's health.

Reproductive health services for women have been further strengthened. The state guarantees that women enjoy good reproductive health services throughout the life cycle, such as conducting general surveillance and treatment of gynecological diseases, and providing adolescent and old-age healthcare. It has implemented the policy of free technical services for family planning, promoted informed choice of contraceptive methods and reduced unintentional pregnancies. It has kept investigating and preventing fetal sex identification for non-medical needs and sex-selective pregnancy termination. It has provided health education, vaccination, maternal health care and other basic public health services for women in the floating population, and has launched pilot programs to ensure equal access to family planning and other basic public services by women in the floating population.

Women's health has further improved. Women's average life expectancy grew to 77.4 years in 2010, an increase of 4.1 years over 2000. The maternal mortality rate has fallen significantly, from 88.8 per 100,000 in 1990 to 21.7 per 100,000 in 2014, meaning that China has achieved the United Nations Millennium Development Goals ahead of time. The gap in maternal mortality rate between urban and rural areas and between different regions has been further narrowed: The rural-urban gap decreased from a factor of 2.4 in 2000 to 1.08 in 2014. In 2000, the maternal mortality rate of western China was 5.4 times that of eastern China; the figure dropped to 2.6 times in 2014. The World Health Organization lists China as one of the 10 countries with high performance in maternal and child health.

V. Women and Decision Making

China has formulated and implemented laws, regulations and policy outlines to ensure that women enjoy equal political rights with men, which has resulted in a higher level of female participation in politics and a greater role played by women in decision making and management of state and social affairs.

Improving laws and policies that boost women's participation in decision making and management. China has formulated and implemented proactive measures to boost women's participation in decision making and management, which, in turn, has helped increase the number and proportion of women in decision-making and managerial positions. The detailed implementation rules of the Law on the

Protection of Rights and Interests of Women and the Electoral Law adopted by various places across China all include explicit provisions on the proportion of women candidates to local people's congresses. The state has formulated a special plan that defines the goals of and requirements for training and selection of women officials, and has taken concrete measures to increase the number and proportion of women officials at various levels. The Organic Law of the Village Committees of the People's Republic of China rules that "female villager representatives should make up more than one third of the village committee." The Program for the Development of Chinese Women (2011-2020) states that "by 2020 the percentage of women in village committees will exceed 30 percent, and that female village committee heads should exceed 10 percent"; and that "the ratio in neighborhood committees should be around 50 percent." The Election Procedure of Village Committees issued in 2013 specifies that "village committee candidate lists should include a certain number of women; if not, those women who get the most votes should be candidates." This shows that a number of measures has been adopted to improve the representation of women in village committees.

Women's participation in decision making and management has markedly improved. China values the role of women in people's congresses by improving their representation in the ranks of deputies to people's congresses at various levels. The ratio of women deputies to the first session of the 12th National People's Congress in 2013 was 23.4 percent, 2.4 percentage points higher than 20 years ago; ethnic minority women deputies made up 41.3 percent of the total number of ethnic minority deputies. China sets store on improving women's participation in socialist consultative democracy and the role of representatives of women's federations and women delegates to the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC). The proportion of women members at the first session of the 12th CPPCC national committee in 2013 was 17.8 percent, 4.1 percentage points higher than 20 years ago. The ratio of female CPC members also markedly increased, reaching 24.3 percent, an increase of 8.7 percentage points from 1995. The ratio of women members in all other political parties (other than the CPC) is higher than 20 years ago. The number of women participating in the management of state public affairs keeps increasing. In 2013, the female employment ratio in central government agencies and their subsidiaries reached 47.8 percent. In recent years, the number of newly employed women civil servants has also increased steadily at local levels.

Women's extensive participation in the development of grassroots democracy. In 2013, female representation in village committees was 22.7 percent, an increase of 7 percentage points from 2000; the ratio of women as village committee heads and representatives also increased significantly, making women an important force in primary-level rural governance. In 2013, women made up 48.4 percent of neighborhood committees and female heads of neighborhood committees represented 41.5 percent. Female employees also play an active part in democratic management and supervision in enterprises. In 2014, female workers represented 38.1 percent of the trade union members, female employee representatives accounted for 29.3 percent of workers' congresses, and female representatives made up 40.1 percent and 41.5 percent of boards of directors and regulatory committees, respectively.

The influence of women and women's organizations in the development of the country's democratic politics keeps growing. China supports and encourages women to take part in the management of state and social affairs in an orderly manner by expanding the scope and channels for such participation. Women deputies to people's congresses and the CPPCC women members have taken an active part in the administration and discussion of state affairs by actively introducing bills, suggestions and motions to help improve gender equality and women's development. The state sets store by gender equality in decision making, enabling leading women officials to play an important role in decision making and management. Women's federations participate in legislation and consultative democracy. They have pressed for incorporating gender equality in the formulation and implementation of policies, laws and regulations, and urged to give expression to the principle of gender equality in the formulation and amendment of the Law on the Protection of Rights and Interests of Women and the Anti-domestic Violence Law of the People's Republic of China. Women's organizations are a force of growing importance in primary level social governance. In recent years, using the venues of rural village committees and urban communities, women's federations have established more than 700,000 service centers (known as "Women's Home") to connect and serve women effectively, and to help with primary level social governance. Other women's organizations also take an active part in democratic governance and supervision.

VI. Women and the Environment

China attaches great importance to creating a social and cultural environment conducive to boosting gender equality; through building a healthy and safe natural environment and fostering equal and harmonious family traditions, sound conditions have been created for women's development. Women are playing an increasingly prominent unique role in the fostering of social culture, protection of the ecological environment and family management.

Creating a social environment in which women are respected and gender equality is upheld. The Party and government departments, women's federations and other social organizations at various levels promote the basic national policy of gender equality through various means, such as publicity campaigns, training courses and seminars. Leading Party and government officials at various levels have taken the lead in writing and publishing articles and making speeches to promote gender equality. China has developed cultural and media policies aimed to boost harmonious development between men and women and prohibit gender discrimination. The state has enhanced guidance and management of the media and has trained media workers to enhance their awareness of gender equality. China has improved supervision to ensure news media and advertising agents exercise strict self-discipline and avoid any discrimination against women in the media by depreciating or denying their independent personality. China has vigorously publicized the positive contribution made by women to economic and social development. Women are playing an important role in the media. By the end of 2014, female journalists and editors had made up 44.1 percent of qualified staff in this area.

Women's cultural life is being enriched. Public cultural services target women with the intention of satisfying their cultural demands. Museums, galleries, libraries and cultural centers nationwide are open to the public for free, and digital libraries are being developed, thus increasing women's access to culture. Major efforts have been made to boost the development of information technology, providing women with new platforms for cultural communication and innovation. By December 2014, Chinese women netizens numbered 283 million, accounting for 43.6 percent of the total netizens. Women have ever-increasing leisure opportunities. Fitness campaigns have been directed at hundreds of millions of women, and such activities are still gaining momentum. According to a recent survey of Chinese women's social status, 55.2 percent of women are taking an active part in physical exercises.

The everyday environment for women is being markedly improved. The Program for the Development of Chinese Women (2011-2020) set goals for improving water supply services and toilets that have a positive impact on women's daily and

working life. Access to sanitary toilets in rural areas increased from 40.3 percent in 2000 to 74.1 percent in 2013. Improved water supply in rural areas has benefitted a total of 900 million people, with accumulative benefit rate of 95.6 percent. Access to tap water in rural areas increased from 55.2 percent in 2000 to 76.4 percent in 2013. All these changes have helped improve the living environment of women and reduced their daily burden. China sets store by highlighting the role of women in building a conservation culture. More and more women are involved in environmental protection, making their contribution to protecting the ecological environment, addressing climate change and maintaining energy and resource security. The number of female members in the NPC Environment Protection and Resources Conservation Committee, female mayors in charge of environmental protection and female heads of environmental protection bureaus has kept increasing. By the end of 2014, female officials working at the Ministry of Environmental Protection accounted for 31.2 percent of the total. Women are encouraged to participate in energy conservation and emission reduction efforts, and to adopt low-carbon lifestyle. Women take part in environmental protection with enthusiasm, and environmental protection organizations with women playing a dominant role are on the rise.

Building a harmonious and equal family environment. The 12th five-year plan for population development takes gender equality, family harmony and freedom and equality in marriage as its major goals. Some local regulations contain explicit provisions on maternity leave for female employees and nursing leave and subsidies for male employees, to support husbands and wives in balancing work and family and jointly sharing family responsibilities. China has conducted social studies of the relationship between women, marriage and family to improve the social support system for women. It has initiated "Care for Girls Action" to challenge the tradition of favoring boys. China has set up and improved systems of services for the elderly to ensure that elderly women's living conditions and quality of life are improved, and that impoverished, widowed and elderly women living alone are given special care. China actively launches campaigns to find "Model Family" and "The Most Harmonious Family" to foster the best family traditions. Over the past 20 years, a marked improvement has been seen in gender equality in marriages and families. The recent survey of Chinese women's social status shows that it has become the norm for husbands and wives to make family decisions jointly, and that more than 70 percent of women have taken part in making major family decisions. More and more women can share family resources on an equal basis with men, and the concept of men and women sharing housework is now accepted, with the housework time gap between men and women shortened from 150 minutes 10 years ago to 74 minutes now.

VII. Legal Guarantees for Gender Equality and Women's Development

By accelerating the building of a socialist country under the rule of law, comprehensively promoting the rule of law and exploring socialist mechanisms safeguarding women's rights and interests, China has put in place a legal system for protecting women's rights and interests and promoting gender equality that is based on the Constitution, takes the Law on the Protection of Rights and Interests of Women as the core and encompasses various specific state laws and regulations, local regulations and government rules and regulations.

Laws and regulations protecting women's rights and interests have been constantly improved. Over the past two decades, more than 20 laws and regulations have been enacted and revised, including the Marriage Law, Population and Family Planning Law, Employment Promotion Law, Organic Law of the Villagers Committees, Social Insurance Law, Law on the Protection of Rights and Interests of Women, and Special Regulations on the Labor Protection of Female Employees. The 31 provinces, autonomous regions and municipalities directly under the central government on China's mainland have revised their measures for implementing the Law on the Protection of Rights and Interests of Women. Major progress has been made in legislation addressing violence against women. Twenty-nine provinces (autonomous regions and municipalities directly under the central government) have formulated local regulations or policies to prevent and prohibit domestic violence. In August 2015, the 16th session of China's 12th NPC Standing Committee conducted the first review of the Anti-domestic Violence Law (Draft). An article addressing sexual harassment against women was added to the Law on the Protection of Rights and Interests of Women revised in 2005, and the Special Regulations on the Labor Protection of Female Employees formulated and implemented in 2012 clearly stipulate that employers should prevent and prohibit sexual harassment against female employees. The Amendment IX to the Criminal Law of the People's Republic of China approved in August 2015 strengthened protection of women, especially of girls under the age of 14, and specified harsher punishments for the crimes of raping girls under the age of 14 and abducting and trafficking in women and children.

Law enforcement has been intensified to protect women's rights and interests. The NPC Standing Committee has attached great importance to law enforcement inspection and thematic research on the enforcement of the Law on the Protection of Rights and Interests of Women and related issues, and urged government departments at all levels to strictly enforce the law. China has strengthened inspection of employers and human resources service organizations, investigated and dealt with crimes violating the labor protection law and infringing upon the

legitimate rights and interests of female employees, and promoted gender equality in employment. The State Council issued China's Action Plan Against Human Trafficking (2013-2020) in 2013, further improving the mechanism of inter-departmental coordination. The public security organs have resolutely combated crimes of violence against women. In 2013, they uncovered 25,852 rape cases and 4,537 cases of abducting and trafficking in women. China has also strengthened international judicial cooperation, carried out international cooperation programs, and severely dealt with transnational and trans-regional gangs engaged in abducting and trafficking in women and children.

Judicial protection of women's rights and interests has been strengthened. The courts have established special collegial panels for safeguarding women's rights, along with family courts to properly try cases of marriage and family disputes and protect women's legitimate rights and interests in emotional distress compensation and property division. Punishment has been reinforced against crimes violating women's personal rights and interests, such as crimes of acting indecently against or insulting a woman by force, of abducting and trafficking women and of buying abducted women, all in an effort to safeguard women's personal rights, interests and dignity. China has also encouraged judicial action against domestic violence at the grassroots level. It has explored the adjudication system of personal security protection against domestic violence, and courts which conduct this pilot program are found in 14 provinces as compared to five in 2008. Some local public security organs have established a domestic violence warning system so as to prevent and respond promptly to domestic violence in a more effective manner. In 2014, the Supreme People's Court issued the guiding cases on domestic violence, regulated judicial discretion in cases of answering violence with violence, and improved the unified application of the law. China has given priority to the important role played by women in judicial justice. In 2013, the proportion of female people's jurors was 34.2 percent, and the proportions of female judges and procurators were 28.8 percent and 29.3 percent, up 12.1 percent and 12.3 percent over 1995, respectively. Professional women's organizations, such as women judges associations, women procurators associations and women lawyers associations, have played a positive role in safeguarding women's rights and interests.

Intensified publicity and education campaigns on law have been carried out to raise public awareness of legal aspects of gender equality. China has implemented in succession six five-year plans to spread legal knowledge among the public, making

laws and regulations safeguarding women's rights and interests an important part of law-related education in schools at different levels, and ensuring they are well publicized in the media through radio, television programs, newspapers and periodicals, and the Internet. Taking advantage of the publicity and education network, China has held law-themed activities to promote the understanding and application of laws on gender equality in state organs, villages, communities, schools, enterprises and work units, trying to nurture an atmosphere of respecting and protecting women's rights and interests in society. Women's federations at all levels and other women's organizations have intensified public opinion monitoring and scientific analysis of major cases violating women's rights and interests, giving voice to the female view in a timely manner, and advocating the value of gender equality throughout society. Activities such as "Building a China under the Rule of Law: Women in Action" have been held to guide female citizens to respect, study, abide by and make use of law, and to improve their awareness and capability of safeguarding their own legitimate rights and interests through the law.

The mechanism of women's rights protection based on multi-institutional cooperation has been improved to provide legal services to women. The Opinions on Further Strengthening Legal Aid and the Opinions on Establishing and Improving the System of State Judicial Relief (for Trial Implementation) were issued in 2013 and 2014 respectively, providing an institutional guarantee for the provision of legal aid and judicial relief to women. In 2014, China established 3,737 legal aid institutions, providing help to 352,000 women. Compared with 2000, the number of legal aid institutions increased by 97.7 percent, and the number of women receiving legal aid increased by 310,000. Support has been given to the efforts of women's federations and other women's organizations in setting up hotlines and institutions providing rights protection services and legal aid for women. At present, the hotline 12338 has been in operation in more than 2,800 districts (counties) of China's 31 provincial-level administrative divisions, and 250,000 institutions such as women's rights protection stations and complaint centers against domestic violence have been established, which have widened the channels for Chinese women to protect their rights and interests.

VIII. International Exchanges and Cooperation in Gender Equality and Women's Development

China actively implements international conventions and documents concerning gender equality and women's development, takes part in international bilateral and multilateral women's exchanges and cooperation, strengthens friendly exchanges with women organizations all over the world, and focuses on providing technical training and material assistance to women in developing countries, thus playing an important role in promoting gender equality and women's development around the globe.

China is fully committed to implementing international conventions and fulfilling international obligations in the field of women. It has signed and approved relevant international conventions and documents, and met the obligations they impose. China embodies the spirit and principle of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) in the making of its laws, policies and plans, makes unremitting efforts to eliminate all forms of discrimination against women, safeguard women's rights and interests according to law, and promotes gender equality. In 2003 and 2012, China submitted reports on the implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women in China. China was examined by the Committee on Elimination of Discrimination Against Women in 2006 and 2014. In 2013, China hosted the Working Group on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women in Law and Practice of the UN Human Rights Council. China has energetically implemented the Beijing Declaration, the Platform for Action, and the United Nations Millennium Development Goals, and included them in its overall plans for economic and social development as well as outlines for the development of Chinese women. By the end of 2014, China had achieved, ahead of schedule, the goals of reducing extreme poverty and hunger, eliminating gender disparities in education, and lowering the mortality rate of women in pregnancy and childbirth.

China actively participates in the regional and global promotion of gender equality. It attaches great importance to cooperation with UN agencies, and supports positive steps taken by the UN to promote gender equality and women's development. China has galvanized the UN Human Rights Council to adopt the presidential statement, which was advocated by China to mark the 20th anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on Women and the adoption of the Beijing Declaration and the Platform for Action. China participates in the making of regulations and action plans for UN Women, and increases cooperation with it. China has hosted and held meetings on actions to follow up the Fourth World Conference on Women, and international meetings on women and disaster reduction, and women and sustainable development. In its efforts to promote regional gender equality, China has joined hands with the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) in

launching a project to improve the capacity to address gender issues and achieve the United Nations Millennium Development Goals in the Asia-Pacific region. As the host of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) in 2014, China organized the Forum on Women and the Economy. Within the framework of the ASEAN plus China, Japan and South Korea cooperation mechanism ("10+3"), China hosted the East Asia Gender Equality Ministerial Meeting.

China conducts extensive bilateral exchanges and cooperation regarding women. It treats gender equality as a major issue in the mechanism of state exchanges. During Sino-US, Sino-French and Sino-Russian exchanges, women's forums, symposiums and cultural weeks of different themes have been held to further enhance mutual friendship and trust. Over the past two decades, China has carried out international cooperative projects concerning women in the fields of women and health, women and the economy, women and education, women and decision making and management, women and the environment, women, marriage and the family, combating domestic violence, and poverty and disaster reduction. Over the past decade, the All-China Women's Federation (ACWF) alone has organized more than 100 international cooperative projects. Within the framework of South-South cooperation, China has focused on providing technical training and material assistance to women in developing countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America, established woman-to-woman exchanges and training centers, and sent Chinese experts to give guidance. In recent years, China has provided generous small-sum material assistance to women in Africa, Asia and Latin America, and helped them improve their working and living conditions.

Chinese women and women organizations take a more active part in international affairs. In 2015, China has 1,695 women diplomats, accounting for 30.7 percent of its total diplomatic strength. Of these, 12 are ambassadors, 19 are consuls general, and 132 are counselors, comprising 7.9 percent, 24.4 percent and 30.4 percent of the respective staff at corresponding levels. Chinese women organizations actively participate in reviewing important UN conventions concerning gender equality and women's development. Chinese experts have served as representatives on UN's Committee on Elimination of Discrimination Against Women, written and submitted NGO shadow reports, when review is in process on the implementation of international conventions and documents, including the CEDAW, the Beijing Declaration, and the Platform for Action, and taken part in various forms of exchanges and dialogue concerning gender equality and women's development.

Conclusion

It is obvious to all that, in tandem with rapid economic and social development, great progress has been achieved in the promotion of gender equality and women's development in China over the past two decades.

At the same time, China is highly aware that, as a developing country with the world's largest population, and restricted by its limited level of economic and social development, it will continue to be confronted with new situations and problems in its efforts to promote women's development. There is still a long way to go to achieve gender equality in China, and arduous tasks remain to be tackled.

In its efforts to advance the Four-Pronged Comprehensive Strategy, China will continue implementing the basic national policy of equality between men and women, constantly improve policies and measures in the fields of economy, law, administration and public opinion, safeguard women's rights and interests in accordance with the law, and work to achieve greater success in the cause of gender equality and women's development. China is willing to work with other countries to encourage all social sectors to contribute to the promotion of gender equality and women's development, to strengthen and expand international exchanges and cooperation, and to contribute further to promoting worldwide equality, development and peace.