

# The Evolution of Global Human Rights Governance: China's Participation and Contribution

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**Abstract:** *The development of global human rights governance is mainly reflected in two dimensions: normative development and institutional development. From the establishment of human rights principles by the UN Charter, the setting of human rights standards by the Declaration, to the construction of the international human rights law system and the continuous enrichment of human rights content, all these constitute important normative advances in global human rights governance. In terms of mechanisms of global human rights governance, the UN human rights protection mechanisms fall into two major categories: Charter-based mechanisms and treaty-based mechanisms. Currently, the Charter-based mechanisms center on the work of the UN Human Rights Council and its subsidiary bodies, including the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) Mechanism and the special procedures mechanism, while the treaty-based mechanisms supervise the implementation of international human rights treaties. China has actively participated in global human rights governance, and has also made significant contributions to it. The overall trend of China's participation is characterized by a more proactive attitude, deeper engagement, and growing influence. At present, China's contributions to global human rights governance are mainly manifested in two dimensions: material support and conceptual guidance for global human rights governance.*

**Keywords:** global human rights governance ♦ norms of global human rights governance ♦ mechanisms of global human rights governance ♦ UN human rights mechanisms

Global governance, first proposed in the 1990s, refers to the use of binding international regimes to resolve global issues — including conflicts, ecology, human rights, migration, drugs, smuggling, and infectious diseases — in order to maintain a stable international political and economic order.<sup>1</sup> Global human rights governance is essentially the application of global governance within the realm of human rights. The concept of global human rights governance can be understood in both a narrow and a broad sense. In its narrow sense, global human rights governance primarily refers to the

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<sup>1</sup> Yu Keping, "An Introduction to Global Governance," *Marxism & Reality* 1 (2002).

development of norms and the operation of mechanisms that emerged after World War II to promote the respect, protection, and realization of human rights and fundamental freedoms worldwide. Its normative framework mainly consists of the *Charter of the United Nations* (hereinafter referred to as the *Charter*), international human rights treaties, and “soft law” instruments such as human rights declarations and resolutions. Its mechanisms are primarily embodied in the various international human rights bodies established under the *Charter* and international human rights treaties. In a broad sense, global human rights governance mainly refers to the governance of issues closely related to human rights worldwide, such as trade and human rights, climate and human rights, war and human rights, and counter-terrorism and human rights.<sup>2</sup> In this paper, a narrower definition of global human rights governance is adopted. The study of the development of global human rights governance primarily focuses on two dimensions: Global human rights norms and global human rights mechanisms.

## **I. The Development of Global Human Rights Governance Norms**

Although “global human rights governance” is a concept that has emerged only in recent years, the process of global human rights governance actually began much earlier. From the perspective of the development of international norms, the *Charter* can be considered an important starting point for global human rights governance norms.

The *Charter* is the foundational document that launched the cause of international human rights protection, establishing such protection as a core objective of the United Nations. It explicitly states that the purpose of the United Nations is “to achieve international co-operation in solving international problems of an economic, social, cultural, or humanitarian character, and in promoting and encouraging respect for human rights and for fundamental freedoms for all without distinction as to race, sex, language, or religion.”<sup>3</sup>

The *Charter* is recognized as the first international legal instrument to prescribe human rights principles. As a multilateral international convention, it serves as the jurisprudential foundation for the series of international human rights instruments subsequently formulated by the United Nations. It is legally binding on all UN Member States. The *Charter* contains nine provisions regarding human rights principles. These principles, enshrined in the *Charter*, were subsequently codified and expanded by the United Nations through the

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<sup>2</sup> Mao Junxiang, “Practical Dilemmas, Ideological Differences and China’s Proposal for Global Human Rights Governance,” *Chinese Journal of Human Rights* 1 (2023).

<sup>3</sup>United Nations, “Charter of the United Nations,” accessed December 10, 2025, <https://www.un.org/zh/about-us/un-charter/full-text>.

*Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (hereinafter referred to as the *Declaration*) and various international conventions, forming the basis of international human rights law.

The *Declaration* stands as a crucial cornerstone of global human rights governance. The *Declaration*, adopted by the UN General Assembly in 1948, was the first international legal instrument specifically dedicated to human rights following the *Charter*. The *Declaration* addressed the limitations of the *Charter* by providing concrete substance to its general human rights provisions. The *Declaration* states: “The General Assembly proclaims this *Declaration* as a common standard of achievement for all peoples and all nations, to the end that every individual and every organ of society, keeping this *Declaration* constantly in mind, shall strive by teaching and education to promote respect for these rights and freedoms and by progressive measures, national and international, to secure their universal and effective recognition and observance, both among the peoples of Member States themselves and among the peoples of territories under their jurisdiction.”<sup>4</sup> From this, it can be seen that the *Declaration* represents a gradual goal to be achieved, rather than a legal obligation for Member States to fulfill immediately. “It was precisely because neither the UN Charter nor the Declaration had adequately addressed the issue of Member States’ legal obligations regarding human rights that the UN began drafting two international human rights covenants after the Declaration’s adoption.”<sup>5</sup>

The international human rights law system serves as the primary international normative framework for global human rights governance. Drafting and amending international human rights covenants was a lengthy process. It was not until 1966 that the *International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights* (ICESCR) and the *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights* (ICCPR) were finally adopted, following seven years of drafting (1947-1954) and 12 years of discussion and revision (1954-1966). Adopted and opened for signature alongside the two Covenants was the *Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights*. As the two covenants were developed on the basis of the *Declaration*, they essentially encompass all the rights stipulated in it. The only exception is the “right to own property,” which was excluded from the two covenants due to profound disagreements. Besides, the two covenants provide for several rights not included in the *Declaration*, particularly certain collective rights such as the rights of minorities and the rights of the child. The significant role of the two covenants in advancing the international human rights cause lies in the fact

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<sup>4</sup> United Nations, “Universal Declaration of Human Rights,” <https://www.un.org/zh/about-us/universal-declaration-of-human-rights>.

<sup>5</sup> Bai Guimei, Gong Renren, and Li Ming, *Human Rights in International Law* (Beijing: Peking University Press, 1996), 63.

that they codified the content of the *Declaration* into legal form. Unlike the legal status of the *Declaration*, which remains subject to ongoing debate, the two international human rights covenants possess indisputable legal force. According to the law of international treaties, a State Party must strictly fulfill its treaty obligations from the date of ratification; a State Party that violates these obligations shall bear international responsibility.

The *Declaration*, the *ICESCR*, the *ICCPR*, and the *Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights* are collectively known as the “*International Bill of Human Rights*,” holding a central position in international human rights law. Other human rights conventions adopted in the post-war era are also essential components of international human rights law, including the *Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide* (1948), the *International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination* (1965), the *International Convention on the Suppression and Punishment of the Crime of Apartheid* (1973), the *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)* (1979), the *Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment* (1984), and the *Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC)* (1989). Furthermore, a number of important resolutions and declarations adopted by the United Nations have played a significant role in the development of human rights principles in international law, they are: the *Resolution on the Right of Peoples and Nations to Self-Determination* (1952), the *Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples* (1960), the *Resolution on New Human Rights Concepts* (1977), the *Declaration on the Right of Peoples to Peace* (1984), the *Declaration on the Right to Development* (1986), and the *Declaration on the Human Environment* (1987).

Following the establishment of human rights principles by the *Charter*, the substance of human rights has been enriched and developed. During the drafting process of the *Declaration* in the early post-war period, socialist states led by the Soviet Union and capitalist states led by the United States engaged in intense struggle. The final compromise resulted in the inclusion of economic, social and cultural rights, championed by socialist states, alongside civil and political rights, which had been consistently advocated by capitalist states. The *Declaration* consists of a preamble and 30 articles, of which Articles 1 to 21 primarily stipulate civil and political rights, while Articles 22 to 28 primarily stipulate economic, social and cultural rights. Among these, economic, social and cultural rights are also referred to as “second-generation human rights” or “positive rights.” The *Declaration* undoubtedly holds a paramount position in the field of international human rights. It was the first international instrument to propose human rights standards for the international community and to define the substance of human rights clearly. In the decades that followed,

through the continuous efforts of developing countries, a series of rights reflecting their aspirations and demands gradually gained recognition from the international community. These rights — including the right to self-determination, the right to development, the right to a healthy environment, and the right to peace — are essentially collective rights, also known as “third-generation human rights” or “solidarity rights.” Consequently, it is precisely under the impetus of the United Nations that the scope of human rights has evolved from its initial focus on civil and political rights (first-generation human rights) to a rich framework that encompasses not only civil and political rights, but also economic, social and cultural rights (second-generation human rights) as well as collective rights (third-generation human rights).

In summary, from the establishment of human rights principles by the *Charter* and the setting of human rights standards by the *Declaration*, to the creation of the international human rights law system and the continuous enrichment of human rights substance, all of these represent significant progress in the normative aspects of global human rights governance.

## **II. The Development of Global Human Rights Governance Mechanisms**

To protect human rights, the United Nations has gradually established a set of international mechanisms for human rights protection, grounded in the *Charter*, the *Declaration*, and international human rights covenants. The human rights protection mechanisms of the United Nations can be divided into two main categories: one is the Charter-based mechanism, which refers to mechanisms established based on the *Charter* and supported by UN bodies with human rights mandates; the other is the treaty-based mechanism, which refers to mechanisms established based on core international human rights covenants and supported by treaty bodies.

### **A. The development of the Charter-based mechanism for human rights protection**

Currently, the Charter-based mechanism for human rights protection centers on the work of the United Nations Human Rights Council and its subsidiary bodies, including the UPR mechanism and Special Procedures. Prior to the establishment of the Human Rights Council, this mechanism primarily relied on the United Nations Commission on Human Rights and its subsidiary bodies, including the Sub-Commission on the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights. The main characteristics of the Charter-based mechanism are that it is established by resolutions adopted by principal organs authorized by the *Charter*; that it undertakes broad human rights mandates; that it addresses an undifferentiated audience; and that it takes action by majority voting.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> China University of Political Science and Law Research Group, “The UN Human Rights Mechanisms and China’s Constructive Participation,” *Human Rights* 6 (2020).

## **1. The evolution from the United Nations Commission on Human Rights to the Human Rights Council**

Established in February 1946 as a specialized body of the United Nations for the deliberation of human rights issues, the United Nations Commission on Human Rights served as a subsidiary organ of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). The mandates of the United Nations Commission on Human Rights included: conducting thematic studies, making recommendations, and drafting international human rights instruments for submission to the General Assembly in accordance with the purposes and principles of the *Charter*; and conducting public or confidential deliberations on human rights issues in specific Member States, which involved investigating allegations of human rights violations, processing communications regarding human rights violations, and expressing opinions or adopting resolutions on the human rights situations in relevant Member States.<sup>7</sup> The United Nations Commission on Human Rights existed for 60 years from its inception until it was replaced by the Human Rights Council. Throughout these six decades of international human rights practice, the Commission conducted extensive work to promote and protect human rights worldwide. On March 27, 2006, at the final session of the Commission on Human Rights, then-UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Louise Arbour summarized and evaluated its legacy. She identified five areas where the Commission made significant contributions. First, the issuance of the *Declaration* in the post-WWII era, which established the global framework for the promotion and protection of human rights; Second, the establishment of *Special Procedures* for human rights protection, supported by a cadre of dedicated experts, including independent experts, special rapporteurs, special representatives of the Secretary-General, special representatives of the High Commissioner, and working groups; Third, the implementation of special actions regarding specific States and territories, beginning with apartheid-era South Africa and followed by others such as East Timor, Kosovo, Palestine, and Rwanda; Fourth, the creation of the first human rights complaint mechanism, known as the “1503 procedure”; Fifth, the development of a global forum for human rights dialogue and a unique partnership with civil society.<sup>8</sup>

Although the United Nations Commission on Human Rights has made significant contributions to the promotion and protection of human rights since its inception, it has also exposed numerous problems. It was precisely the “credibility crisis” resulting from these issues that shook the foundation of the

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<sup>7</sup> “About the Commission on Human Rights,” published on the official website of the United Nations, accessed December 18, 2025, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/hr-bodies/chr/background>.

<sup>8</sup> “Statement by High Commissioner for Human Rights to Last Meeting of Commission on Human Rights,” published on the official website of the United Nations, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2009/10/statement-high-commissioner-human-rights-last-meeting-commission-human>.

Commission's existence, eventually leading to its replacement by the Human Rights Council. Summarily, the primary causes of the Commission's "credibility crisis" include several aspects: First, the politicization of human rights issues, particularly the country-specific agenda items, which for decades turned the Commission into a venue for certain States to attack and disparage one another; Second, the application of double standards on human rights issues, a practice that began during the Cold War as a product of international struggle between the East and West but has persisted to this day; Third, an ineffective response to major human rights violations, e.g., regarding the U.S. invasion of Iraq and other significant human rights crises, the Commission failed to play the role it should have during the deliberation process. Beyond the "credibility crisis," another critical reason for the Commission's replacement was that human rights principles had never received the attention they deserved since being established by the United Nations, a fact evidenced by the Commission's low institutional rank.

The formal proposal to establish the Human Rights Council was first officially introduced by UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan on March 21, 2005, at the United Nations General Assembly in New York. In his report titled "In Larger Freedom: Towards Development, Security and Human Rights for All," he formally proposed the creation of the Human Rights Council. He suggested that the United Nations implement a system of three councils to separately address international peace and security, economic and social issues, and human rights.

The proposal to establish the Human Rights Council was adopted by the 2005 World Summit held in September. The resolution to establish the Human Rights Council, passed by vote on March 15, 2006, was a product of compromise; a certain gap existed between the final plan for the Human Rights Council and the initial proposal. The status of the Human Rights Council was defined as a subsidiary organ of the General Assembly rather than a principal organ of the United Nations. Therefore, it does not yet enjoy equal status with the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council. This represents a significant departure from Secretary-General Annan's original vision of giving equal weight and attention to the three pillars of security, development, and human rights. Yet the replacement of the UN Commission on Human Rights by the UN Human Rights Council, and the latter's elevation from a functional commission of the UN Economic and Social Council to a subsidiary organ of the General Assembly, demonstrates that the status of human rights within the UN system has been further raised and that the United Nations has attached far greater importance to human rights issues.

Since its inception, the United Nations Human Rights Council has conducted extensive work in global human rights governance, exerting a significant influence. Its primary mechanisms include the UPR, the Special

Procedures, the Advisory Committee, and the Complaint Procedure. Among these, the Universal Periodic Review has already entered its fourth cycle, playing an important role in promoting the mainstreaming of human rights at the national level and improving the human rights situations in countries worldwide. Investigations mandated by the Human Rights Council have also become essential tools for addressing serious violations of international humanitarian law and human rights law. Investigative bodies mandated by the Human Rights Council have taken various forms, including fact-finding missions and commissions of inquiry. Furthermore, intergovernmental working groups, expert mechanisms, and forums under the Human Rights Council have also played important roles.<sup>9</sup> The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) serves as the secretariat for the Human Rights Council, providing it with intellectual support and institutional safeguards.

## **2. Establishment of the UPR mechanism**

The UPR mechanism is a Charter-based mechanism, established by a resolution of the United Nations General Assembly. It refers to a human rights mechanism through which the United Nations Human Rights Council conducts periodic reviews of the human rights situations of UN Member States. In essence, it is a periodic peer review mechanism, whereby States regularly submit reports to and undergo review by an international body composed of their peers. The establishment of the UPR mechanism under the Human Rights Council was originally proposed by then-Secretary-General Kofi Annan, sharing the same origin as the establishment of the Human Rights Council itself. In April 2005, in his report titled “*In Larger Freedom: Towards Development, Security and Human Rights for All*,” Annan formally proposed the creation of the Human Rights Council and, for the first time, suggested that the new Council should possess a peer review function: “The Human Rights Council will need to ensure that it develops a system of peer review that is fair, transparent and workable, whereby States are reviewed against the same criteria; It should touch upon the entire spectrum of human rights, namely, civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights.”<sup>10</sup> In March 2006, UN Resolution 60/251 provided a more specific elaboration on the peer review function of the Human Rights Council and named it the UPR mechanism, which serves as the direct basis for the establishment of the mechanism.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>9</sup> United Nations Human Rights Council, published on the official website of the United Nations, accessed December 20, 2025, <https://www.ohchr.org/zh/hr-bodies/hrc/other-sub-bodies>.

<sup>10</sup> Kofi Annan, “Larger Freedom: Towards Development, Security and Human Rights for All,” *UN Doc. A/59/2005, para. 135*, published on the official website of the United Nations, <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N05/270/77/PDF/N0527077.pdf?OpenElement>.

<sup>11</sup> United Nations General Assembly, “General Assembly Resolution of March 15, 2006,” *A/RES/60/251 (2006)*, published on the official website of the United Nations, accessed December 20, 2025, <https://documents.un.org/doc/undoc/gen/n05/502/66/pdf/n0550266.pdf>.

In June 2006, a dedicated working group was established at the first session of the Human Rights Council, which was responsible for specifically advancing the establishment of the UPR mechanism. In September 2007, at its fifth session, the Human Rights Council adopted *Resolution 5/1*, which set out a blueprint for the UPR mechanism, providing detailed provisions regarding procedures, principles, and modalities. In the same month, the Council, at its sixth session, adopted *Decision 6/102*, which primarily established regulations for the information to be prepared by Member States undergoing the UPR process. In April 2008, through a presidential statement, the Human Rights Council released the “Modalities and practices for the universal periodic review process” (Presidential Statement 8/1), making detailed arrangements for the working modalities and review patterns of the UPR Working Group, the content of reports, and the modalities of the plenary sessions. Through these extensive efforts by the Human Rights Council, the UPR mechanism developed into a relatively mature human rights protection mechanism within just a few years.

The process of the UPR mechanism generally includes key aspects such as periodicity, the order of review, review procedures, and review modalities. The document “*Institution-building of the United Nations Human Rights Council*,” adopted at the fifth session of the Human Rights Council in 2007, clearly defined the periodicity and order of review: the subjects of review include both Member States and observer States of the Human Rights Council; the duration of the first cycle of the UPR was set at four years, with the Working Group meeting three times a year for two-week sessions; the entire review cycle consisted of 12 sessions in total, reviewing 16 countries per session.<sup>12</sup> In 2011, at its 17<sup>th</sup> session, the Human Rights Council adopted a resolution titled “*Follow-up to the Human Rights Council Resolution 16/21 with Regard to the Universal Periodic Review*,” which adjusted the periodicity and order of review. Starting from the second cycle, the duration of the review cycle was extended from four years to four and a half years; the total number of Working Group sessions per cycle was increased from 12 to 14, and the number of countries reviewed per Working Group session was reduced from 16 to 14.

The UPR is conducted by the UPR Working Group, which is composed of the 47 member states of the Human Rights Council. Through UPR working group meetings, it conducts an interactive dialogue with the State under Review, during which all member states have the right to ask questions, offer recommendations, or make comments to the State under Review. To improve the efficiency of the review, for each review, the Human Rights Council selects

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<sup>12</sup> Sun Meng, “The Universal Periodic Review Mechanism and China’s Practice: Changes and Challenges,” *Journal of Political Science and Law* 3 (2015).

three States from Member States of different regions to form a “troika” to serve as rapporteurs. They assist in ensuring the smooth conduct of the review and are responsible for drafting the Working Group report. The outcome of the review is primarily contained in the report of the Working Group, which is prepared by the troika with the full participation of the State under Review and the assistance of the OHCHR. The report includes an introduction, a summary of the proceedings, conclusions and/or recommendations, as well as the voluntary pledges and commitments made by the State under Review. After the conclusion of the Working Group session, the report must be submitted to the plenary session of the Human Rights Council for deliberation and adoption. The UPR mechanism also includes follow-ups, which primarily refer to how the State under Review fulfills the recommendations and comments it has publicly accepted after the review process, as well as the voluntary pledges or commitments made during the session.<sup>13</sup>

### **3. Continuation of special procedures**

Special Procedures is a collective term for a class of mechanisms and is a vital component of the United Nations human rights machinery. Established by the Commission on Human Rights and maintained by the Human Rights Council, these are independent human rights expert mechanisms designed to address specific country situations or thematic issues worldwide and to provide advice and reports on human rights from a country-specific or thematic perspective.

Special Procedures of the Human Rights Council consist of independent human rights experts with specific mandates to report and advise on human rights from a thematic or country-specific viewpoint. Special Procedures can be either individuals (referred to as “Special Rapporteurs” or “Independent Experts”) or working groups. A working group is composed of five members, one from each of the five United Nations regional groups: Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean, Eastern Europe, and Western Europe. Special Rapporteurs, Independent Experts, and members of working groups are all prominent independent experts appointed by the Human Rights Council. They serve in their personal capacities and perform their work voluntarily. The mandates of Special Procedures typically require mandate holders to examine, monitor, advise, and publicly report on human rights situations. If a mandate is directed at the human rights situation in a specific country or region, it is called a country mandate; if it is directed at serious human rights violations on a worldwide scale, it is called a thematic mandate.

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<sup>13</sup> Resolution 5/1 of United Nations Human Rights Council, “Institution-building of the United Nations Human Rights Council (2007),” published on the official website of the United Nations, accessed December 25, 2025, [https://ap.ohchr.org/documents/E/HRC/resolutions/A\\_HRC\\_RES\\_5\\_1.doc](https://ap.ohchr.org/documents/E/HRC/resolutions/A_HRC_RES_5_1.doc).

The specific functions of Special Procedures include: receiving individual communications and engaging in communication and exchange with States regarding relevant human rights issues, thereby providing remedies to potential victims of human rights violations; conducting communications and providing advice on a State's human rights issues based on information received or through country visits; preparing study reports to provide interpretations of relevant human rights norms and standards; and raising public awareness and attention toward human rights issues through media channels. Among these, country visits are a crucial method for mandate holders to visit the State concerned and obtain first-hand human rights information; such visits typically last one to two weeks. All these mandates are required to report their findings and recommendations to the Human Rights Council, and many mandates are also reported to the General Assembly. At times, these mandates serve as the only mechanism for issuing early warnings to the international community regarding certain human rights issues. They are capable of responding to situations around the world, and States are not required to have previously ratified a specific human rights instrument.<sup>14</sup>

Special Procedures have a clear scope of work. With the support of the OHCHR, Special Procedures undertake: Pay country visits; take action on individual cases of alleged human rights violations and broader concerns by sending communications to States; conduct thematic studies and convene expert consultations to promote the development of international human rights standards; engage in advocacy and raise public awareness; and provide advisory services for technical cooperation. Special Procedures reports annually to the Human Rights Council, and most mandates are also reported annually to the United Nations General Assembly. Furthermore, either at the request of the Human Rights Council or upon the proposal of mandate holders, Special Procedures: prepare thematic studies; develop human rights standards and guidelines; participate in expert consultations, seminars, and conferences; organize panel discussions during sessions of the Human Rights Council; take part in consultations with various actors and organizations at the national, regional, and international levels; and raise public awareness of specific human rights situations and phenomena that have been confirmed as threats to human rights or as existing violations through public statements and interaction with various partners.<sup>15</sup> As of November 2023, there were a total of 46 thematic mandates and 14 country mandates.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Special Procedures of the Human Rights Council, published on the official website of the United Nations, accessed December 21, 2025, <https://www.ohchr.org/zh/special-procedures-human-rights-council/special-procedures-human-rights-council>.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> These thematic mandates primarily include: The mandate of the Working Group on the rights of peasants and other people working in rural areas; the mandate of the Special Rapporteur on the promotion

## **B. The development of the international human rights treaty-based mechanism**

The international human rights treaty-based mechanism is established by States Parties to international human rights treaties voluntarily. Currently, nine core human rights instruments have been formed within the field of international human rights law. Human rights treaty bodies are organs established under human rights treaties to monitor treaty implementation. These bodies are composed of independent experts responsible for reviewing country reports on the implementation of international conventions, individual complaints, or communications. To date, the treaty bodies responsible for monitoring the implementation of international human rights treaties have gradually developed four major procedures: the “State Parties’ Reporting Procedure,” the “Inter-State Complaint Procedure,” the “Individual Complaint Procedure,” and the “Inquiry Procedure.” These quasi-judicial procedures, which prevail across “treaty bodies,” collectively fulfill the mission of monitoring the implementation of international human rights treaties.

The so-called State Parties’ Reporting Procedure refers to the requirement that States Parties to a human rights treaty shall, in accordance with the provisions of the treaty they have ratified, submit periodic reports to the corresponding treaty body. These reports explain the legislative, judicial, administrative, and other measures taken by the State Party to implement the human rights treaty and to ensure that the rights recognized by the treaty are

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and protection of human rights in the context of climate change; the mandate of the Special Rapporteur on the sale, sexual exploitation and sexual abuse of children; the mandate of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders; the mandate of the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention; the mandate of the Special Rapporteur on adequate housing as a component of the right to an adequate standard of living, and on the right to non-discrimination in this context; the mandate of the Special Rapporteur on the right of everyone to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health; the mandate of the Special Rapporteur on the negative impact of unilateral coercive measures on the enjoyment of human rights; the mandate of the Special Rapporteur on the implications for human rights of the environmentally sound management and disposal of hazardous substances and wastes; the mandate of the Special Rapporteur on the right to development; the mandate of the Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association; the mandate of the Independent Expert on human rights and international solidarity; and others. The 14 country mandates include: The mandate of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967; the mandate of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Russian Federation; the mandate of the Independent Expert on the situation of human rights in the Central African Republic; the mandate of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran; the mandate of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Eritrea; the mandate of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Burundi; the mandate of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea; the mandate of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Cambodia; the mandate of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Belarus; the mandate of the Independent Expert on the situation of human rights in Somalia; the mandate of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Myanmar; the mandate of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Afghanistan; the mandate of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Syrian Arab Republic; and the mandate of the Independent Expert on the situation of human rights in Mali.

effectively implemented within that State. The Inter-State Complaint Procedure (also known as the Inter-State Petition Procedure), as an international implementation mechanism for international human rights treaties, refers to the right of a State Party, under the provisions of a treaty, to submit a complaint or allegation to a treaty body (or committee) regarding another State Party's failure to fulfill its treaty obligations. The Individual Complaint Procedure, also known as the Individual Petition Procedure or the Individual Communication Procedure, refers to a system in which individuals or groups of individuals whose rights under a human rights treaty have been violated submit a request for review to international human rights organizations and bodies. The so-called Inquiry Procedure refers to the authority of a human rights treaty body, under certain conditions and upon receipt of reliable information indicating grave or systematic violations by a State Party of any of the rights stipulated in a human rights treaty, to decide to designate one or more of its members to conduct an inquiry into that State Party.<sup>17</sup>

Among these four procedures in the international human rights treaty monitoring mechanism, the reporting obligation of States parties is the only mandatory legal procedure. States Parties are required to submit periodic reports on treaty compliance to the treaty bodies as prescribed. The Inter-State Complaint Procedure is rarely utilized because, rather than invoking this formal procedure, the States concerned tend to favor criticizing and condemning human rights violations by other States within the United Nations forums. The Individual Complaint Procedure faces significant efficiency issues in its implementation due to a heavy workload. The International Inquiry System is an optional procedure; State Parties may choose whether or not to accept this procedure when signing or ratifying the core human rights treaties.

**The Nine Core International Human Rights Treaties and Their Treaty Bodies<sup>18</sup>**

Core Human Rights Treaty	Treaty Body
<i>International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR)</i>	Human Rights Committee (CCPR)
<i>International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR)</i>	Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR)
<i>International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (ICERD)</i>	Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD)

<sup>17</sup> Tu Yunxin, "On the Normative Structure of International Human Rights Treaties Monitoring Mechanisms and Its Legal Challenges," *Human Rights* 4 (2019).

<sup>18</sup> There is an additional human rights treaty body — the Subcommittee on Prevention of Torture (SPT) — established pursuant to the *Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment*. It does not receive or review periodic compliance reports submitted by States parties.

<i>Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)</i>	Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)
<i>Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CAT)</i>	Committee against Torture (CAT)
<i>Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC)</i>	Committee on the Rights of the Child (CRC)
<i>International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families (ICRMW)</i>	Committee on Migrant Workers (CMW)
<i>Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD)</i>	Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD)
<i>International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance (ICPPED)</i>	Committee on Enforced Disappearances (CED)

### III. China's Participation in and Contribution to Global Human Rights Governance

For a long time, China has actively participated in global human rights governance and made significant contributions to it. This can be understood through the following aspects:

#### A. The journey of China's engagement in global human rights governance

China has been an active participant in the process of global human rights governance since the founding of the United Nations, and has made outstanding contributions to the establishment and development of norms and mechanisms for global human rights governance in the course of its participation.

China is a founding Member State of the United Nations and the first signatory to the *Charter*. China participated in the drafting of the *Declaration*, one of the most fundamental documents of international human rights standards. A Chinese representative, P.C. Chang (Zhang Pengchun), served on the three-person special drafting committee of the Commission on Human Rights that drafted the *Declaration*. Therefore, China has made significant contributions not only to the establishment of the guiding principles of the *Charter* but also to the formulation of the *Declaration*.

Following the founding of the People's Republic of China and prior to the Reform and Opening-up, China's participation in international human rights activities was relatively limited, influenced by the Cold War environment and the status of its foreign relations at the time. After the restoration of China's

lawful seat in the United Nations in October 1971, China began to participate in the deliberation of human rights issues by sending delegations to attend sessions of the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). With the implementation of the reform and opening-up policy, China's perspective on human rights issues began to change. In 1980, China started to consider and study the issue of participating in international human rights activities and, to this end, established a collaborative group involving multiple ministries and commissions. In 1981, China participated in the elections for the UN Commission on Human Rights and was successfully elected, becoming a full member of the UN Commission on Human Rights starting from 1982. Since 1981, China has sent representatives to participate in all sessions of the governmental expert group of the UN Commission on Human Rights that drafted the *Declaration on the Right to Development*, until the *Declaration* was adopted by the UN General Assembly in 1986. China also repeatedly sent representatives to participate in the drafting work of international human rights legal instruments, taking part in several working groups drafting human rights conventions. The 1980s marked the most intensive period for the People's Republic of China in joining international human rights treaties, acceding to a total of 11 such instruments.<sup>19</sup>

In the early 1990s, China underwent a major strategic adjustment in its diplomacy regarding human rights. The hallmark of this strategic shift was the publication of the white paper on *Human Rights in China* by the Chinese government in November 1991. This was the first white paper on human rights issued by the Chinese government and its first official document concerning human rights issues. The white paper articulated China's position on human rights to the international community for the first time: "China recognizes and respects the purposes and principles of the *Charter* related to the protection and promotion of human rights. It appreciates and supports the efforts of the UN in promoting universal respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, and takes an active part in UN activities in the human rights field." "China is in favor of strengthening international cooperation in the realm of human rights based on mutual understanding and seeking a common ground while reserving differences."<sup>20</sup>

After making major strategic adjustments in its foreign policy regarding human rights, China began to take a proactive approach to international human rights affairs. It utilized the international stage to promote its own human rights

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<sup>19</sup> Li Junru, Chang Jian, and Wang Linxia, "The Historical Achievements and Developmental Progress of Human Rights in China," in *Report on China's Human Rights Development No. 1 (2011)*, edited by Li Junru (Beijing: Social Sciences Academic Press (China), 2011), 34-36.

<sup>20</sup> "1991: Human Rights in China," published on the official website of The State Council Information Office of the People's Republic of China, accessed December 23, 2025, <http://www.scio.gov.cn/ztk/dtzt/2014/31553/31561/Document/1381043/1381043.htm>.

position and resolutely and forcefully refuted the unfounded attacks by Western countries based on the achievements it had made over the decades. China advocated for equal dialogue in the international human rights field and resolutely opposed hegemonic acts in international human rights activities. It also united with a broad range of developing countries in international human rights activities, striving tirelessly to enrich and develop international human rights thought and to protect the rights and interests of developing countries. During this period, China actively participated in the Regional Preparatory Meeting for Asia of the World Conference on Human Rights, held in Bangkok, Thailand, from March 29 to April 2, 1993, and was deeply involved in drafting the *Bangkok Declaration*. Furthermore, from June 14 to 25, 1993, China participated in the World Conference on Human Rights held in Vienna, making a significant contribution to the adoption of the Conference's outcome document, the *Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action*.

In March 2004, the second session of the 10<sup>th</sup> National People's Congress solemnly declared to the world that China had incorporated the principle that "The state shall respect and protect human rights" into its *Constitution*. "Enshrining human rights in the *Constitution*" in 2004 was not only a milestone in the development of China's human rights cause but also inaugurated a new stage in China's participation in global human rights governance, enhancing both the intensity and breadth of its involvement.

During this period, China played an important role in the establishment and deliberation process of the United Nations Human Rights Council and was elected as a member of the Council for two consecutive terms (in 2006 and 2009) following its inception. In 2009, China also underwent its first UPR by the United Nations Human Rights Council. During this period, China actively participated in the formulation of international human rights norms, and its cooperation with the OHCHR, Special Procedures, and human rights treaty bodies continued to deepen, entering a period of intensive accession to international human rights instruments.

Since the 18<sup>th</sup> National Congress of the Communist Party of China in 2012 — particularly with the introduction of the vision of a "community with a shared future for mankind" and the Belt and Road Initiative — China's participation in global human rights governance has entered a new stage. During this era, China's engagement has continued to deepen, and several important concepts advocated by China have been incorporated into international human rights discourse. In 2013, 2016, 2020, and 2023, China was successfully re-elected as a member of the United Nations Human Rights Council with a high number of votes for four consecutive terms. To date, China has served as a member of the Council six times, making it one of the most frequently elected Member States. Besides, China underwent the second, third, and fourth cycles of the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) by the UN Human

Rights Council in October 2013, November 2018, and January 2024, respectively.

During this period, China also underwent reviews by the Committee on the Rights of the Child, the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, the Committee against Torture, and the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination regarding its implementation of the *Convention on the Rights of the Child* and its *Optional Protocol* on the involvement of children in armed conflict, the *International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights*, the *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women*, the *Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment*, and the *International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination*, among others. Meanwhile, China has expanded its circle of bilateral human rights dialogue partners. Developing countries and regional organizations have become China's new human rights dialogue partners — including the African Union (AU), South Africa, Brazil, Morocco, Kyrgyzstan, Mexico, Egypt, the League of Arab States, Qatar, Malaysia, Indonesia, and ASEAN.

## **B. China's contribution to global human rights governance**

China's current contributions to global human rights governance are reflected at both the material and conceptual levels.

### **1. China's material support for global human rights governance**

China's material contribution to global human rights governance is primarily channeled through its financial support for the United Nations. According to the latest United Nations scale of assessments for 2025 to 2027, China has become the second-largest contributor to the United Nations. China's share of the United Nations budget has reached 20%, an increase of nearly 5 percentage points compared to the previous cycle (15.254%). China's annual contribution is approximately over \$745 million (equivalent to more than RMB 5.4 billion), which is an increase of RMB 1.6 billion per year compared to the previous cycle.<sup>21</sup> Within the UN regular budget of \$3.717 billion, the share borne by China is second only to the 22% of the United States. United Nations assessments are the primary source of funding and the regular budget for the United Nations, used to pay for the recurrent expenses required to maintain the normal operations of United Nations agencies. A portion of the United Nations assessments paid by China is used to support the operations of bodies such as the United Nations Human Rights Council; this forms China's direct material support for global human rights governance.

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<sup>21</sup> "Assessed Contributions of Member States for 2025," published on the official website of the United Nations, accessed December 30, 2025, <https://www.un.org/zh/ga/contributions/index.shtml>.

Another form of China's material support for global human rights governance is reflected in special contributions and project support. An example is China's support for the Peace and Development Fund. On November 21, 2024, the Steering Committee of the China-UN Peace and Development Fund held its ninth meeting at the United Nations Headquarters in New York. Ambassador Fu Cong, permanent representative of China to the United Nations, and Earle Courtenay Rattray, chief of Staff to the UN Secretary-General, representing the Chinese government and the United Nations, respectively, signed an agreement to extend the fund's contributions, confirming that the Chinese government will continue to provide contributions until 2030 after the fund expires in 2025.<sup>22</sup> Furthermore, through the platform of the United Nations Human Rights Council, China has hosted thematic exhibitions such as "Accessibility for All: Building an Inclusive Future" and promoted resolutions commemorating the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the *Beijing Declaration*, supporting the protection of the rights of groups such as women and persons with disabilities worldwide through material support or technical cooperation.

China's material support for global human rights governance is also reflected in its financial contributions to the OHCHR. The Chinese government has provided donations to the OHCHR to support its operations, with the annual contribution increasing from \$20,000 to \$50,000 beginning in 2010. China pledged a significant increase in its donations to the OHCHR between 2014 and 2017. In 2018, China announced it would donate \$800,000 annually over the following five years to support human rights capacity building for developing countries and to promote the right to development. In 2024, China pledged to donate \$1 million to support the OHCHR in establishing a knowledge center for economic, social, and cultural rights. In cooperation with the OHCHR, China has committed to training 50 professionals from developing countries in the field of economic, social, and cultural rights within China in 2024.<sup>23</sup>

## **2. China's conceptual leadership in global human rights governance**

In recent years, China has actively shared its vision for global human rights governance, gaining broad recognition and resonance within the

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<sup>22</sup> "The 9<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Steering Committee of the China-UN Peace and Development Fund," published on the official website of the Permanent Mission of the People's Republic of China to the United Nations, [https://un.china-mission.gov.cn/zgylhg/xzyys/zlhjj/202412/t20241219\\_11506125.htm](https://un.china-mission.gov.cn/zgylhg/xzyys/zlhjj/202412/t20241219_11506125.htm).

<sup>23</sup> "Following a Chinese Path of Human Rights Development and Making New and Greater Contributions to the Global Human Rights Cause," an introductory statement by Ambassador Chen Xu, head of the Chinese Government Delegation, at China's fourth Universal Periodic Review at the United Nations Human Rights Council, published on the official website of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China, accessed December 30, 2025, [https://www.mfa.gov.cn/web/wjdt\\_674879/sjxw\\_674887/202401/t20240124\\_11232434.shtml](https://www.mfa.gov.cn/web/wjdt_674879/sjxw_674887/202401/t20240124_11232434.shtml).

international community. To a large extent, this has served as a form of conceptual leadership in the field.

**(1) The concept of “promoting human rights through development”**

China's promotion of this concept has garnered significant international consensus. This is primarily reflected in the fact that the resolutions titled “The contribution of development to the enjoyment of all human rights,” which China has proposed five consecutive times at the United Nations Human Rights Council, have all been adopted.

On June 22, 2017, the resolution proposed by China titled “The contribution of development to the enjoyment of all human rights” was adopted with the co-sponsorship of over 70 countries at the 35<sup>th</sup> session of the United Nations Human Rights Council.<sup>24</sup> This marked the first time the Chinese concept of “promoting human rights through development” was introduced into the international human rights system, and it was also the first time in the history of the Human Rights Council that a resolution was adopted specifically on the issue of development.<sup>25</sup> On July 12, 2019, the 41<sup>st</sup> session of the Human Rights Council again adopted the resolution submitted by China on “The contribution of development to the enjoyment of all human rights” by an overwhelming majority.<sup>26</sup> On May 28, 2021, the Human Rights Council held a seminar in Geneva, Switzerland, on “The contribution of development to the enjoyment of all human rights.” Nearly 200 representatives from various governments, international organizations, non-governmental organizations, as well as experts and scholars, engaged in lively discussions centered on the theme of the meeting, fully affirming the foundational role of development in the realization of human rights.<sup>27</sup> On July 12, 2021, the 47<sup>th</sup> session of the United Nations Human Rights Council once again adopted the resolution submitted by China on “The contribution of development to the enjoyment of all human rights.”<sup>28</sup> On July 14, 2023, the 53<sup>rd</sup> session of the Human Rights Council again adopted the resolution submitted by China on “The contribution

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<sup>24</sup> “Championing the Concept of ‘Promoting Human Rights through Development,’” *People's Daily*, June 24, 2017: 3.

<sup>25</sup> “The UN Human Rights Council Adopts Again the Resolution on ‘The Contribution of Development to the Enjoyment of All Human Rights’ Submitted by China,” published on xinhuanet, accessed March 10, 2026, [https://www.xinhuanet.com/world/2019-07/12/c\\_1124747411.htm](https://www.xinhuanet.com/world/2019-07/12/c_1124747411.htm).

<sup>26</sup> “UN Human Rights Council Holds Seminar on ‘The Contribution of Development to the Enjoyment of All Human Rights,’” published on people.cn, accessed March 11, 2026, <https://world.people.com.cn/n1/2021/0530/c1002-32117000.html>.

<sup>27</sup> “The 47<sup>th</sup> Session of the UN Human Rights Council Adopts the Resolution on ‘The Contribution of Development to the Enjoyment of All Human Rights’ Submitted by China,” published on CRI Online, accessed March 11, 2026, <http://news.cri.cn/20210713/4713d311-1cba-ccfb-c93d-3fe79948c8a1.html>.

<sup>28</sup> “The UN Human Rights Council Adopts Again the Resolution on ‘The Contribution of Development to the Enjoyment of All Human Rights’ Submitted by China,” published on the official website of the State Council of the People's Republic of China, accessed March 11, 2026, [https://www.gov.cn/yaowen/liebiao/202307/content\\_6892009.htm](https://www.gov.cn/yaowen/liebiao/202307/content_6892009.htm).

of development to the enjoyment of all human rights.”<sup>29</sup> On July 8, 2025, the 59<sup>th</sup> session of the Human Rights Council adopted the resolution on “The contribution of development to the enjoyment of all human rights,” which was spearheaded by China on behalf of the Global South. This marked the fifth time since 2017 that China proposed this resolution to the Human Rights Council, and it was the first time the resolution was adopted by consensus without a vote. The adoption of the resolution by consensus indicates that the Chinese concept of “promoting human rights through development” has converged into a broad international consensus.

## **(2) The concept of promoting win-win cooperation in the field of human rights**

The concept of promoting win-win cooperation in the field of human rights, advocated by China, has resonated strongly within the international community. On March 23, 2018, the 37<sup>th</sup> session of the UN Human Rights Council adopted the resolution on promoting mutually beneficial cooperation in the field of human rights proposed by China. The resolution called upon all States to work together to build a new type of international relations based on mutual respect, fairness, justice, and win-win cooperation, and to build a community with a shared future for mankind. It emphasized that all States adhere to multilateralism, strengthen dialogue and cooperation in the field of human rights, and achieve win-win cooperation.<sup>30</sup> On June 22, 2020, the Human Rights Council once again adopted the resolution on promoting mutually beneficial cooperation in the field of human rights submitted by China. The resolution advocates for upholding multilateralism and calls for the building of a new type of international relations and a community with a shared future for mankind. It stresses that States should engage in genuine dialogue and cooperation in the field of human rights, share good practices and experiences in promoting and protecting human rights, and strengthen technical assistance and capacity-building to achieve win-win cooperation.<sup>31</sup> On March 23, 2021, the 46<sup>th</sup> session of the Human Rights Council again passed the resolution on Promoting Mutually Beneficial Cooperation in the Field of Human Rights submitted by China. The resolution calls on all States to persist

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<sup>29</sup> Chen Xu, “Contributing China’s Approach to Improving Global Human Rights Governance,” *People’s Daily*, page 3.

<sup>30</sup> “The UN Human Rights Council Adopts a Resolution Calling for Forging a New Type of International Relations and Building a Community with a Shared Future for Mankind,” published on the official website of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People’s Republic of China, accessed December 28, 2025, [https://www.mfa.gov.cn/web/zwbdt673032/wshdt673034/201803/t20180327\\_5817085.shtml](https://www.mfa.gov.cn/web/zwbdt673032/wshdt673034/201803/t20180327_5817085.shtml).

<sup>31</sup> “The UN Human Rights Council Adopts Again the Resolution on Promoting Win-Win Cooperation in the Field of Human Rights Submitted by China,” published on the official website of the Permanent Mission of the People’s Republic of China to the United Nations Office at Geneva and Other International Organizations in Switzerland, accessed December 28, 2025, [https://geneva.china-mission.gov.cn/dbtyw/rqsw/202006/t20200622\\_8298635.htm](https://geneva.china-mission.gov.cn/dbtyw/rqsw/202006/t20200622_8298635.htm).

in multilateralism, conduct constructive dialogue and cooperation, enhance technical assistance and capacity-building, and promote win-win cooperation to jointly build a community with a shared future for mankind.<sup>32</sup>

### **(3) The Concept of Building a Community with a Shared Future for Mankind**

On March 1, 2017, at the 34<sup>th</sup> session of the UN Human Rights Council, China delivered a joint statement on behalf of 140 States entitled “Promoting and Protecting Human Rights and Jointly Building a Community with a Shared Future for Mankind.” This statement expounded on the concept of building a community with a shared future for mankind and its significant importance in advancing the international human rights cause. On March 23, 2017, two of the resolutions adopted at the 34<sup>th</sup> session of the Human Rights Council — “Question of the realization in all countries of economic, social and cultural rights” and “The Right to Food” — explicitly incorporated the language of “building a community with a shared future for mankind”. This marked the first time that the concept of building a community with a shared future for mankind was included in Human Rights Council resolutions, officially becoming part of international discourse on human rights. Since then, this concept has been repeatedly incorporated into various UN human rights resolutions and other documents, gaining broad recognition from the international community.

### **(4) The concept of “Promoting and Protecting Economic, Social and Cultural Rights within the Context of Addressing Inequalities”**

On October 12, 2023, the 54<sup>th</sup> session of the UN Human Rights Council adopted, by consensus, the resolution entitled “Promoting and Protecting Economic, Social and Cultural Rights within the Context of Addressing Inequalities,” jointly submitted by China, Bolivia, Egypt, Pakistan, South Africa, and other States. The resolution received broad support from developing countries, with 80 States joining as co-sponsors. On September 12, 2024, Ambassador Chen Xu stated during the thematic panel discussion on “Promoting and Protecting Economic, Social and Cultural Rights within the Context of Addressing Inequalities” at the 57<sup>th</sup> session of the Human Rights Council: “The failure to realize economic, social and cultural rights along with inequalities among and within countries are a significant contributor to exacerbating contradictions and conflicts. Equal enjoyment of these rights is the foundation for realizing all human rights and is an urgent requirement for preserving peace and stability, promoting sustainable development and

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<sup>32</sup> “UN Human Rights Council Adopts the Resolution of Promoting Mutually Beneficial Cooperation in the Field of Human Rights Submitted by China,” *People's Daily Overseas Edition*, March 25, 2021, page 2.

addressing global challenges.”<sup>33</sup> On October 6, 2025, the 60<sup>th</sup> session of the UN Human Rights Council once again adopted, by consensus, the resolution “Promoting and Protecting Economic, Social and Cultural Rights within the Context of Addressing Inequalities,” submitted by China on behalf of nearly 70 States, including Bolivia, Egypt, Pakistan, and South Africa.<sup>34</sup> The fact that such a large number of States acted as co-sponsors and the resolution was adopted by consensus indicates that this concept advocated by China has resonated widely within the international community.

Besides the aforementioned concepts, China has also proposed a series of resolutions and initiatives, such as the resolution on the “Negative impact of the legacies of colonialism on the enjoyment of human rights,” the resolution on “Promoting accessibility for the full enjoyment of all human rights by all,” the resolution “Reaffirming the *Beijing Declaration* and Platform for Action adopted in 1995 at the Fourth World Conference on Women,” and the initiative on “Artificial intelligence for the promotion of the rights of specific groups.” These efforts have promoted constructive dialogue and cooperation on human rights within the international community, guiding the development of global human rights governance toward a more equitable, just, reasonable and inclusive direction.

On September 1, 2025, General Secretary Xi Jinping delivered an important speech titled “Pooling the Strength of the SCO to Improve Global Governance” at the “SCO Plus” Meeting, in which he proposed the Global Governance Initiative. The Global Governance Initiative aims to uphold sovereign equality, abide by the international rule of law, practice multilateralism, advocate for a people-centered approach, and emphasize action-oriented results. These five core concepts clarify the principles, methods, and paths to be followed in reforming and improving global governance. They constitute an organic and unified whole, providing guidance for promoting the construction of a more just and reasonable global governance system and moving toward a community with a shared future for mankind.<sup>35</sup> The global governance philosophy proposed by General Secretary Xi Jinping targets all areas of global governance, including the field of human rights, representing

<sup>33</sup> Remarks by H.E. Ambassador Chen Xu at the Panel Discussion on Promoting and Protecting Economic, Social and Cultural Rights within the Context of Addressing Equalities at the 57<sup>th</sup> Session of the Human Rights Council, published on the official website of the Mission of the People’s Republic of China to the United Nations Office at Geneva and Other International Organizations in Switzerland, accessed December 28, 2025, [https://geneva.china-mission.gov.cn/dbtxwx/202409/t20240912\\_11489279.htm](https://geneva.china-mission.gov.cn/dbtxwx/202409/t20240912_11489279.htm).

<sup>34</sup> “The UN Human Rights Council Adopts by Consensus the Resolution on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights Sponsored by China,” published on the official website of the State Council of the People’s Republic of China, accessed December 28, 2025, [https://www.gov.cn/yaowen/liebiao/202510/content\\_7043489.htm](https://www.gov.cn/yaowen/liebiao/202510/content_7043489.htm).

<sup>35</sup> Zhao Lei, “A Global Governance Initiative That Embodies the Responsibility of a Major Country,” in *HongQi WenGao (Red Flag Manuscript)* (17) 2025, published on Qstheory.cn, accessed December 28, 2025, <https://www.qstheory.cn/20250913/d1a675f19aaf4dff8e0f44c8c077d9a8/c.html>.

another significant contribution by China to the philosophy of global human rights governance.

## **Conclusion**

This article discusses the development of global human rights governance and China's participation and contribution from two dimensions: global human rights governance norms and global human rights governance mechanisms. In terms of the norms of global human rights governance, the *Charter* marks an important starting point for their development; the *Declaration* serves as a vital cornerstone; and the system of international human rights law acts as the primary international normative vehicle. From the establishment of human rights principles by the *Charter* and the setting of human rights standards by the *Declaration*, to the creation of the international human rights law system and the continuous enrichment of human rights substance, all of these represent significant progress in the normative aspects of global human rights governance. Regarding the mechanisms of global human rights governance, the UN human rights protection mechanisms are divided into two major categories: Charter-based mechanisms and treaty-based mechanisms. The Charter-based mechanisms have evolved from the United Nations Commission on Human Rights to the United Nations Human Rights Council. Currently, these mechanisms focus on the work of the Human Rights Council and its subsidiary bodies, including the UPR mechanism and Special Procedures.

Treaty bodies are tasked with the mission of monitoring the implementation of international human rights treaties, exerting a continuous influence on the improvement of the human rights situation within States Parties. For a long time, China has actively participated in global human rights governance and made significant contributions to it. China's participation in the practice of global human rights governance has undergone a transformative process. The general trend reflects an increasingly proactive attitude, a deepening level of engagement, and growing international influence. Currently, China's contributions to global human rights governance are primarily manifested at both the material and conceptual levels. At the material level, China provides substantial support to the United Nations, including financing the operations of the Human Rights Council and other bodies through assessed contributions, providing special-purpose grants and project support, and offering financial donations to the OHCHR. At the conceptual level, China plays a leading role in shaping the concepts of global human rights governance. These concepts include the concept of "promoting human rights through development," the concept of promoting mutually beneficial cooperation in the field of human rights, the concept of building a community with a shared future for mankind, and the concept of promoting and protecting economic, social,

and cultural rights within the context of addressing inequalities. These concepts have all gained extensive international recognition.

(Translated by *QI Guohua*)