

# **Successful Practice of Regional Ethnic Autonomy in Tibet**

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## **Contents**

Preface

I. Old Tibet: Dark and Backward

II. Embarking on the Road to Development and Progress

III. The Political System Suited to China's Actual Conditions

IV. The People as Masters of the Country

V. Improving People's Welfare

VI. Protecting and Carrying Forward the Excellent Traditional Culture

VII. Respecting and Protecting Freedom of Religious Belief

VIII. Promoting Ecological Progress

Conclusion

## **Preface**

Regional ethnic autonomy is a fundamental political system under socialism with Chinese characteristics - a basic policy through which to solve problems relating to ethnic minorities.

Regional ethnic autonomy in China means, under the unified leadership of the central government, that regional autonomy is exercised and organs of self-government are established for the exercise of the right of autonomy in areas where various ethnic minorities live in compact communities. The establishment of ethnic

autonomous areas is determined by local ethnic relations, economic development and other conditions, with reference to historical background. China's ethnic autonomous areas are divided, according to the population and size of the compact communities in which ethnic minorities live, into autonomous regions, autonomous prefectures, and autonomous counties at three levels equivalent to provinces, cities divided into districts, and counties in the administrative division.

Tibet is an ethnic region mostly inhabited by Tibetans, who account for more than 92 percent of its present 3,175,500 population that also includes 40 other ethnic groups, including the Han, Mongolian, Hui, Naxi, Nu, Drung, Monba, Lhoba, Deng and Sherpa people. According to the Constitution of the People's Republic of China (PRC), regional ethnic autonomy has been exercised in Tibet, and Tibet Autonomous Region, under which are the Monba, Lhoba and Naxi ethnic townships, has been founded, protecting by law the political rights of various ethnic groups in Tibet to participate as equals in administering state and local affairs.

Since the democratic reform was carried out in 1959 and that the regional ethnic autonomy came into practice in 1965, Tibet has established the new socialist system and achieved historic leaps in its economic and social development. Tibet has taken a road that unites it with all China's ethnic groups and struggles to develop equally, achieve prosperity, and make progress with them. As part of the Chinese nation, the Tibetan people fulfill the right to participate equally in the management of state affairs; they are thus managers of local social affairs and masters of their own destiny, creating and sharing the material and spiritual wealth of Tibet.

Although it has been only 50 years since the founding of Tibet Autonomous Region, great changes have taken place. Tibet is now in its golden age.

### **I. Old Tibet: Dark and Backward**

Even in the 1950s, Tibet was still a society ruled by feudal serfdom under theocracy. Having existed for several centuries, this wretched system stifled human rights and destroyed human qualities. It was thus the most backward mode of human society under which the people had no democratic, economic, social, or cultural rights, and their basic human rights were not protected. Old Tibet was a far cry from modern civilization.

Under feudal serfdom, serfs suffered cruel political oppression and had no personal freedom or fundamental rights.

Old Tibet implemented laws, as represented by the "16-Article Code" and "13-Article Code," that oppressed serfs. These laws divided people into three classes and nine ranks, whereby nobles, Living Buddhas and senior officials were born into and thus constituted the upper class, while the broad masses of serfs constituted the lower class. Value accorded to life correspondingly differed. The value of the life of a person of the upper class was measured in gold according to his weight. The value of the lives of butchers, blacksmiths, and others of the lowest rank of the lower class was equivalent to hempen rope. When people of different classes and ranks violated the same criminal law, the criteria in old Tibet for imposing penalties and the means of punishment were quite different. The laws stipulated that the punishment for a servant who injured his master was to have his hands or feet chopped off, but a master who injured a servant was not required to pay compensation. Serf owners and serfs had overtly unequal standing according to law. Serf owners held absolute power over the lives of serfs and slaves, and ensured their rule over the latter through savage punishments, including gouging out eyes, cutting out flesh or tongues, cutting off hands or feet, pulling out tendons, and being put in manacles.

The Kashag (cabinet) of old Tibet prescribed that all serfs must stay on the land within the manors of their owners. They were not allowed to leave without permission; fleeing the manor was forbidden. "All serfs have owners and all plots of land are assigned." Serfs were possessed by the three major estate-holders (local government officials, nobles and upper-ranking lamas in monasteries). They remained serfs from generation to generation, and confined to the land of their owners. All serfs and their livestock able to labor had to till the plots of land assigned to them and provide corvee labor. Once serfs lost their ability to labor, they were deprived of livestock, farm tools and land, and their status was degraded to that of slave. Since serfs were their private property, the three major estate-holders could use them as gambling stakes, mortgages for debt, present them as gifts, or transfer and trade them. All serfs needed permission from their owners to marry, and male and female serfs belonging to different owners had to pay "redemption fees" before such permission was granted. After marriage, serfs were also taxed on their newborn children, which were registered the moment they were born, so sealing their fate as lifelong serfs. Serfs that needed to make a living in other places were required to pay "servitude tax," and had to produce proof of having paid such tax or they would otherwise be punished as fugitives.

After presiding over the enthronement ceremony of the 14th Dalai Lama in 1940, Wu Zhongxin, chief of the Commission for Mongolian and Tibetan Affairs of the Kuomintang Government, described the rulers' oppression and the people's sufferings in old Tibet in his "Report on Tibetan Affairs on a Mission": "Located in frigid highlands, Tibet has rare agricultural products. The people live a hard life, whereas the Tibetan authorities do their utmost to oppress and exploit them, making the lives of the Tibetans one of hell and misery. The Tibetan authorities regard the people as slaves and beasts of burden and do not pay them as a rule; the people even have to find their own food and horse fodder; meanwhile they endure incessant, copious and complicated corvee labor and never enjoy days of peace. You can thus imagine how harassed they are. The authorities can issue an order to appropriate the people's property without compensation and bestow such property on lamaseries or meritorious nobles. In short, in Tibet, the people have lost their guarantee of survival and freedom, and their miserable life is beyond description."

Ruled by feudal serfdom under theocracy, serfs had no means of production, and their right to subsistence was under threat.

In old Tibet, the three major estate-holders and their agents accounted for only five percent of Tibet's population, but they owned almost all of Tibet's farmland, pastures, forests, mountains, rivers, and beaches, as well as most of the livestock. About 95 percent of old Tibet's population was made up of serfs, including "tralpa" as they are known in the Tibetan language (people who tilled plots of land assigned to them and who were obligated to provide corvee labor for serf owners), "duiqoin" (small households with chimneys emitting smoke), and "nangzan" (hereditary household slaves who were deprived of any means of production and personal freedom). They had no means of production and suffered cruel economic exploitation.

The first exploitation serfs suffered was land rent. Serf owners on feudal manors divided the land into two parts: The largest part was kept as manor demesne while smaller lots were rented to serfs under stringent conditions. To use the lots, serfs had to work on the demesne with their own farm implements and provide their own food. Such unpaid labor constituted the rent they paid to serf owners. Most of the grain that serfs harvested from the lots was finally taken away by estate-holders. A "tralpa" could only keep 100-150 kilograms of grain annually, which was not enough to live on; his diet mainly consisted of wild herbs and weeds mixed with a little grain.

In addition to the heavy land rent paid in the form of labor, serfs had to pay numerous taxes and fees.

The second exploitation serfs suffered was corvee labor - a broad term covering not only corvee, but taxes and levies, and rents for land and livestock. The former local government of Tibet alone levied more than 200 kinds of taxes. Serfs had to contribute more than 50 percent or sometimes even 70 to 80 percent of their labor, unpaid, to the government and estate-holders. Corvee labor was divided into two kinds: one was that which serfs provided to the estate-holders they were bonded to and their agents; the other was the unpaid work serfs did for the local government of Tibet and its subordinates. The heaviest was transport corvee, because Tibet is large but sparsely populated and transport was inconvenient, necessitating the transport of all kinds of goods by humans or pack animals. Year after year, serfs were made to transport materials over mountains and rivers for the local government. This gave rise to the saying, "The boots have no soles, and the backs of the cattle are hairless."

The third exploitation serfs suffered was usury. In old Tibet, the three major estate-holders were all exploiters of usury. The local government of Tibet had many money-lending agencies, and lending money and collecting interest were among officials' duties. Many monasteries also participated in money-lending. Revenue from usury made up 25 to 30 percent of the total revenue of the three major monasteries, namely Drepung, Sera and Ganden. Most aristocrats were also engaged in usury, the interest of which accounted for 15 percent of their family revenues. Serfs had to borrow money to survive, and more than 90 percent of serf households were in debt. Serfs were burdened with new debts, debts passed down from previous generations, debts resulting from joint liability, and debts apportioned among all the serfs. One third of these were the debts passed down from previous generations which could never be repaid, even by succeeding generations, due to the imposition of compound interest.

Feudal serfdom under theocracy seriously obstructed social progress in Tibet. At the time of the peaceful liberation in 1951, there was almost no trace of modern industry, commerce, science and technology, education, culture, or health care. With no roads in the modern sense, Tibet was cut off from the outside world. Primitive farming had long been used in agricultural production, and farm tools were rudimentary. Herdsmen had to travel from place to place to find pasture for their livestock. There were few strains and breeds of grains and animals, and some had even degenerated. The level of both the productive forces and social development was thus extremely low.

French traveler Alexandra David-Neel described people's life in her book *Le vieux Tibet Face a la Chine nouvelle (When Old Tibet Meets New China)*, "These poor people can only stay on their sterile land forever. They lose all human freedom, and become poorer and poorer each year." The people had no basic right to subsistence, much less to development. They were deprived of the right to education, and could not be schooled in their native language and culture. By the 1950s, the 2,000 or more studying in old-style government-run schools and old-style private schools were exclusively aristocrats; the illiteracy rate of the young and the middle-aged was 95 percent. The people had no right to economic development. The three major estate-holders squeezed profits from serfs, but did not update their tools; serfs worked day and night, but could not make more social products because they had no capability for social reproduction.

The feudal serfdom under theocracy in old Tibet was savage, cruel and backward, like the dark society of medieval Europe. In his book *The Unveiling of Lhasa*, British military journalist Edmund Candler, who visited Lhasa in 1904, recorded details of the old Tibetan society: "...at present, the people are medieval, not only in their system of government and their religion, their inquisition, their witchcraft, their incarnations, their ordeals by fire and boiling oil, but in every aspect of their daily life."

## **II. Embarking on the Road to Development and Progress**

After three important historical stages - from its peaceful liberation and democratic reform to the establishment of the autonomous region - Tibet has taken the road of regional ethnic autonomy. This historic process was a correct choice the people made to realize liberation and be their own masters, and it was in the fundamental interest of all ethnic groups of Tibet.

-- Driving out imperialist forces, and realizing peaceful liberation

After the Opium War of 1840, imperialist forces intensified aggression on China, gradually reducing the country to a semi-colonial, semi-feudal society. China's Tibet region also suffered imperialist aggression. In face of the British invasions of 1888 and 1904, Tibetan military and civilians put up a heroic resistance, but it failed due to the corrupt Qing government and declining national strength, and feudal serfdom.

Britain coerced the Qing government, even bypassing it and directly forcing the local government of Tibet to sign unequal treaties, thus grabbing a series of privileges in Tibet that seriously damaged the sovereignty of China. Economically, it forcibly opened trading ports there, making Gyantse and Yadong two ports where permanent British trade representatives resided and official institutions were set up. Militarily, it stationed troops, one company in Gyantse and a platoon in Yadong. In addition, it built such infrastructure as posts, telecommunications, and courier stations managed and run by the British that served Britain's pillaging, and provided long-term service for British and Indian officers and a few Tibetan separatists.

It was the urgent desire of all ethnic groups in Tibet and of upper-class patriots to free Tibet from imperialist aggression. The founding of the People's Republic of China on October 1, 1949 was a great inspiration for the people of Tibet. They keenly expected the Central People's Government of China to liberate Tibet and drive out imperialist powers at the earliest opportunity. On October 1, 1949, the very day the People's Republic was founded, the 10th Panchen Erdeni telegraphed Chairman Mao Zedong and Commander-in-Chief Zhu De, expressing his support for the Central People's Government and urging the Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA) to liberate Tibet as soon as possible. In December 1949, Reting Yeshe Tsultrim, aide to the Fifth Regent Reting Rinpoche who suffered persecution from pro-British forces, arrived in Xining, Qinghai Province, to report to the PLA on imperialist attempts to destroy Tibet's internal unity, urging the PLA to liberate Tibet without delay. Sherab Gyatso, a famous master of Tibetan Buddhism, delivered a talk in Xi'an, denouncing the imperialists for hatching a plot through which Lhasa authorities would seek "independence."

Through the efforts of the Central People's Government and of the people of Tibet, the Agreement of the Central People's Government and the Local Government of Tibet on Measures for the Peaceful Liberation of Tibet (the "17-Article Agreement") was signed on May 23, 1951. The first article stipulated, "The people of Tibet should unite and drive out imperialist aggressive forces; they will return to the family of the People's Republic of China." In the agreement, the local government of Tibet promised to "actively assist the PLA in entering Tibet and consolidating national defense." On May 25, Chairman Mao Zedong of the People's Revolutionary Military Committee of the Central People's Government issued an order, so marking the PLA's entry into Tibet. All ethnic groups of Tibet expressed heartfelt support for and a warm welcome to the PLA, and helped the troops enter Tibet.

The PLA troops' entry to Tibet to drive out imperialist forces and abolish unequal treaties that imperialist forces had imposed on the people of Tibet was a major

historical event signifying that the Chinese nation, including the Tibetan group, had realized liberation and independence. It utterly changed the history and destiny of Tibet, and provided its various ethnic groups with a fundamental guarantee of being liberated and becoming masters.

--Abolishing feudal serfdom, and the people becoming masters

In the mid-1950s, feudal serfdom under theocracy came to an end. To preserve serfdom, the reactionary forces from the upper class of Tibet tore up the "17-Article Agreement" and staged an all-out armed rebellion in Lhasa on March 10, 1959. On March 22, the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China (CPC) issued the Instructions on Several Policy Issues about Carrying out Democratic Reform in Suppressing the Rebellion in Tibet (draft), demanding that troops mobilize the people to carry out democratic reform amid the battles to suppress the rebellion. On March 28, Premier Zhou Enlai promulgated a State Council decree, dissolving the local government of Tibet and ordering that local government power be taken over by the Preparatory Committee of Tibet Autonomous Region, with the 10th Panchen Erdeni acting as its chairman. In the meantime, the Central People's Government implemented a policy of "suppressing the rebellion while conducting reform," and led the Tibetan people in a surging tide of democratic reform. The reform wrecked the feudal serfdom under theocracy, liberating the people and making them their own masters, so creating important social and historical conditions for the establishment of regional ethnic autonomy.

Abolishing the feudal serfdom and establishing the people's regime created institutional conditions for regional ethnic autonomy in Tibet. By the end of 1960, Tibet had established 1,009 organs of state power at the township level, 283 at the district level, 78 at the county level (including county-level districts), and eight at the prefecture (city) level. Meanwhile, more than 4,400 liberated serfs and slaves had become government officials at various levels. All township-level government officials were from the Tibetan group, 90 percent of district-level government officials were Tibetan, and more than 300 Tibetans held leading posts at or above the county level.

In April 1961, general elections at the township level were held all over Tibet. Hundreds of thousands of liberated serfs and slaves exercised the democratic rights that they had never enjoyed. In August 1965, elections at the township and county levels were completed in Tibet. Altogether 1,359 townships and towns conducted elections at the basic level, and 567 townships and towns held their people's congresses to exercise their functions and power. The people's democratic organs of



state power at the township level were established in 92 percent of the Region, the majority of participants being liberated serfs and slaves. In addition, 54 counties held their first session of people's congresses to elect the county magistrates and deputy magistrates, established people's committees and elected deputies to the people's congresses.

Abolishing economic privileges of serf owners enabled the people to become owners of the means of production, greatly liberated the productive forces, and protected Tibetan people's right to subsistence, laying the physical foundation for the practice of regional ethnic autonomy. The feudal serfdom not only infringed upon human rights and destroyed human qualities, but also effectively put a brake on development of social productivity and left people's basic need for clothing and food unguaranteed. During the democratic reform, about 20,000 "nangzan" settled, and were allotted 2,520,000 kilograms of grain. The democratic reform liberated and developed Tibet's social productivity; as a result, the working people of Tibet were freed from heavy corvee, taxes, and usurious exploitation, and were able to keep all the fruits of their hard work. Their enthusiasm for production ran unprecedentedly high.

Abolishing religious privileges of serf owners shattered the people's spiritual shackles, providing ideological and cultural conditions for the implementation of regional ethnic autonomy in Tibet. Under theocracy, religion was directly controlled by serf owners and used as a tool for ruling and oppressing the people. To sanctify feudal privileges and enslave the people spiritually, the three major estate-holders regarded any new idea, new culture or scientific knowledge that was contrary to their will as heresy, imprisoning people's thinking and hindering the spread of education and scientific and cultural development. Through the democratic reform, Tibet abolished all feudal privileges, implemented the policy of freedom of religious belief, and separated religion from government, so preventing religion from interfering in its politics, economy, culture and social life. The people were thus freed from the spiritual shackles of theocracy.

-- Establishing Tibet Autonomous Region, and taking the socialist road

It was a common wish of the people of Tibet to exercise regional ethnic autonomy. The "17-Article Agreement" stipulated, "According to the ethnic policy in the Common Program of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC), under the unified leadership of the Central People's Government, the Tibetan people shall have the right to exercise regional ethnic autonomy." In 1954, after the First

National People's Congress closed, Mao Zedong, top leader of the Central People's Government, met with the 14th Dalai Lama and the 10th Panchen Erdeni. Mao told them, "Tibet will not have a military and political committee; instead, the Preparatory Committee of Tibet Autonomous Region will be established to prepare for the exercise of regional ethnic autonomy." The two agreed. Later, according to stipulations in the Constitution about the practice of regional ethnic autonomy, the central government started work on the establishment of Tibet Autonomous Region. In November 1954, the central government proposed to establish the Preparatory Committee of Tibet Autonomous Region. At its Seventh Plenary Meeting held in March 1955, the State Council specifically studied and discussed the matter and issues relating to Tibet's construction. Following the meeting, the central government gave specific instructions on the matter. On April 22, 1956, the founding conference of the Preparatory Committee of Tibet Autonomous Region was held in the newly built Great Hall of Lhasa. Over 300 delegates and non-voting delegates from all ethnic groups, social strata, religions, and social groups throughout Tibet attended the conference. This was the first time in the history of Tibet that people of broad representation gathered for democratic consultation and discussion. The 14th Dalai Lama became chairman of the Preparatory Committee, while the 10th Panchen Erdeni became first deputy chairman. The Preparatory Committee was a consultative administrative body as an organ of political power, an important stepping stone for the exercise of regional ethnic autonomy in Tibet. Its establishment pushed forward the establishment of Tibet Autonomous Region. However, the armed rebellion in 1959 seriously affected the work of its establishment. After the rebellion was quelled, the establishment was carried out smoothly.

On September 1, 1965, the First Session of the First People's Congress of Tibet Autonomous Region was inaugurated in Lhasa, and the organs and leaders of the Region were elected, with Ngapoi Ngawang Jigme as the chairman of the People's Committee. A large number of liberated serfs held leading posts in organs of political power at different levels of the Region. The establishment of Tibet Autonomous Region signified that Tibet had set up the people's democratic government and begun to exercise thoroughgoing regional ethnic autonomy. Since then, the people of Tibet have enjoyed the right to handle local affairs themselves, and embarked on the socialist road to development and progress.

### **III. The Political System Suited to China's Actual Conditions**

Implementing the system of regional ethnic autonomy in Tibet conforms to China's reality as a unified multiethnic country.

China is a unified multiethnic country inhabited by 55 minority ethnic groups, including the Mongolian, Hui, Tibetan, Uygur, Zhuang, Korean, and Manchu, in addition to the Han ethnic group. The Chinese nation is a big, pluralistic and integrated family whose constituent ethnic groups have all contributed to national development and cultural innovation. The origins and development of China's ethnic groups are indigenous, pluralistic and diverse. All have formed and evolved in different ways, yet in the general trend, have developed into a unified multiethnic country and converged into the unified and stable Chinese nation. As early as the pre-Qin period, Chinese ancestors developed the concepts of "world" and "grand unification." In 221 BC, the Qin Dynasty (221-206 BC) realized the first unification in history of China, and established prefectures and counties to rule the country. The central government of the Han Dynasty (206 BC- AD 220) and subsequent dynasties developed and consolidated China's unified multiethnic pattern. Despite the brief separatist regimes and regional splits that have occurred in Chinese history, unification has always been the mainstream and direction of national development.

Ever since ancient times, Tibet has been an integral part of China, and the Tibetan ethnic group has been a communal member of the Chinese nation sharing a common destiny. The ancestors of the Tibetan and other ethnic groups who lived on the Tibetan Plateau in ancient times established extensive contacts with China's inland, and made significant contributions to the formation and development of the country. From the 13th century, when the Yuan Dynasty (1271-1368) included Tibet under its central administrative jurisdiction, to the time before 1949 when the People's Republic of China was founded, the central governments of all dynasties in China ruled Tibet as part of the country. On this footing, they adopted special policies for Tibet, taking into account the "special local customs and conditions," and adopted an administrative structure and governance approaches that were distinct from those in other parts of China.

In the Yuan Dynasty (1271-1368), the central government established the Supreme Control Commission of Buddhism (later renamed the Commission for Buddhist and Tibetan Affairs), and set up in Tibet the Chief Military Command under the Pacification Commissioner's Office to directly manage the region's political and military affairs. The Yuan court stationed troops in Tibet, and set up 13 organs, including the 10,000-man Brigades and 1,000-man Battalions under the Pacification Commissioner's Office. The Yuan court set up courier stations on the road leading

from Tibet to the capital city of Dadu, and sent officials to Tibet three times to conduct census. Emperor Shizu of the Yuan Dynasty, Kublai Khan, appointed Phagpa from the Sakya School of Tibetan Buddhism as Imperial Preceptor. Later, when the Kagyu School replaced the Sakya School, Emperor Shundi appointed the Kagyu leader Changchub Gyaltzen "Ta Situ."

The Ming Dynasty (1368-1644) generally followed the Yuan administrative system for Tibet. Politically, the Ming court implemented a policy of multiple enfeoffment, conferring the titles "Prince of Dharma" and "Imperial Empowerments Master" upon religious leaders in Tibet; economically, it promoted the tea-horse trade to increase Tibet's trade and exchanges with other regions; in terms of organizational structure, it established the u-Tsang Regional Military Commission in today's central Tibet and the Do-kham Regional Military Commission in eastern Tibet, both subordinated to Shaanxi Regional Military Commission, and the Ngari Commanding Tribal Office in western Tibet.

In the Qing Dynasty (1644-1911), the Court of Tribal Affairs (later the Ministry of Tribal Affairs) took charge of Tibetan affairs. In 1653 and 1713, the Qing emperors conferred the Dalai Lamas and Panchen Erdenis of the Gelug School of Tibetan Buddhism that appeared in the late Ming Dynasty, and established the system of lot-drawing from the golden urn to confirm the reincarnated soul boy of a deceased Living Buddha. In 1727, the Qing government started to station grand ministers resident in Tibet. In 1751, Emperor Qianlong appointed the Seventh Dalai Lama to administer the local government of Tibet, established the Kashag (cabinet) composed of four Kalons (ministers). In 1793, Ordinance by the Imperial House Concerning Better Governance of Tibet (the "29 Articles") was promulgated to enhance the Qing court's administration of Tibet.

The central government continued to exercise sovereignty over Tibet during the Republic of China period (1912-1949). In 1912, the central government established the Bureau of Mongolian and Tibetan Affairs (renamed the Mongolian and Tibetan Affairs Yuan in 1914) to replace the late Qing's Ministry of Tribal Affairs, and dispatched the commissioner resident in Tibet to exercise the functions and power of the grand minister resident in Tibet. In 1929, the nationalist government established the Mongolian and Tibetan Affairs Commission to exercise administrative jurisdiction of Tibet. In 1940, the nationalist government set up the Tibet Office of the Mongolian and Tibetan Affairs Commission in Lhasa. The Organic Law of the Congress of the Republic of China stipulated the methods whereby the people of Tibet would participate in elections, and the rights of elected congressmen

from Tibet to directly participate in deliberation and administration of state affairs. The identification and enthronement of both the 14th Dalai Lama and the 10th Panchen Erdeni were approved by the government of the Republic of China.

Since its birth in 1921, the CPC has supported ethnic equality and unity in China, vigorously exploring the path through which to achieve ethnic equality and resolve ethnic issues. Since the founding of the PRC in 1949, the Chinese government has promoted equality, unity, mutual support, fraternity, and common development and prosperity among all ethnic groups as fundamental principles under which to address ethnic issues and relations. Taking into consideration China's history and social conditions in modern times, the PRC did not choose the composite system (also known as the federal system) for its state structure, but the unitary system instead; it decided to exercise regional ethnic autonomy in areas inhabited by minority ethnic groups under unified state leadership, thus to ensure that ethnic minorities enjoy the rights of being masters of the country.

Regional ethnic autonomy is the correct choice for China, a unified multiethnic country, to address ethnic issues and relations. China's regional ethnic autonomy is a form of autonomy under unified state leadership. All ethnic autonomous areas are inseparable from the country, and the organs of self-government of all ethnic autonomous areas shall be subject to the central government's leadership.

The regional ethnic autonomy system is also a significant component of China's socialist system. Under the socialist system, all power belongs to the people, and the state safeguards the democratic rights of the people. All autonomous areas exercise the power of autonomy in their economic, political, cultural, social, and ecological development, and in managing their regional affairs. This exemplifies the exercise of socialist democracy in regions inhabited by ethnic minorities.

Through the peaceful liberation in 1951 and the democratic reform in 1959, Tibet Autonomous Region was founded in 1965, so officially establishing the system of regional ethnic autonomy in Tibet. The exercise of this system in Tibet has combined unification and autonomy, taking into account both ethnic and regional factors. This system inherits historical traditions and signifies socialist democracy; it conforms to the historical traditions of Tibet and the whole country, as well as to the common will and fundamental interests of the people of all ethnic groups.

Currently, the People's Congress and the People's Government of Tibet Autonomous Region are organs of self-government as well as local organs of state power through which to implement state laws and policies based on local reality. Through several decades of exploring the path of regional ethnic autonomy, the people of all ethnic groups in Tibet Autonomous Region have achieved equality, unity, mutual support and harmony, and the system of regional ethnic autonomy has won the wholehearted support of all ethnic groups in China.

#### **IV. The People as Masters of the Country**

That the people are masters of the country is the core and foundation of the system of regional ethnic autonomy. The implementation of this system provides an institutional guarantee for the people of all ethnic groups in Tibet to be masters of the country and of society in the real sense.

-The people of all ethnic groups in Tibet have the full right to vote and stand for election.

As stipulated in the Constitution of the People's Republic of China, "All citizens of the People's Republic of China who have reached the age of 18 have the right to vote and stand for election, regardless of ethnic status, race, sex, occupation, family background, religious belief, education, property status, or length of residence, other than persons deprived of political rights according to law." The Law of the People's Republic of China on Regional Ethnic Autonomy has provisions regarding the numbers of deputies from all ethnic groups to the people's congress of an autonomous region, the chairperson of the standing committee of the people's congress of an autonomous region, and chairperson of the people's government of an autonomous region. In Tibet, the people of all ethnic groups directly elect deputies to the people's congresses at the county (district), township and town levels in accordance with the law; these deputies elect the deputies to the National People's Congress (NPC) and the people's congress of the autonomous region. The Monba and the Lhoba ethnic groups who have a small share in Tibet's population also have deputies to the NPC and the people's congresses at all levels in Tibet.

From 2012 to January 2013, 94 percent of the constituency of Tibet Autonomous Region participated in direct elections at the county and township levels, among the four levels of the people's congresses. Currently, Tibet has 34,264 deputies to the people's congresses at all levels. Among them, deputies from the Tibetan and other

minority ethnic groups account for 66.7 percent and 70.2 percent respectively of all deputies from Tibet to the NPC and to the People's Congress of Tibet Autonomous Region. In the 10th Standing Committee of the People's Congress of Tibet Autonomous Region, 24 of the 45 members and eight of the 14 chairperson/vice-chairpersons are from the Tibetan and other minority ethnic groups. Since the founding of Tibet Autonomous Region, all the chairpersons of the standing committee of its people's congress and all the chairpersons of its people's government have been Tibetan citizens.

The people of all ethnic groups in Tibet fully enjoy the right to manage their ethnic and regional affairs. According to the Chinese Constitution, the organs of self-government of Tibet Autonomous Region exercise the power and functions of provincial-level state organs as well as the power of autonomy in accordance with the law. The People's Congress of Tibet Autonomous Region has the power to enact regulations on the exercise of autonomy and other separate regulations. Since Tibet Autonomous Region was established, its people's congress, as the supreme authority in the region and on behalf of the people of Tibet, has exercised the power of autonomy in managing its ethnic and regional affairs: listen to and review the work reports of the people's government, the standing committee of the people's congress, the higher people's court, and the people's procuratorate of the autonomous region, and supervise the work of these local state organs; enact major local regulations, and make major resolutions and decisions on local social and economic development; review and approve economic and social development plans, financial budgets and final accounts; and elect the members of the standing committee of the people's congress, chairpersons and vice-chairpersons of the autonomous region, the president of the higher people's court, and the procurator-general of the people's procuratorate.

By July 2015, the People's Congress of Tibet Autonomous Region and its Standing Committee had enacted and ratified 123 local regulations that are currently effective, made 148 resolutions and decisions that have the same legal standing as regulations, and 29 regulations, resolutions and decisions it ratified have been repealed. They total 300 in all, covering the building of political power, economic development, social stability, culture, education, language, protection of cultural relics, and environmental protection. Every year the Committee of Tibet Autonomous Region of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference discusses the work report, the economic and social development plan, and the financial budget report of the People's Government of Tibet Autonomous Region,

and the work report of the Higher People's Court and the People's Procuratorate of Tibet Autonomous Region; organizes its members to participate in the consultation and discussion of Tibet's local regulations (draft); voices opinions and offers suggestions on the formulation and implementation of the Eighth, Ninth, 10th, 11th, and 12th Five-year Plans of Tibet Autonomous Region at plenary meetings, standing committee meetings, chairman's meetings, consultative conferences, special symposiums, or through member inspections and investigations, making proposals and convening "economic development forums." In this way, it exercises the functions of participating in the deliberation and administration of state affairs on behalf of all circles in Tibet.

According to the Law of the People's Republic of China on Regional Ethnic Autonomy, "If a resolution, decision, order or instruction of a state organ at a higher level does not suit the conditions in an ethnic autonomous area, the organ of self-government of the area may either implement it with certain alterations or cease implementing it after reporting to and receiving the approval of the state organ at a higher level." In addition to national holidays, for example, Tibet has also established other public holidays, mostly traditional Tibetan festivals such as the Tibetan New Year and Shoton Festival. Taking into consideration its special natural and geographical conditions, Tibet Autonomous Region applies 35 weekly working hours, five hours less than the national legal level. In 1981, after taking into consideration Tibet's history and folk customs, the Standing Committee of the People's Congress of Tibet Autonomous Region promulgated the Alternative Regulations of Tibet Autonomous Region on the Implementation of the Marriage Law of the People's Republic of China, in which the legal age of marriage for both men and women was reduced by two years relative to the Marriage Law of the People's Republic of China, and polyandrous and polygynous relationships that had existed before the regulations took effect would be allowed to continue if no one involved proposed dissolution. In light of the actual conditions in Tibet, the autonomous region enacted and implemented multiple alternative regulations and supplementary provisions on state laws, including the Regulations of Tibet Autonomous Region on the Protection of Cultural Relics, the Regulations of Tibet Autonomous Region on Environmental Protection, and the Decision of the Standing Committee of the People's Congress of Tibet Autonomous Region on Cracking Down on the Crime of Life Compensation.

-Minority ethnic group officials are improving their capability.



As stipulated in the Constitution of the People's Republic of China, "Among the chairperson and vice-chairpersons of the standing committee of the people's congress of an ethnic autonomous area, there must be citizens of the ethnic group(s) exercising regional autonomy in the areas concerned; the heads of all autonomous regions, autonomous prefectures and autonomous counties should be citizens of the ethnic group(s) exercising regional autonomy in the areas concerned." To ensure all ethnic groups, especially ethnic minorities in Tibet, fully exercise their rights as masters of the country, Tibet Autonomous Region always advocates the appointment and training of local officials from minority ethnic groups. In the early days after establishment of Tibet Autonomous Region in 1965, it had only 7,600 or more officials from minority ethnic groups; by 1976 the figure was 16,800; by the end of 1986 it was 31,000; by the end of 1994 it was 44,000; and by the end of 2014 it was more than 110,000, 13 times more than that of 1965, and accounting for 70 percent of the total number of officials in the autonomous region.

Currently, Tibet Autonomous Region has 33 provincial-level officials from minority ethnic groups, and more than 450 departmental/bureau-level officials from minority ethnic groups; chief Party and government officials at the prefectural/municipal and county/district levels are mostly ethnic minorities; 70 percent or more of the officials in the Party and government leading groups at the township and town/sub-district levels are ethnic minorities; and the Party and government organs at all levels in the Region have ethnic minority leading officials in accordance with the law. Among both the deputies to the 10th People's Congress and members of the 10th People's Political Consultative Conference of Tibet Autonomous Region, ethnic minorities account for more than 70 percent. Moreover, a number of outstanding ethnic minority officials in Tibet directly participate in the administration of state affairs. Among the 12th NPC deputies and the 12th CPPCC National Committee members from Tibet, Tibetans and other ethnic minorities account for more than 80 percent. The 10th Panchen Erdeni, Ngapoi Ngawang Jigme, Pagbalha Geleg Namgyai, Raidi and Qiangba Puncog have all been high-ranking leaders at the state level.

-Ethnic relationships featuring equality, unity, mutual support and harmony have been enhanced and developed.

Without equality and unity among all ethnic groups, the people cannot be masters of the country. Achieving ethnic equality and unity is the starting point and ultimate goal of the CPC's ethnic philosophy and policy. Over the past 50 years since Tibet Autonomous Region was established, the central government and Tibet Autonomous

Region have adhered to the policy of ethnic equality, unity, mutual support, and harmony. Through protecting the rights of all ethnic groups as masters of the country, improving the appointment and training of ethnic minority officials, promoting voluntary communication, exchanges and interaction among all ethnic groups, and enhancing support from other parts of the country for Tibet's social and economic development, China has created a favorable situation wherein all ethnic groups work together in harmony towards common development.

The central government always attaches great importance to the development of Tibet, cares for the wellbeing of the people of all ethnic groups in Tibet, mobilizes resources from the whole country to assist Tibet, and promotes progress in Tibet through providing preferential policies and full support in personnel, materials, and funds. From 1952 to 2014, the central government provided Tibet with financial subsidies totaling 648.08 billion yuan, which accounted for 92.8 percent of Tibet's public financial expenditure. Since 1980, there have been six national symposiums on work in Tibet, formulating integrated blueprints for Tibet's development from the perspective of the country's overall drive towards modernization. Since the Third National Symposium on Work in Tibet in 1994, the central government has put into effect the policy of pairing-up support for Tibet, whereby 60 central state organs, 18 provinces or municipalities directly under the central government, and 17 centrally managed state-owned enterprises have paired up with various areas of Tibet in order to provide assistance to them. Over the last two decades, 4,496 outstanding officials and 1,466 professionals have been sent to work in Tibet in seven batches; 7,615 assistance projects have been carried out; and 26 billion yuan has been invested in Tibet, mainly aimed at improving infrastructure and the quality of life. All of this assistance has made an enormous contribution to Tibet's social and economic development.

In 1990, the Party Committee and the government of Tibet Autonomous Region designated September as Ethnic Unity Month. Before 2010, the Party Committee and the government of the autonomous region had held five ethnic unity and progress award ceremonies that commended 1,756 outstanding units and individuals, including Kong Fansen and Li Suzhi. Since 2012, the Party committees and governments at all levels in Tibet have held annual ethnic unity and progress award ceremonies, and commended 2,089 units and 3,224 individuals. In 2013, Lhasa was selected as the pilot city for National Demonstration Prefecture (City/League) for Ethnic Unity and Progress. In recent years, the History Museum of

the Tibet Military Command, Dzong Fortress in Gyantse where the Tibetans had fought British invaders, the Museum of Tibet Autonomous Region, Tibet Minzu University, and Lhasa Customs have been designated by the State Ethnic Affairs Commission as Education Bases for National Ethnic Unity and Progress. The thought that "the Han ethnic group cannot develop without minority ethnic groups, and vice versa, while all minority ethnic groups cannot develop separately" has taken root in people's minds. The public have reached the consensus that "unity and stability are a blessing while secession and riots are a scourge."

## **V. Improving People's Welfare**

Under the system of regional ethnic autonomy, Tibet's economic and social development has achieved leapfrog development by constantly reaching higher levels. Rapid economic growth and comprehensive social progress have brought real benefits to all ethnic groups in Tibet, effectively guaranteeing their right to subsistence and development, and maintaining the harmony and stability of its society.

-Tibet's modernization level has steadily risen.

Tibet's GDP soared from 327 million yuan in 1965 to 92.08 billion yuan in 2014, a 281-time increase. Since 1994, the local GDP has grown at an annual rate of 12.4 percent on average, registering double-digit growth for 20 consecutive years. Local fiscal revenues increased from 22.39 million yuan in 1965 to 16.475 billion yuan in 2014, an average annual increase of 14.46 percent, further enhancing Tibet's self-development capabilities. The Region's industrial added value skyrocketed from nine million yuan in 1965 to 6.616 billion yuan in 2014, a 735-time increase, or an average annual growth of 14.4 percent, and the proportion of secondary industry's added value in the local GDP rose from 6.7 percent in 1965 to 36.6 percent in 2014. Total retail sales of consumer goods increased from 89 million yuan in 1965 to 36.451 billion yuan in 2014, a 409-time increase, or an average annual growth of 13.1 percent. The total volume of Tibet's foreign trade rose from US\$7 million in 1965 to US\$2.255 billion in 2014, a 321-time increase, or an average annual growth of 12.5 percent.

Priority has been given to such industries with Tibetan characteristics as Tibetan medicine, folk handicrafts, green food and drinks, and new energy. At present, seven

industrial belts have taken shape, 20 demonstration zones of standardized agriculture have been established, and 95 agricultural and animal husbandry industrialization leading enterprises at or above the prefectural level cultivated. Nine big groups have been established, one by one, including construction and engineering, mining, tourism, Tibetan medicine, and commerce and trade. Tibetan medicine industry has taken shape, with 18 pharmaceutical enterprises producing more than 360 kinds of drugs. The output of natural drinking water has exceeded 300,000 tons, making the industry a new economic growth point. In 2014, Tibet received 15.53 million tourists, a 4,436-time increase compared with 1980 when the Region first opened to tourism, or an average annual increase of 28 percent. Tourism revenue has now reached 20.4 billion yuan, a 20,400-time increase or an average annual increase of 32.8 percent.

A comprehensive transportation system including roads, railways and aviation has been built, further facilitating Tibet's transportation. Radiating from Lhasa to Sichuan and Yunnan in the east, Xinjiang in the west, Qinghai in the north, and India and Nepal in the south, a road transportation network that connects prefectures, cities, counties, and townships has taken shape. At the end of 2014, the total length of roads open to traffic reached 75,000 km, 8,891 km of which have sub-high-grade surfaces or better, accounting for 12.6 percent of the total. Sixty-five, or 88 percent, of all 74 counties in Tibet had access to asphalt roads. As many as 690 townships and 5,408 administrative villages could be reached by road, respectively accounting for 99.7 percent and 99.2 percent of the total. The Golmud-Lhasa and Lhasa-Shigatse railways had opened to traffic, and the construction of the railway connecting Lhasa and Nyingchi started. Tibet Airlines was established, with five airports, and eight airlines operating in Tibet. An airport network has taken shape in Tibet, with Gongkar Airport in Lhasa as the main hub, and Bangda Airport in Qamdo, Menling Airport in Nyingchi, Gunsar Airport in Ngari and Heping Airport in Shigatse as the branches, catering to 48 domestic and international air routes that link Tibet with 33 cities in China and the rest of the world.

An extensive energy system has now been formed with hydropower as the mainstay, backed up by geothermal, wind, and solar energy sources. Lhasa's Ethernet ring network project and power transmission and transformation project, the Qinghai-Tibet Power Grid Interconnection Project, and the Sichuan-Tibet Interconnection Project have officially gone into operation, so consigning to history the previously solitary operation of Tibet Autonomous Region power line. Such emergency power supply projects as Zhikong Hydropower Station, Shiquanhe Hydropower Station, Xueka Hydropower Station, Yangbajain Geothermal Power Station, and Lhasa's thermal power plant have been built and put into operation. Zam Hydropower

Station, the hydroelectric project with the biggest installed capacity in the Region, has also become operational. Moreover, the building of energy bases was facilitated. In 2014 the total installed generating capacity reached 1.697 million kw, and the annual output of generated electricity came to 3.22 billion kwh. Tibet initiated and carried out power construction projects in Nyima County and Tsonyi in Nagchu, and in seven counties and one township in Ngari that were without electricity. The Region has demonstrated and promoted 30,000 photovoltaic (PV) systems, established 90 PV power plants, and more than 1,200 solar streetlamps, with a total installed capacity of 8,000 kw. By the end of 2012, all administrative villages had access to electricity, and the problem of electricity access had been basically solved.

Tibet has now entered the information age, having established a modern telecommunications network with optical cable satellites and the Internet as the backbone. The total length of optical cable lines in the Region has reached 97,000 km, among which over 30,000 km are long-distance optical cable lines. Optical cables have now reached 668 townships and towns in 74 counties, or 97.8 percent of all townships and towns in Tibet, and mobile phone signals cover 5,261 administrative villages. The number of Internet user households has reached 2.177 million, with an Internet penetration of 70.7 percent, and mobile Internet coverage in farming and pastoral areas has surpassed 65 percent.

-People's happiness quotient has been greatly improved.

People in both urban and rural areas are living a richer and fuller life as their incomes have increased rapidly. In 2014 the per capita disposable income of urban residents reached 22,016 yuan, a 38-time increase, or an average annual increase of 10.7 percent compared with 565 yuan in 1978; and that of farmers and herdsmen was 7,359 yuan, representing an average annual increase of 10.9 percent. The level of urbanization has also steadily risen. The proportion of urban population during the third population census in 1982 was 9.48 percent, but this percentage increased to 11.52 in 1990, to 19.43 in 2000 and to 22.67 in 2010. Along with improvements to the people's livelihood, diversified consumption patterns have appeared, and such consumer goods as refrigerators, color TV sets, computers, washing machines, motorcycles, and mobile phones have entered ordinary households. Many farmers and herdsmen have become well-off and built new houses; some have even bought automobiles. Radio, television, telecommunications, the Internet and other modern information transmission means, which are at the same level as that of the country and the rest of the world, are now part of Tibetans' daily life. According to the "CCTV Economic Life Survey" jointly hosted by the National Bureau of Statistics, China Post Group, and China Central Television (CCTV), Lhasa has topped the "happiness index"

in China for five consecutive years.

Both urban and rural residents' living conditions have greatly improved. Tibet took the lead in 2006 in initiating housing projects for low-income local farmers and herdsmen. By the end of 2013, the Region had appropriated 27.8 billion yuan and finished building 460,300 of those houses. As many as 2.3 million farmers and herdsmen had moved into safe modern houses, their per capita living space having reached 30.4 sq m, so marking an historic improvement in their living conditions. Constantly increasing input into the building of relocation housing, Tibet has built 66,076 more such houses covering 4.0442 million sq m, with an input of 8.809 billion yuan. The Region has proactively carried out the city heating project in Lhasa. Since initiation of the project in 2012, Tibet has built 63 km of a main gas pipe network, 256 km of a secondary pipe network and more than 1,200 km of a courtyard pipe network. It has completed 768 heating projects for residential areas and workplaces, so benefiting 107,000 households in a 21.36 million sq m area. The heating system has become available to almost all urban areas in Lhasa. The burning of dung for heating is now history.

Farmers and herdsmen are living in a clean and beautiful environment. Tibet has also improved its facilities in the areas of water, electricity, highways, gas, telecommunications, postal services, radio and television, and the environment in farming and pastoral areas, basically solving the problem of drinking water safety. It has also realized telephone communication and radio and TV coverage in all villages, and broadband connection in all townships. Tibet has improved the living environment of 4,500 administrative villages. Almost 240,000 farmer and herdsman households use clean biogas, and more than 95 percent of rural households cook with iodized salt. Since 2010, work on improving the people's living environment and the ecological environment has been carried out in Tibet according to the requirement of "clean water, clean farm and clean home." At present programs for improving the appearance of villages and the ecological environment have been carried out in 4,500 administrative villages with an input of 4.4 billion yuan.

The poverty-stricken population has been substantially reduced. From 2006 to 2014, Tibet launched the "Campaign to Develop Border Areas and Improve the Lives of the People," relocated poverty-stricken families and people with Kashin-Beck disease, and increased by 20 to 30 percent the per capita living area of 116,300 poverty-stricken families. Many people have moved from small, dark, adobe houses, where they lived alongside livestock, to safe, more suitable homes. Poverty relief projects have benefited 2.6 million people in 578,000 households. Tibet has built and

renovated a total of 3,223 km of country roads, 3,371.6 km of irrigation channels, 347 ponds covering a total 2.3294 million sq m; it has built 883 bridges for agricultural purposes of a total 12,834 m in length, 4,583 greenhouses, and 35,000 pens. It has also installed or improved irrigation systems for 300,000 mu (one mu = 1/15 hectare) of farmland. Tibet has moreover improved the ecological environment of poverty-stricken areas, and the total area of fenced grassland, improved grassland, and planted grassland has reached 287,800 mu. Since 2003, the income of farmers and herdsmen has recorded double-digit growth for 12 consecutive years. The poverty-stricken population - people with a per capita per annum income of less than 2,300 yuan (at constant price of 2010) - has fallen from 1.17 million in 2010 to 610,000 at the end of 2014. The proportion of poverty-stricken population in the Region's total population of farmers and herdsmen fell from 49.2 percent in 2010 to 23.7 percent in 2014. Since 2006, the Region has directly or indirectly allocated a total of 70.636 billion yuan in subsidies to strengthening agriculture and benefiting farmers, 189 million yuan in subsidies to grain production, 358 million yuan as general subsidies for purchasing agricultural supplies, and 340 million yuan as subsidies for purchasing home appliances and furniture. Those subsidies have increased the income and purchasing power of farmers and herdsmen and improved their living standards.

Tibet's social security has entered a new stage. Due to its proactive employment policy, Tibet has maintained a high employment rate. In 2014 the registered urban unemployment rate was maintained at below 2.5 percent, and newly increased urban employment totaled 43,000. Graduates from institutions of higher learning were provided with 11,000 jobs in the public sector, while provinces, municipalities directly under the central government and centrally managed state-owned enterprises offered 5,335 job vacancies. More than 1,500 graduates from Tibet found jobs in other parts of the country. The number of public welfare jobs in the Region totaled 30,000, and 26,018 people found jobs in public welfare sectors. More than 2,500 zero-employment households were provided with jobs in a timely manner, and the employment situation remained stable. In recent years, the social security system that covers both urban and rural residents has been established in an all-round way. Tibet strengthened the security system of "five major insurance types" (endowment insurance, unemployment insurance, work-related injury insurance, medical insurance, and maternity insurance), improved the social endowment insurance system for urban and rural residents, expanded the basic living allowance, implemented free accident insurance, and established the basic endowment insurance and medical insurance systems for monks and nuns. These moves have benefited 2.606 million insurance participants. The basic old-age pension for enterprise retirees in Tibet reached 3,338 yuan per person per month,

one of the highest in the country. The basic living allowance for urban residents was raised to 534 yuan per person per month and to 2,231 yuan for rural residents per person per year. The yearly payment to those who enjoy the "five guarantees" (for food, clothing, medical care, housing and funeral expenses) was significantly raised to 3,873 yuan per person per year, the standard of rural decentralized support rose to 3,874 yuan per person per year, and the minimum subsistence guarantees for children housed in orphanages was 1,200 yuan per person per month. Condolence money was also timely extended to impoverished urban and rural residents. By the end of 2013, there were 263 social welfare organizations, eight state-run children's welfare homes, and two private children's welfare homes in Tibet. Centralized support covered 72 percent of those who enjoy the "five guarantees," and more than 5,900 orphans were effectively supported.

Tibet's medical undertakings are also rapidly improving. A medical and health network that integrates traditional Chinese, Western and Tibetan medicines has been established in Tibet, covering all cities and villages in the Region, with Lhasa as the center. The Region has built 71 county hospitals and 678 township clinics that provide free basic medical services to all farmers and herdsmen. The medical service system that covers all urban and rural areas is improving, and a three-tier medical service network that covers counties, townships and villages is in place. By the end of 2014, there were 1,430 medical organizations in Tibet, and 3.79 hospital beds and 4.08 medical workers for every 1,000 residents. Maximum payment of basic medical insurance for urban employees reached 300,000 yuan, and for urban residents 200,000 yuan. The fiscal subsidy standard for urban residents' basic medical insurance increased to 380 yuan per person every year, and the inpatient reimbursement rate for urban residents covered by the medical insurance policy reached 75 percent. All farmers and herdsmen in Tibet are now covered by a medical system based on free medical service. It provides each farmer and herdsman with an annual medical allowance of 420 yuan, and an 80 percent reimbursement rate for medical services that the policy covers, with a maximum medical reimbursement of 60,000 yuan. All monks and nuns are included in the basic medical insurance system. Tibet has abolished the deductible line of medical assistance, and was among the earliest in China to realize full coverage and urban-rural integration of medical assistance. Tibet also provides free physical examinations for urban and rural residents, and 99 percent of the Region's urban and rural residents have health records. In 2013, the childbirth mortality rate had fallen to 1.5451 per thousand and the infant mortality rate to 19.97 per thousand. Average life expectancy has risen



from 35.5 years in the 1950s to the present 68.17 years. The Region has basically stamped out diseases caused by iodine deficiency.

- Progress has been made in all social undertakings.

Tibet's education has taken on a new look, and all children can now go to school. Nine-year compulsory education is practiced in all counties in the Region, and a complete modern education system is in place, covering preschool education, basic education, vocational education, higher education, adult education, and special education. Tibet has realized 15-year free education from the preschool stage to senior middle school, fully implemented the nutrition improvement plan for students under compulsory education in agricultural and pastoral areas, and realized 100 percent coverage in terms of both policies and funds. Tibet has covered all tuition, food, and boarding expenses for students from farmers' and herdsmen's families and those from families in urban areas with financial difficulties from preschool education to senior middle school education, and raised the subsidy standard many times to today's 3,000 yuan per student every year. Tibet has launched the campaign to provide three-year bilingual education for preschool children in urban areas, and two years for those in agricultural and pastoral areas. At the end of 2014, there were more than 80,000 children in kindergartens, and the gross enrollment rate for preschool education had reached 60 percent; there were six higher education institutions, nine secondary vocational schools with 17,000 students, 22 senior middle schools, four six-year middle schools, 93 junior middle schools, three nine-year education schools, three 12-year education schools, and 829 primary schools. The primary school enrollment rate reached 99.64 percent among school-age children, the illiteracy rate among young and middle-aged people fell to less than 0.57 percent, and the average length of education reached 8.6 years for the Region's general population and above 12 years for the newly-increased working population. Since the central government adopted the strategy in 1984 of "cultivating talent for Tibet in other parts of China," Tibetan schools and classes in 21 provinces and municipalities directly under the central government have cultivated more than 32,000 graduates from junior colleges and secondary technical schools for Tibet. Tibet has now cultivated its own postgraduate and Ph.D. students, built almost 30 scientific research institutions, compiled a group of renowned experts and scholars, and an army of 69,709 professionals in such areas as history, economics, demographics, languages, religion, agriculture, animal husbandry, forestry, ecology, biology, Tibetan medicine, salt lakes, and geothermal and solar energy. Tibet tops

China in areas such as Tibetan studies, plateau ecology, and Tibetan medicine, and boasts academic achievements of world influence.

Public cultural services now cover both urban and rural areas in Tibet, and have enriched people's cultural life. The Region has built eight public art centers, five public libraries, three museums, 74 county-level cultural activity centers, and 692 township-level cultural stations. In addition, it has built one regional center, seven prefecture-level sub-centers, 74 county-level sub-centers, 692 township-level stations, and 5,389 village-level stations as part of the project to share cultural information and resources. A cultural facility network covering the four levels of autonomous region, prefecture, county, and township is also taking shape. The cultural facility construction project as an important part of the 12th Five-year Plan (2011-2015) with a total input of nearly 1.3 billion yuan is making full progress. By the end of 2015, all prefectures and cities in Tibet will have public libraries and cultural centers, areas rich in cultural relics will have museums, all counties will have libraries, cultural centers or comprehensive cultural activity centers, all townships will have cultural stations, and 53 percent of the county-level state-owned art troupes will have rehearsal spaces. The total number of public cultural venues will reach 790. Tibet has built more than 1,600 cultural squares, and launched 90 regularly-staged popular cultural activities, including the Lhasa Shoton Festival celebrations. Tibet also initiated the campaign to provide free access to public facilities. In the recent five years, the Region's public cultural venues have launched more than 40,000 free mass cultural events, benefiting more than eight million people. The Region's professional art groups and folk art groups at the county level staged more than 10,000 shows, and sent more than 100,000 books to the countryside.

Tibet's press and publishing are growing fast, and more and more cultural products are appearing. Tibet People's Publishing House and Tibetan Ancient Books Publishing House published 19,052 book and textbook titles, totaling 282.63 million printed copies. In 2014, the Tibet Audio-Visual Publishing House and the Snowfield Electronic Audio-Visual Publishing House published 115 audio-visual and electronic book titles, totaling 379,600 copies. Tibet has 25 newspapers, 35 periodicals, and 576 publishing and distribution entities, among which 89 are Xinhua Bookstores at regional, prefectural and county levels, five are Xinhua Bookstores at frontier ports, and 482 are private distribution networks. In 2014, the autonomous region distributed 33.95 million copies of books, with a total value of 323 million yuan. The Region has 38 printing enterprises, one of which is a key enterprise with its turnover over 20 million yuan per annum. In 2014, the total output of the Region's printing industry reached 360 million yuan. The Region has built 5,609 rural libraries and 1,700

monastery libraries, bringing libraries to all administrative villages and monasteries, and providing all farmers, herdsmen, monks and nuns with access to books.

Tibet's radio, film and television undertakings have also made significant headway. The Region has built, rebuilt or expanded 78 FM stations above 100 w, 78 television transmitters above 50 w, 27 medium wave broadcast transmitters, one satellite earth station, and 9,371 radio and television stations for all villages. All 1,787 monasteries in the Region now have radio, film and television coverage. At present, Tibet has one provincial broadcast station with five frequencies, and its audiences are found in 50 countries and regions. It has one provincial TV station with four channels. Its programs, all digitized, cover more than 700 million people in China, and its satellite TV programs in Tibetan language can be viewed in neighboring Nepal, India, and Bhutan. Tibet has six prefectural-level radio stations, and one TV station. The coverage of radio in Tibet has increased from 12 percent in 1965 to today's 94.78 percent and that of television from zero in 1965 to today's 95.91 percent. More than 90 percent of farmer and herdsman families have access to radio and television. Through direct broadcast satellite receivers, each rural family can receive 40 to 70 digital radio and TV program channels. At present, Tibet has 566 film agencies, including 478 digitized film projection teams in the countryside.

## **VI. Protecting and Carrying Forward the Excellent Traditional Culture**

In the long course of history, the Tibetan people have created their own splendid culture that enriches and is an important component of Chinese culture. During the 50 years since its establishment, Tibet Autonomous Region has done much and made remarkable achievements towards respecting, protecting, inheriting, and carrying forward Tibet's excellent traditional culture. Tibetan culture today manifests new vitality by blending tradition and modernity.

Tibetan language learning is efficiently protected. The Constitution of the People's Republic of China and Law of the People's Republic of China on Regional Ethnic Autonomy both specify that every ethnic group has the freedom to use and develop its own language. Bilingual teaching in Tibetan and Chinese is carried out in all schools in Tibet to inherit the Tibetan language in the course of learning. At present, synchronous bilingual teaching is conducted at primary schools in agricultural and pastoral areas and certain cities and towns of the Region, and major courses are taught in Tibetan. Middle schools (including inland Tibetan middle schools) have

Tibetan language courses, and other courses are taught in Chinese. Tibetan language is listed as an exam subject in college and secondary vocational school entrance exams and so figures in the final score. There are now 30,642 bilingual teachers in kindergartens, primary and middle schools, and 5,800 teachers of Tibetan language in primary and middle schools. Tibet Autonomous Region has compiled 821 textbooks, 410 reference books, 56 syllabuses and curriculum standards, and 73 supplementary books for 13 subjects.

Use of the Tibetan language is being popularized. Tibetan and Chinese are used in important meetings and their documents held in the autonomous region; Tibetan is the first choice for judicial organs in publicizing legal knowledge and law enforcement, and its use is also stressed by departments related to agriculture and technology. In 2014, Tibet People's Publishing House and Tibetan Ancient Books Publishing House published altogether 547 book titles totaling 13.025 million copies, more than 80 percent of which were in Tibetan. The Region publishes 14 Tibetan-language periodicals and 11 Tibetan-language newspapers. At present, Tibet People's Broadcasting Station broadcasts 42 Tibetan-language programs (including Kangba language) each day, including 21 hours and 15 minutes of news in Tibetan language and 18 hours of Kangba programs. Tibetan TV airs 24 hours of Tibetan-language programs. Wide use of the Tibetan language in postal services, communications, transport, and finance also promotes the autonomous region's rapid social and economic development.

Excellent traditional culture is protected and inherited. The state has founded education centers and research institutes, such as Tibet University, Xizang Minzu University, Tibetan Traditional Medical College, China Tibetology Research Center, Tibetan Academy of Social Sciences, and Tibetan Institute of Astronomy, all of which cover extensive studies. Over the decades, Tibet has organized large-scale and systematic campaigns to restore its traditional culture, having collected more than 10,000 pieces of music, songs and folk art forms, and more than 30 million words of written texts. It has also recorded copious amounts of audios and videos, taken about 10,000 photos, and published more than 1,000 papers on traditional culture of Tibetan and 10 volumes of works on Tibetan arts, such as Chinese Drama - Tibetan Volume, Collection of Folk Dances of Chinese Ethnic Groups - Tibetan Volume, and Collection of Chinese Ethnic and Folk Music - Tibetan Volume. It has moreover published more than 30 treatises on Tibetan culture, having restored, reorganized and published 261 Tibetan ancient books. All these efforts help to save, protect and revitalize endangered ethnic and folk culture. Since 2005, when the work of

surveying and protecting Tibetan intangible cultural heritage was officially launched, the central government and Tibet have channeled about 200 million yuan into efforts to preserve items of important intangible heritage, such as Tibetan opera, Gesar, traditional singing and dancing, and craftsmanship, thus forming a four-level intangible heritage protection category at the state, autonomous region, prefecture, and county level. Currently, there are more than 1,000 intangible heritage items covering 10 categories as defined on the intangible heritage list. Among them, Tibetan opera and Gesar have been chosen as Masterpieces of UNESCO Intangible Heritage of Humanity, and 89 are on the state level intangible heritage list. There are four production pilots under state level protection and 323 items under the autonomous regional protection, 113 sites for the teaching and learning of intangible heritage, and 68 state level inheritors and 350 inheritors at the autonomous region level. The Region is home to 158 precious ancient books and four state key protection units, four Hometowns of Chinese Folk Art, and 65 Hometowns of Folk Art in Tibet Autonomous Region. Traditional festivals such as the Shoton Festival and Yarlung Cultural Festival have been resumed and innovated, so becoming local cultural brands.

Cultural relics are under effective protection. Over the past 50 years, the state has constantly renewed its efforts to protect Tibetan cultural relics, particularly with regard to the maintenance and protection of cultural relics under the jurisdiction of Tibet Autonomous Region, restoring and saving them in a timely manner. The 46 key cultural relics renovation and protection projects listed in the 12th Five-year Plan at a cost of more than one billion yuan is proceeding smoothly. Relevant local regulations have been issued, such as the Regulations of Tibet Autonomous Region on the Protection of Cultural Relics, and the Measures of Tibet Autonomous Region for the Protection and Management of the Potala Palace. Excavation of important historical and revolutionary cultural relics has been strengthened, and the third survey of immovable cultural relics across the Region is complete, which recorded 241 important historical sites and renowned architectures and 4,277 cultural relics sites of all kinds. The first survey of movable cultural relics has also been launched. According to statistics, there are millions of such relics across the Region. Security staff has been assigned to guard cultural relics in the wild, so further strengthening the security of cultural relics across the Region. Phased progress has been made in survey, protection and research of Pattra-leaf Scriptures, and The Tibet Autonomous Region Pattra-leaf Scripture Catalogue and Photocopy of Tibet Autonomous Region Pattra-leaf Scriptures have been published. Currently there is one world cultural

heritage site spread over three places, 55 cultural relics protection units at state level, 391 at autonomous region level, 978 at city and county level, and three state historical and cultural cities.

## **VII. Respecting and Protecting Freedom of Religious Belief**

The Constitution stipulates that freedom of religious belief is one of citizens' fundamental rights. Today's Tibet is home to various religions, such as Tibetan Buddhism, within which exist different sects, Bon, Islam, and Catholicism. After democratic reform, Tibet put an end to theocracy, separating politics from religion and so restoring the latter's true significance. For years, the central government and the local government of Tibet Autonomous Region have fully respected citizens' rights on freedom of religious belief, and given equal attention and protection to all religions and sects to ensure normal religious activities and religious beliefs are protected according to law.

Religious activities are respected and protected. Currently, there are 1,787 sites for different religious activities in Tibet, and more than 46,000 resident monks and nuns. Tibet Autonomous Region and seven cities all have Buddhist associations. The Tibetan branch of the Buddhist Association of China has set up the Tibetan Buddhist Institute, the Tripitaka Scripture Printing Lamasery, and the Tibetan Buddhism journal in Tibetan language. Tibetan and other minority ethnic groups lead their religious lives and carry out religious activities according to native traditions. In Tibet Autonomous Region, religious festivals are celebrated in the same way as they always were. More than 40 major religious activities, such as pilgrimages to holy mountains and lakes, the Saga Dawa Festival, the Buddha Exhibition Festival, and the Lamaist Devil Dance Festival, are protected and inherited. Almost all religious believers have scripture halls or shrines at their homes. Each year, millions of pilgrimages to Lhasa are made. In Tibet, prayer flags and mani stones are seen everywhere. All major temples are full of believers prostrating themselves before Buddha, spinning prayer wheels and paying homage to Buddha. Tibetan people enjoy full freedom in their conduct of religious activities. To meet the religious needs of different believers, Tibet has four mosques and one Catholic church. These religions are also respected and protected according to law and coexist in harmony with other religions.

Tibetan Buddhist culture is respected and protected. The central government and the local government of Tibet Autonomous Region have always regarded Tibetan

Buddhist culture as an important component of traditional Chinese culture, offering protection and reinforcing the collection, compilation, publication, and research of religious classics. The central government set a budget of more than 40 million yuan for the revision and publication of the Tibetan Buddhist canons Kangyur and Tengyur, a 20-year project entailing the efforts of more than 100 Tibetan experts. Since the 1990s, the Tibetan-language Chinese Tripitaka - Tengyur (collated edition), A Tibetan-Chinese General Catalogue of the Tibetan Tripitaka, A Commentary on Tshad-ma sde-bdun, Five Treatises of Maitreya, and Annotations on Pramanavarttika Karika - the Solemn Snowland have been successively compiled and published. More than 1,490 copies of Kangyur have been printed, and the ritual procedures, biographies, and treatises on Tibetan Buddhism have also been published to meet the study demands of monasteries, Buddhist monks and nuns, and lay believers. Treatises on Buddhism written and published by religious research institutes, eminent monks and scholars, such as Collation and Research of Pattra-leaf Scriptures, Collation of Sanskrit Pattra-leaf Scriptures Extant in Lhasa, Studies of the Origin and Development of Religions and Religious Sects in Tibet, Reincarnation System of Living Buddhas, History of Buddhism by Guta, Records of Tibetan Bonist Temples, Records of Tibetan Buddhist Monasteries in China, and The Art of Murals of Buddhist Monasteries in Tibet have been published.

Temples are maintained and protected. Since the 1980s, the state has allocated funds, gold, and silver to maintain, renovate and protect temples. More than 1.4 billion yuan has been spent on restoring Tibetan cultural relics and refurbishment of key monasteries. A total of 6.7 million yuan, 111 kg of gold, 2,000 kg of silver, and a large amount of jewelry have been used to renovate stupas and prayer halls from the Fifth Panchen Erdeni to the Ninth Panchen Erdeni. The state budget to build these for the 10th Panchen Erdeni was 66.2 million yuan and 650 kg of gold. In 1994, the state allocated another 20 million yuan to renovate Ganden Monastery. Since 1995, the central budget has given active support to the maintenance and protection of monasteries listed as state key cultural relics units, such as the Potala Palace, Norbulingka and Sakya Monastery.

The Living Buddha reincarnation is proceeding well. The Living Buddha reincarnation is a succession system unique to Tibetan Buddhism, and is respected by the state and governments at different levels of the autonomous region, the state having issued the Measures on the Management of the Reincarnation of Living Buddhas of Tibetan Buddhism. Through traditional religious rituals and historical conventions

like drawing lots from a golden urn, and with the approval of the State Council, the Tibet Autonomous Region sought out and identified the reincarnation of the 10th Panchen Erdeni, and conferred and enthroned the 11th Panchen Erdeni in 1995. Tibet now has 358 Living Buddhas, more than 60 of whom have been confirmed through historical conventions and traditional religious rituals.

The system whereby Tibetan Buddhist monks learn sutras is improving since the autonomous region issued the Opinions on Building a Branch of the Tibetan Buddhist Institute and Methods of Awarding Academic Ranks in the Tibetan Buddhist Institute (in trial implementation). The China Tibetan Language High-level Institute of Buddhism has been set up in Beijing, and the Tibetan Buddhist Institute in Lhasa. Both recruit and train senior Buddhist teaching personnel. More than 60 monasteries of various sects in Tibet have their own sutra learning classes, and teach and confer degrees according to tradition. Since 2005, senior academic ranks examinations and degree conferring ceremonies have been held each year at the China Tibetan Language High-level Institute of Buddhism in Beijing, and degree examinations unique to Gelug held in Jokhang Temple and the three major monasteries in Lhasa. So far, a total of 84 monks have received senior academic titles in Lhasa and 46 in Beijing.

### **VIII. Promoting Ecological Progress**

Tibet is an important ecological safety barrier in China. Over past decades, in keeping with economic, social and natural laws, Tibet has followed a sustainable path compatible with the harmonious coexistence of economy, society, and the ecological environment. In recent years, with the strategic objectives of building safety barriers of eco-systems as well as building an ecologically beautiful Tibet, the Government of Tibet Autonomous Region has drawn up systematic plans to protect and develop Tibet's ecological environment.

Plans to build and protect Tibet as an ecological safety barrier have been carried out. On February 18, 2009, the 50th executive meeting of the State Council deliberated and approved the Plan for Ecological Safety Barrier Protection and Improvement in Tibet (2008-2030), aiming to complete building the Tibet ecological safety barrier by 2030 with an investment of 15.5 billion yuan. So far, 5.646 billion yuan has been spent on the project. The 10 projects in three categories specified in the Plan, including natural grassland protection, forest fire prevention and pest control operation, wild animal and plant protection and nature reserves construction, key wetland protection, energy substitution program in agricultural and pastoral areas,



shelterbelt network building, man-made grassland and deteriorated pastureland improvement, desertification control, water and soil conservation, and ecological safety barrier monitoring, are in full swing.

Biological diversity and key ecological reserves are under effective protection. Currently, Tibet has 47 nature reserves, which cover 412,200 sq km, or 34.35 percent of the total land area of China. It has also set up 22 ecological reserves (with 2 of state level), 4 state level scenic spots, 9 national forest parks, 10 national wetland parks, and 4 geological parks (with 3 of state level), wherein 141 species of wild animals and 38 species of wild plants under state-level protection, 196 species of indigenous animals, 855 indigenous plants and important ecological systems are under effective protection. The large and medium-sized wildlife populations of Tibet lead the country: numbers of Tibetan antelopes have grown from 50,000 to 70,000 in 1995 to more than 200,000 now, and black-necked cranes from 1,000 to 3,000 in 1995 to 7,000 currently. Numbers of such rare and endangered species as wild yaks and Tibetan wild kiangs are also steadily growing.

Ecological development in forestry and grassland is making remarkable progress. According to the eighth national survey of forest resources conducted in 2014, the Region's forest coverage rate was as high as 11.98 percent, covering a total area of 14.7156 million ha. Wood stock accounted for 2.262 billion cubic meters of forest, 2.261 billion cubic meters of virgin forest, and 267 cubic meters per ha of high forest. The key non-commercial forest totals 10.1127 million ha. Tibet leads the country in terms of per capita forest coverage, stock of forest, virgin forest and high forest, and area of key non-commercial forest. Compared with the third national survey of desertification and sandification, the fourth survey shows a 78,900 ha decline in desertification and 65,700 ha decline in sandification in Tibet. This signifies that the situation has been checked and is now taking a turn for the better. By the end of 2014, there was 84.33 million ha of natural grassland in Tibet, 70.67 million of which is usable.

Eco-compensation pilot work is progressing. The central government applies eco-compensation policies to forest and grassland etc., in Tibet, having allocated more than four billion yuan each year to the Region. The state has also formulated the Measures for Management of Eco-Compensation Funds for Forest in Tibet Autonomous Region. From 2010, the central budget began granting annual 772 million yuan of eco-compensation to the Region's non-commercial forest. Based on the pilot work to award grassland ecological protection to five counties from 2009 to

2010, in 2011 a policy to subsidize grassland ecological protection was fully implemented in 74 counties across the Region. It entailed spending 2.00981 billion yuan of subsidies and awards each year on protecting the grassland environment and increasing the income of farmers and herdsmen. The state has implemented the transfer payment policy in key ecological reserves, covering 18 counties of Tibet and spending 1.083 billion yuan in 2014. These measures help to protect key non-commercial forest, prime grassland and key ecological areas.

Tibet takes the lead in building ecological culture. In 2014, the National Development and Reform Commission and five other departments jointly issued the Notice on Building Ecological Culture Demonstration Areas (The First Group), listing Shannan and Nyingchi prefectures as the first group, which will take the lead in conducting independent environmental monitoring and enforcing environmental laws, improving the pollution discharge permit system and enterprise pollutant cap control system, and establishing a lifelong accountability system for environmental damage to explore effective models for building ecological culture in impoverished border areas mostly inhabited by ethnic minorities with rich ecological resources and value.

As the surveys and evaluations of the Chinese Academy of Sciences and relevant departments show, Tibet Plateau boasts a stable and balanced ecological system with a stable eco-quality. Encompassing all terrestrial ecosystems, the Tibetan ecosystems remain important gene pools of China and the entire globe's biological species, and a key area for biodiversity conservation. Its water, air, noise, soil, radiation, and ecological and environmental quality all remain in good condition, and its rivers, lakes, forests, grasslands, wetlands, glaciers, snow mountains, and wildlife are all under effective protection, most in the Region maintaining their original natural state.

## **Conclusion**

Over the past 50 years, under the firm leadership of the CPC and the central government, great changes have taken place in Tibet through implementation of regional ethnic autonomy, and Tibet has made a historical leapfrog from a backward, impoverished and isolated society into a progressing, prospering, and open one. Practice has fully demonstrated that regional ethnic autonomy is a objective requirement for Tibet's development and progress, and that it conforms to the fundamental interests of all ethnic groups in Tibet. This system fits China's national conditions and the reality of Tibet, and is thus the right choice for Tibet.

The Region's ethnic autonomy helps people of all ethnic groups in Tibet become their own masters and enjoy full democratic and extensive economic, social and cultural rights. Over the years, the 14th Dalai Lama clique, aiming at "Tibetan independence," has constantly preached the "middle way," peddled the concept of a "Greater Tibet," and lobbied for "a high degree of autonomy," so as to negate regional ethnic autonomy and its contribution to Tibet's progress. The 14th Dalai group's separatist activities violate the Constitution of China and its state system, and greatly damage the fundamental interests of all ethnic groups in Tibet. That is why they have met strong opposition from all Chinese people, including those of all ethnic groups in Tibet, and hence the reasons they are doomed to fail.

Currently, people of all ethnic groups in Tibet are working hard, along with the whole nation, to build China into a prosperous society in all respects and realize the great dream of rejuvenating the Chinese nation. With the advance of the socialist undertaking with Chinese characteristics, the system of regional ethnic autonomy will be further developed and improved, enabling people of all ethnic groups in Tibet to be their own masters at an even higher level.