**China's Progress in Poverty Reduction and Human Rights**

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VI. Poverty Reduction at a Crucial Stage

Poverty eradication is and always has been a goal and a basic right of all peoples in their pursuit of a happy life. Over the years, based on the prevailing national conditions, the Communist Party of China (CPC) and the Chinese government have remained committed to a development concept that puts people's rights to subsistence and to development first. Committed to reducing and eliminating poverty, China has endeavored to guarantee and improve people's well-being, and developed a full range of social undertakings, so as to ensure that the results of development benefit all the people in a fairer way, and that all enjoy the rights to equal participation and equal development.

Since the 18th National Congress of the CPC in November 2012, in the great cause of building a moderately prosperous society and realizing the Chinese Dream of great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation, the CPC Central Committee led by General Secretary Xi Jinping has remained committed to a development concept that puts people first, and implemented the basic strategy of targeted poverty alleviation and elimination. China's poverty reduction actions, both solid and effective, have made a great contribution to the cause of international poverty reduction, and achieved remarkable results in world human rights development.

I. China's Poverty Reduction Program Has Promoted the Development of Human Rights

Poverty is so widespread that it has seriously hindered the fulfillment and enjoyment of human rights; reducing and eliminating poverty is therefore a major element of human rights protection.

Over the recent decades, the Chinese government has persevered in its attempts to eliminate poverty, improve people's well-being, and gradually realize common prosperity. It has made continuous development- oriented poverty-reduction efforts in rural areas to help those who are striving to escape from poverty and improve the quality of their lives.

China's poverty reduction actions are broad in extent; they include building rural and agricultural infrastructure, helping increase the incomes of impoverished population, and providing public services such as social security and health care, education and cultural services. While comprehensively safeguarding the economic, social and cultural rights of those living in poverty, these measures have created conditions for the protection of other human rights.

Since the initiation of reform and opening up in the late 1970s, the Chinese government has worked without fail to alleviate poverty - establishing special poverty-relief institutions, determining targeted areas and population, allocating specialized funds, formulating poverty standards and special preferential policies adapted to China's national conditions, and steering its policy of poverty alleviation through development.

The government has carried out large-scale development-oriented poverty eradication programs across the country in a planned and organized way, and implemented a series of medium- and long-term projects which include the Seven-Year Program for Lifting 80 Million People Out of Poverty (1994-2000), the Outline for Development-Oriented Poverty Alleviation for China's Rural Areas (2001-2010) and the Outline for Development-Oriented Poverty Alleviation for China's Rural Areas (2011-2020). Poverty reduction has become an important component of China's national strategy.

Since the 18th National Congress of CPC, the Central Committee has given top priority to development-oriented poverty reduction in its philosophy of governance, deeming it vital in its efforts to complete the process of building a moderately prosperous society in all respects by the centenary of the CPC (founded in 1921), which is known to be one of China's "Two Centenary Goals." (see note) To this end, poverty reduction has been incorporated into China's overall approach to building socialism with Chinese characteristics, that is, to promote coordinated progress in economic, political, cultural, social and ecological areas and strategy of "Four Comprehensives" (comprehensively build a moderately prosperous society, comprehensively deepen reform, comprehensively implement the rule of law, and comprehensively strengthen Party discipline).

[Note: The Two Centenary Goals were put forth by the CPC at its 18th National Congress for building socialism with Chinese characteristics. The other goal is to build China into a modern socialist country that is prosperous, strong, democratic, culturally advanced, and harmonious by the centenary of the People's Republic of China (founded in 1949).]

At the Fifth Plenary Session of the 18th CPC Central Committee held in October 2015, the CPC further specified the task of eliminating rural poverty and rehabilitating all impoverished counties by 2020. The subsequent central work conference on development-oriented poverty reduction, held the following November, and the decision on winning the fight against poverty issued by the CPC Central Committee and the State Council in December, made comprehensive plans on poverty elimination for the 13th Five-Year Plan period (2016-2020).

China's 13th Five-Year Plan for Economic and Social Development has codified the central leadership's poverty-reduction decision into the state will that is operable in practice. For the first time, poverty reduction has been made an important part of one of China's five-year plans, and helping the poor population shake off poverty has been listed an obligatory index in such a document. Also for the first time, the heads of Party committees and governments of relevant provinces and autonomous regions have signed to the Central Authorities letters of commitment on poverty elimination, and likewise similar documents have been signed by leaders at lower levels.

Poverty reduction is the most telling evidence of China's progress in human rights. Over the past 30 years or more since the launch of reform and opening up, more than 700 million Chinese people have been raised from poverty. The number of rural poor had fallen to 55.75 million by 2015, with the incidence of poverty dropping to 5.7 percent. Notable improvement has been made to infrastructure and basic public services, and poverty-reduction mechanisms have been innovated, thus contributing to the guarantee of the basic rights of the impoverished population. This has laid a solid foundation for achieving a moderately prosperous society in all respects.

The UN Millennium Development Goals Report 2015 shows that the proportion of people living in extreme poverty in China fell by half from 61 percent in 1990 to below 30 percent in 2002, and on down to 4.2 percent in 2014. The number of citizens China has raised from poverty accounts for 70 percent of the world's total. With the most people lifted out of poverty, China has led other countries to realize the UN Millennium Development Goal and made an enormous contribution to poverty reduction worldwide. Its endeavors have been widely hailed by the international community and its achievements will go down in history. Such achievements forcefully demonstrate the brilliant leadership of the CPC and the advantages of socialism with Chinese characteristics.

Chart: Poverty levels in China's rural areas according to the current rural poverty standard



Graphics shows the poverty levels in China's rural areas according to the current rural poverty standard, Oct. 17, 2016. (Xinhua/Zhou Daqing)

While combating poverty at home, China also actively helps other developing countries to address their poverty problems. Over more than six decades since the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949, China has provided nearly RMB400 billion to 166 countries and international organizations, sent more than 600,000 aid workers, given medical assistance to 69 countries, and aided more than 120 developing countries in realizing the Millennium Goals. On seven occasions China has unconditionally canceled interest-free loans to heavily indebted countries and least developed countries.

After years of trials and experimentation, China has accumulated a wealth of experience in promoting human rights through development- oriented poverty reduction, and established a new model of development- oriented poverty alleviation with Chinese characteristics.

-- Proceeding from the prevailing national conditions and exploiting its institutional advantages. China is the world's largest developing country with more than 1.3 billion people. Development is the paramount task of the CPC in governing and rejuvenating China, which is essential to addressing the country's existing problems. By exploiting its political and institutional advantages, China has formed a trans-regional, trans- departmental, and trans-industrial poverty reduction process to which all social sectors contribute through the mechanism of "Party leadership, government guidance and social participation."

-- Accelerating economic development and promoting poverty reduction. Taking poverty reduction as a major element of economic development, China promotes poverty reduction alongside economic growth, combines development-oriented poverty alleviation and socio-economic development, treats poverty alleviation through development as the main focus of the economic and social development plan, coordinates the development of poverty reduction and human rights protection, and achieves effective interaction between plans for poverty reduction and elimination, national economic and social development, and national human rights action.

-- Adhering to multi-form poverty reduction, and focusing on effect. Development is the fundamental approach to poverty eradication. China addresses poverty reduction by enhancing the skills of the impoverished population and improving their capacity for self-development, and acts to prevent the transfer of poverty across generations. The government adds preferential policies to its general welfare policy, devising preferential policies for the impoverished population on the basis of the general welfare policy for the rural areas, agriculture and farmers. It takes targeted poverty reduction and elimination as the basic strategy, with differentiated and targeted measures, and provides aid and guarantees for all those who qualify.

-- Prioritizing social fairness and justice, and striving to bring benefits and common prosperity to all. Focusing on ensuring and improving public well-being, China encourages institutional and organizational innovation, and promotes social fairness and justice. It is establishing a social fairness guarantee system applying to rights, opportunities and rules, protecting the people's right to equal participation and equal development with the rule of law, and bringing the benefits of reform and development as well as common prosperity to the whole population.

II. Ensuring Impoverished People's Right to Life

It is one of the basic policies of the Chinese government to innovatively improve its methods in reducing and eradicating poverty, and takes targeted measures to that end. Recently, through data tracking on the conditions of the impoverished population, the government analyzes the causes of their problems, and offer guidance on their development needs. Targeted measures are implemented in terms of funding, projects, and recipients. Every impoverished household is guaranteed help, every village has designated officials to carry out poverty eradication measures, and goals are met within the defined standards. In the fight against poverty, China has enhanced poverty eradication effects, accelerated the speed of poverty eradication, and ensured impoverished people's right to life.

Support has been given to poverty eradication through developing industries with local features. The state has issued a series of development plans and policies regarding industries with local features to provide growth opportunities for impoverished areas. These include the Guiding Opinions on Strengthening Poverty Alleviation Work in the Agricultural Industry and Poverty Alleviation Plan in the Forestry Sector (2013-2020), which focuses on developing agriculture and animal husbandry with local features. Poverty Alleviation Through Development Plan of the Agricultural Industry (2011-2020); Measures for Increasing the Income of Industries with Local Features and Development Plan for Economic Forests (2013-2020), which lay out a good plan for the development of agriculture, forestry, and animal husbandry in contiguous poverty-stricken areas, with key areas specified; and Regional Layout of Agricultural Products with Local Features (2013-2020), which covers 96 agricultural products with local characteristics in impoverished areas for unified planning, with increased investment from various sources. During the Twelfth Five-Year Plan period (2011-2015), RMB122 billion was spent on agricultural infrastructure and specialized funds, and RMB116 billion on forestry infrastructure and specialized funds in contiguous poverty-stricken areas. Driven by the industries with local characteristics, poverty-stricken areas are seeing greater momentum in their development, with growing incomes for farmers.

Poverty alleviation through resettling impoverished population has been steadily carried out. Since 2012 the state has allocated RMB40.4 billion from the central government to leverage a total investment of RMB141.2 billion of all kinds, resettling 5.91 million impoverished people. The central and provincial coffers as well as local governments at various levels have provided RMB38 billion for poverty reduction, resettled 5.8 million poor people. These concerted efforts have effectively brought more development opportunities to poverty-stricken areas. Through scientific planning and careful site selection, infrastructure and community services have been strengthened in resettlement areas, significantly improving the living and working conditions of the relocated population. By developing farm production and animal farming, and guiding workers to travel to seek employment elsewhere, China has seen increases in the income of resettled farmers and migrant workers, with faster progress in eradicating poverty and achieving prosperity. In 2016 the Chinese government has initiated a new round of resettlement programs for its impoverished population, with increased funds from central government, and further raised subsidy standards. It has introduced policy-based funds for development, expanded funding sources, and strengthened follow-up support to relocated people, ensuring that each resettled household is lifted out of poverty.

Poverty eradication through ecological conservation is making progress. In poverty-stricken areas, the state promotes the protection of natural forest resources, returning farmlands to forests and grazing land to grasslands, controlling the sources of sandstorms affecting the Beijing- Tianjin area, controlling stony desertification, and protecting biological diversity. All these efforts have contributed to protecting the ecology in impoverished areas and restoring the environment, to improving local ecology, to providing more opportunities for the impoverished population, to boosting the industries with local characteristics, and to increasing the employment and income of local residents and protecting the resources required for their development. China has established a mechanism for ecological compensation, and is actively promoting the program in poverty-stricken areas. It has further raised the standards of compensating the ecological benefits of forests, improving the reward mechanism for grassland ecological protection, and promoting the modernization of animal husbandry in poverty-stricken areas. Measures have been taken to expand the income channels of the impoverished population, and to encourage voluntary work by those living in the key projects areas, thereby bringing them benefits. China strives to improve living conditions of impoverished population. Efforts have been made to improve the ecological environment of impoverished counties, and to promote the development of woody grain and oil, specialty fruits, timber and bamboo forests, forest-dependent industries, herbivorous animal husbandry, and eco-tourism, effectively improving the lives of the impoverished population.

Increased efforts have been made to alleviate poverty through education. During the Twelfth Five-Year Plan period, China prioritized education in its effort to eradicate poverty. The measures included: continuing to promote the balanced development of compulsory education, closing the gap in education between urban and rural areas, improving education infrastructure in impoverished areas, implementing the Action Plan for Three-Year Preschool Education, offering cost-of-living subsidies to teachers in rural areas, and enrolling students from poverty-stricken areas, exempting their tuition fees at secondary vocational schools, and allotting living subsidies to the students. All this was targeted at ensuring impoverished people's access to education.

In 2012-2015, the central government injected RMB83.1 billion into poor compulsory education schools, and RMB14 billion to build 244,000 dormitory units for 300,000 teachers in remote rural areas. The state carried out a three-year action plan to promote preschool education, increasing the nation's three-year preschool gross enrollment rate from 62.3 percent in 2011 to 75 percent in 2015. In central and western China, the number of children enrolled in kindergartens rose from 21.53 million in 2011 to 27.89 million in 2015, up 30 percent. Following the release of the Notice on Unifying the Establishment of the Faculty and Staff of Elementary and Secondary Schools in Urban and Rural Areas, issued in November 2014, the teaching and administrative staff of elementary and secondary schools in villages, counties, and towns began to enjoy the same standards of establishment as urban schools, with favorable treatment for those in remote poor rural areas. In 2013-2015, the central government allotted RMB4.4 billion for cost-of-living subsidies for rural teachers in contiguous poverty-stricken areas, benefiting over one million teachers in 600 counties. In 2012-2015, the central government provided RMB41.7 billion in tuition subsidies to secondary vocational schools, and granted exemptions from tuition fees to rural students (including those from counties and towns) and urban students with agriculture-related majors or with financial difficulties (except those majoring in arts) at full-time public secondary vocational schools. Students who were eligible for tuitions exemption at private secondary vocational schools certified by administrative organs were guaranteed the same tuition exemptions as students of the same major at local public secondary vocational schools. The state offers grants to first- and second-year students with agriculture- related majors or with financial difficulties at full-time schools, and the standard has been raised from RMB1,500 per student per year in 2012-2014 to RMB2,000 since the spring semester of 2015, covering 40 percent of students. A directional enrollment program was carried out in poverty-stricken areas, enrolling 183,000 students in 832 impoverished counties form 2012 to 2015. In 2013-2015, the annual growth rate of rural students from poor areas enrolled in key universities was kept above 10 percent.

Chart: Spending of the central government on poverty alleviation through education



Graphics shows the spending of the central government on poverty alleviation through education, Oct. 17, 2016.(Xinhua/Zhou Daqing)

Poverty alleviation through medical security has been implemented. The Chinese government continues to strengthen its poverty alleviation effort through promoting medical security, reducing the medical costs of the impoverished population in rural areas, strengthening medical and health services in poverty-stricken areas, and improving the health of people in these areas, so that they are not reduced to or returned to poverty because of illness. All this has ensured the right to health. Improvement has been made in the New Rural Cooperative Medical System (NRCMS), which covers over 97 percent of rural residents. In 2016, the NRCMS offers a per capita subsidy of RMB420, and reimbursement ratios of outpatient and inpatient costs reached 50 percent and 75 percent. Serious illness insurance for urban and rural residents has been fully implemented, covering more than one billion residents with a reimbursement ratio of no lower than 50 percent. A medical emergency relief system has been established to help people suffering from serious illnesses, and universal medical care has been further improved to cover major illnesses, significantly reducing the medical costs of rural residents. Since 2012, the central government has allocated RMB79.4 billion to support infrastructure construction at 110,000 health service units in poverty-stricken areas. Programs have been carried out to offer free medical education to rural students who will return to serve in their areas, to send general practitioners to clinics in rural areas, to pair up hospitals in urban and rural areas to enable medical assistance, and to organize state-level hospitals to help and support county-level hospitals in poverty-stricken areas. In 2015, 45 items in the 12 categories of basic public health services were implemented, with per capita subsidy rising from RMB15 in 2011 to RMB40. Programs have been carried out to ensure that women in rural areas have access to folic acid supplements in order to prevent neural tube defects, and to improve child nutrition in poverty-stricken areas, in an effort to strengthen disease prevention and control and promote good health. Thanks to these efforts the health of the impoverished population has gradually improved. In 2016, the National Health and Family Planning Commission, the State Council Leading Group of Poverty Alleviation and Development, and 13 other departments jointly launched a poverty alleviation project through health promotion, so as to ensure that the impoverished rural population will welcome the arrival of a moderately prosperous society with the rest of the nation.

Chart: NRCMS per capita subsidy



Graphics shows NRCMS per capita subsidy, Oct. 17, 2016. (Xinhua/Zhou Daqing)

Programs are being implemented to lift all rural residents out of poverty. The state has released a plan to align the subsistence allowances system with development-oriented poverty alleviation policies in rural areas. Focusing on the goals of poverty eradication, all localities are improving their policies, measures, and working mechanisms to offer subsistence allowances to the most impoverished rural residents, striving to increase the standards of social security for the impoverished population. Registered rural families eligible for subsistence allowances are included in the subsistence allowance system in accordance with established procedures, and they receive the allowances based on the gap between their per capita household income and local subsistence allowance standards. Rural families covered by the subsistence allowances and eligible for poverty reduction programs are registered in accordance with established procedures, and receive help and support based on the different causes of their poverty. Families which were lifted out of poverty but have returned to poverty are included in temporary relief, medical relief, rural subsistence allowances and other social relief systems, and are registered for help and support. In 2015, the number of recipients of rural subsistence allowances was 49.04 million, with the standard raised from RMB143 per person per month in 2011 to RMB265. Per capita expenditure on supporting rural population in dire poverty in nursing homes and at their own homes reached RMB6,026 and RMB4,490, growing by 48.4 percent and 49.3 percent compared with the 2012 levels.

Experiments have been carried out on poverty alleviation through asset investments. In recent years, to help impoverished people experiencing difficulties in achieving self-development, some localities are actively experimenting on poverty alleviation through asset investments. With poverty reduction as the ultimate goal, poverty alleviation funds and other funds for rural areas are invested in infrastructure construction and industrial development in poverty-stricken areas, and the assets are quantified as shares owned by the households with a partial or permanent inability to increase their property income. The investment is mainly made by promising industries with local characteristics, and the farmers' specialized cooperatives often play an active role in running the operations, to ensure that impoverished people enjoy a guaranteed return and dividends on such asset investments, and that they may also benefit from transferring their farmlands and working in local businesses. At the end of 2014, the state initiated trial runs of poverty alleviation projects through developing the photovoltaic industry in provinces of Anhui, Hebei, Shanxi, Gansu, Qinghai, and Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region, pumping new blood into these regions by increasing their asset income. In 2016, the state has strengthened the initiative, planning to increase the average household income of two million households registered with incapacity (including disabled persons) to RMB3,000 and above by 2020. This will involve 35,000 registered villages in 471 counties of 16 provinces and autonomous regions.

Services have been strengthened to support employment and entrepreneurship. In recent years, the government has given top priority to employment, enacting more active employment policies, providing vocational training, and strengthening services to support employment and entrepreneurship, effectively ensuring impoverished people's right to work. It has launched the Spring Tide Action, a program to enhance the occupational skills of migrant workers, providing impoverished rural laborers with training programs in employment and occupational skills, and starting businesses, with subsidies provided for attending these trainings. The state has implemented the Opinions on Strengthening the Dewdrop Project to Support New Laborers from Impoverished Rural Families to Receive Vocational Training, providing an annual subsidy to registered impoverished families with people receiving vocational education. China has further improved its public services for employment. It has strengthened the platform for labor and employment and social security services at the grassroots level, organized the Spring Breeze Action and other employment services, strengthened the alignment of labor exports and imports, and offered free services to the impoverished rural population in guiding their employment choices, introducing jobs and opportunities, and offering counseling on the policies, laws, and regulations regarding employment. The state has helped surplus rural laborers to seek employment in cities and promoted their steady transfer, with 7.93 million new migrant workers added on a yearly basis in 2011- 2014. China has actively implemented policies to support entrepreneurship, organizing training sessions for people who are interested in starting businesses and who need training in entrepreneurship and relevant services. Other services such as information, guidance on business operations, new business incubation, and follow-up services are also provided to support new entrepreneurs.

III. Safeguarding the Rights of Specific Groups

The poor population in such specific groups as women, children, the elderly, the disabled and ethnic minorities are the focus of poverty reduction. Since 2012, the Chinese government has increased support for these groups in policy priorities to ensure their rights to social security, health, education and other services are effectively protected.

Protection of impoverished women's rights has been enhanced. The government has carried out the Program for the Development of Chinese Women (2011-2020), formulating and implementing policies and measures to protect poor women's rights and interests. It has strengthened education and training for women in poor areas, training more than 2 million women in rural areas of central and western regions of China. The government has implemented the small-loan guarantee program and a financial interest discount policy for women to encourage urban and rural women to find employment or start businesses. The government conducts a campaign of free breast and cervical cancer screening ("two cancers screening") for rural women every year which covers 532 impoverished counties, offering free breast cancer screening for 10 million rural women and cervical cancer screening for 1.2 million rural women. From 2011 to 2015, the central lottery public welfare fund provided RMB400 million in carrying out such public welfare projects as "treating poor mothers with breast and cervical cancers," "affordable housing for mothers," and "mothers' health express," through which it had helped poor single mothers and poor women who were sick to achieve better lives and better prospects for development. The government has established and improved a new social relief system to enhance the protection of poor women. In 2015, 71.22 million people around China received subsistence allowances and relief and assistance to support those in extreme poverty. Among these, 26.094 million were women, accounting for 36.6 percent of the total. In this way, those who qualified all received assistance and help.

Protection of poor children's rights has been enhanced. The government has formulated and carried out the Program for the Development of Chinese Children (2011-2020) and the National Program for the Development of Children in Poor Areas (2014-2020), improving the system of care services for "left-behind" children (see note) and the mechanism of classified services for children living in difficult circumstances, providing them with rescue and protection.

[note: Children who remain at home while their parents travel as migrant workers to pursue employment.]

The government has implemented the Opinions of the State Council on Strengthening Care and Protection of Rural Left-Behind Children. In this process, it has advanced the building of "children's homes" and "children's happy homes" in urban and rural communities, based on which 158,000 care service actions have been carried out around China, benefiting 13.13 million "left-behind" children. The government has carried out the Opinions of the State Council on Strengthening Care and Protection of Children in Difficulty. During the process, local governments have introduced measures of classified management of children in difficulty, under which, based on the needs and characteristics of different groups, standards are set by category and measures are enforced based on these standards to increase the level of guarantee for children living in difficulty.

The government has implemented the Opinions of the State Council on Strengthening Care and Protection of Orphans, on the basis of which a nationwide subsistence allowance system for orphans and a living allowance system for HIV-affected children have been established. To this end, the central government allocates RMB2 billion every year, ensuring the basic life needs of more than 500,000 orphans and HIV-infected children and making institutional arrangements concerning their medical care, education, and rehabilitation, and their employment, housing and other needs when they grow up.

The government has launched the National Tomorrow Program on Surgery and Rehabilitation for Orphans with Disabilities, with an accumulated fund of RMB860 million, offering free surgery and rehabilitation services to 90,000 orphans, abandoned babies, and poor children.

The government has implemented the Opinions of the General Office of the State Council on Strengthening Rescue and Protection of Homeless Minors, launching special campaigns to "send street children home" and "help street children back to school," while striving to ensure that no minors are used for begging or forced or tricked into begging. It has also extensively introduced an appropriate and all-inclusive welfare and service system for children and carried out experimental work on encouraging social protection of minors, and promoted the establishment of a system for rescuing and protecting minors and a children's welfare and protection network at the county, township and village levels. Since 2011, more than half of China's counties have implemented a program of nutrition improvement for rural students receiving compulsory education, offering a nutritious meal allowance of RMB4 per day per student in impoverished areas; the central government has input a total of RMB67 billion benefiting 33.6 million rural students. Since 2012 the government has carried out a nutrition improvement program for children in poor areas, providing free nutrition packages to infants aged six to 24 months, and popularizing knowledge on healthy feeding among guardians and improving their family education; by this method it has promoted healthy growth and development of infants and young children in poor areas. In 2015, the central government allocated specialized subsidies of RMB500 million to this program, benefiting 2.11 million children in 341 counties in 14 contiguous impoverished areas in 21 provinces, autonomous regions and municipalities directly under the central government.

System for protecting the rights of the elderly has been improved. The government has actively promoted the reform of the old-age insurance system, strengthened old-age services in rural areas, and established and improved a subsidy system for old-age services. In 2009 it started pilot work on new rural social old-age insurance; in 2011 it started pilot work on social old-age insurance for urban residents; in 2014 it established a unified old-age insurance system for urban and rural residents nationwide. In 2015, the central and local governments provided RMB204.4 billion to guarantee and improve the basic life needs of hundreds of millions of elderly urban and rural residents. By the end of 2015, the number of insured around China had reached 505 million, 148 million people had received insurance payments, 95 percent being rural residents; there were 27,248 homes for the elderly with 2.49 million beds in rural areas; day-care services covered more than 50 percent of rural communities; and a system of old-age service subsidies for the elderly in financial difficulties had been established in 20 provinces and equivalent units, while a system of nursing subsidies for disabled elderly had been set up in 17 provinces and equivalent units.

Better rights for persons with disabilities. In 2012 the General Office of the State Council issued the Outline of Development-oriented Poverty Reduction for Rural Persons with Disabilities (2011-2020), emphasizing that poor disabled people are key targets of poverty alleviation. In 2015 the State Council issued the Opinions on Accelerating the Process of Persons with Disabilities Toward a Comparatively Well-Off Life, outlining a series of important measures in three key fields for persons with disabilities: (1) basic livelihood; (2) employment, entrepreneurship and income growth; and (3) basic public services. In 2015 the Opinions of the State Council on Establishing a Full Scale System of Living Subsidies for Disabled Persons with Financial Difficulties and Nursing Subsidies for Persons with Serious Disabilities came into effect. It was the first national system of welfare and subsidy for persons with disabilities. Through targeted surveys, the government has obtained basic information on more than 26.6 million named and identified disabled persons with certificates and more than 700,000 communities providing public services for the disabled, thus managing to provide accurate services for persons with disabilities based on reliable data support.

Since 2012, the central government has arranged RMB3.74 billion of discount loans for rehabilitation and poverty alleviation of 219,000 poor persons with disabilities. It has provided vocational training for 1.45 million persons with disabilities, and as a result 1.24 million urban residents with disabilities have found employment. In 2015, a national platform of online employment services for persons with disabilities was launched. With government subsides, 1.18 million households of poor rural persons with disabilities have seen their homes renovated, 3.17 million poor rural persons with disabilities have received practical technical training, and 4.96 million poor rural persons with disabilities have been lifted out of poverty. As a result of these initiatives, poverty resulting from disability has been effectively reduced.

As of the end of 2015, a total of 10.89 million urban and rural residents with disabilities had been covered by subsistence allowances, nearly 22.3 million persons with disabilities were covered by social old-age insurance for urban and rural residents, and 3.02 million persons with disabilities were covered by basic medical insurance for urban residents.

Poverty eradication for ethnic minority groups has been accelerated. The government has developed a series of special support policies to accelerate poverty eradication for ethnic minority groups and regions inhabited by ethnic minorities. The Outline for Development-oriented Poverty Reduction for China's Rural Areas (2011-2020) maps out 14 contiguous impoverished areas, 11 of which are in ethnic autonomous areas, and 592 key counties for national development-oriented poverty alleviation work, 263 of which are in ethnic autonomous areas. Of the 30,000 poor villages mapped out in the 12th Five-Year Plan for whole-village development-oriented poverty alleviation, 13,158 are in ethnic autonomous areas. From 2012 to 2015, the central government allocated development funds of RMB14.59 billion for ethnic minority groups to advance a special campaign of developing border areas and improving local people's lives, to support development of ethnic minority groups with a small population, and to protect and develop ethnic minority villages with special features and traditional handicrafts. The central government has worked out a budget to inject RMB5.5 billion to support border areas and areas inhabited by ethnic minority groups with a small population in infrastructure construction, in improving local working and living conditions, and in developing social programs. During the 12th Five-Year Plan period, the impoverished population of the five autonomous regions (Inner Mongolia, Guangxi, Tibet, Ningxia, and Xinjiang) and the three provinces with concentrated ethnic minority groups (Guizhou, Yunnan and Qinghai) had dropped from 39.17 million in 2011 to 18.13 million, a decrease of 21.04 million, down 53.7 percent. The poverty incidence declined from 27.2 percent to 12.4 percent, down by 14.8 percentage points.

Chart: Infrastructure improvement in areas inhabited by ethnic minority groups with a small population



Graphics shows the infrastructure improvement in areas inhabited by ethnic minority groups with a small population, Oct. 17, 2016. (Xinhua/Zhou Daqing)

IV. Improving the Development Environment of Impoverished Areas

Strengthening infrastructure construction in impoverished areas to overcome obstacles to development is the basis and premise for realizing local people's rights to subsistence and development. Since 2012, the Chinese government has supported infrastructure construction in impoverished areas with more funds, further improving basic working and living conditions in those areas.

Upgrading and reconstruction of communications infrastructure in impoverished areas has been accelerated. The government issued its "Broadband China" Strategy and Implementation Plan in 2013. The central government has given more financial support to communications infrastructure construction in impoverished areas, and encouraged enterprises to shoulder social responsibilities, so as to eliminate the "digital divide" in poor areas. It has worked hard to promote IT application in poor villages, grant Internet access to towns and townships and broadband access to administrative villages, spread information in the countryside, and do other work. Thus it has effectively improved communications infrastructure in poor rural areas. By the end of 2015, all administrative villages had telephone access, all towns and townships had broadband access, and the number of Internet access ports exceeded 130 million, effectively enhancing broadband penetration in impoverished areas, improving local working and living conditions, and providing strong support to industrial development in those areas. The central government has injected RMB9.22 billion, basically achieving radio and television coverage in all natural villages with a power supply and fewer than 20 households.

Water conservancy in impoverished areas has been intensified. The government has formulated and carried out the Specialized National Plan on Poverty Reduction with Water Conservancy Efforts and more than 10 similar plans or programs, significantly quickening the pace of water conservancy projects in impoverished areas. From 2011 to 2015, 84 percent of central water conservancy funds went to central and western regions, and nearly 70 percent was used in water conservancy projects for improving people's lives. During the 12th Five-Year Plan period, the government arranged RMB237.5 billion of central water conservancy funds for impoverished areas, providing safe drinking water to 115 million rural residents and teachers and students in poor areas, and increasing the provision of centralized water supplies in rural areas to over 75 percent coverage. Among the 85 major water-saving projects under way, 60 will benefit impoverished areas, representing an aggregate of RMB560 billion. In impoverished areas, risks have been mitigated for more than 7,700 dangerous reservoirs and dangerous large and medium-sized sluices, more than 3,900 kilometers of river embankments have been built or reinforced, and 14,500 kilometers of new medium and small rivers have been improved. The installed hydropower capacity of rural areas has grown by 7.5 million kilowatts, providing energy to 440,000 rural households.

Remarkable progress has been made in electric power provision in impoverished areas. From 2013 to 2015, the Chinese government arranged RMB24.8 billion to extend power grids to areas without electricity and launch renewable energy power projects, fully resolving electricity problems for people without power supply services across the country. A rural power grid upgrading campaign has been launched. Both the central and local governments have given more financial support to rural power construction in impoverished areas, especially in remote western ethnic minority regions such as Tibet, Xinjiang and Tibetan-inhabited areas in the four provinces of Sichuan, Yunnan, Qinghai and Gansu. A total of RMB180.2 billion has been allocated to this work, greatly improving the power supply and the universal services in impoverished areas. In 2016, a new round of rural power grid upgrading has been launched.

Transport improvements in impoverished areas have been accelerated. The government has enacted and implemented the Outline on Poverty Reduction with Transportation Construction in Contiguous Impoverished Areas (2011-2020). During the 12th Five-Year Plan period, the government input vehicle purchase tax funds of more than RMB550 billion, and promoted social investment of nearly RMB2 trillion in highway construction. It also accelerated construction of national expressways, general national and provincial highways, rural roads, rural passenger stations, and bridges to replace ropeways in contiguous impoverished areas, building 330,000 kilometers of rural roads, and helping 654 towns and townships, and 48,000 administrative villages to build tarmac and cement roads. By the end of 2015, in contiguous impoverished areas, tarmac and cement roads had been paved in 96.1 percent of towns and townships and 86.2 percent of administrative villages, and shuttle buses served 95.5 percent of towns and townships and 83.1 percent of administrative villages. Improved transport facilities have led to effective development and utilization of mineral resources, energy and tourist potential resources in poor areas, accelerating the pace of poverty eradication. In 2016, China launched a campaign of poverty reduction and eradication involving the construction of one million kilometers of rural roads and 100 major passageway projects.

Living environment of impoverished areas has been improved. The government has launched a project to renovate neglected and dangerous buildings in rural areas, with funds mainly raised by farmers and supplemented by government subsidy. Central finance has increased the subsidy from RMB5,000 to 7,500 per household, and 8,500 for those in impoverished areas, securing the basic housing needs of rural families occupying the most dangerous buildings, and experiencing the greatest financial difficulties. By the end of 2015, a total of RMB155.67 billion had been allocated across the country to support 19.97 million poor rural households in renovating neglected buildings. The government sets ensuring basic sanitary conditions the primary task of improving the living environment of poor villages, and gives preferential support to impoverished areas in protecting traditional villages, and in ensuring rural garbage and sewage treatment facilities. Since 2012, 1,194 villages in impoverished areas have been included in the List of China's Traditional Villages, each of which receives a grant of RMB3 million from central finance to protect the village and improve the living environment. Waste management is improving rapidly in rural areas, and a system of check and acceptance of treatment of rural household refuse in each province has been established, realizing synchronous progress between impoverished areas and other areas.

V. Concerted Efforts in Poverty Reduction

Poverty reduction is a systematic project entailing a set of supporting policies and mechanisms as well as full participation of the entire society. Since 2012 the Chinese government has kept up funding for poverty alleviation and reduction, implemented reforms and innovations to the working mechanism, encouraged all sectors of society to participate in poverty alleviation efforts, and improved the democratic supervision mechanism to ensure the effectiveness of poverty reduction.

Government funding for poverty alleviation keeps increasing. Since 2012 the government has proactively adjusted its fiscal expenditure structure to increase funding for poverty reduction and worked to improve the fiscal policy system for poverty alleviation funding. From 2011 to 2015, the government assigned special poverty alleviation funds amounting to RMB189.84 billion, with an average annual growth rate of 14.5 percent; it also assigned RMB5.03 billion from public lottery welfare funds to support anti-poverty development in disadvantaged former revolutionary base areas. Moreover, the government has created innovative fiscal systems and mechanisms for poverty alleviation, strengthened management of government funds for poverty alleviation, and through government funding and the market system leveraged financial capital in support of population relocation projects for poverty alleviation.

Chart: Central government's special Fund for poverty alleviation from 2010 to 2016



Graphics shows the central government's special Fund for poverty alleviation from 2010 to 2016, Oct. 17, 2016. (Xinhua/Zhou Daqing)

Poverty alleviation funding methods have been innovated. The government has taken targeted funding measures to meet both specific financing needs for poverty alleviation and the specific requirements of development programs in impoverished areas. It has also worked to meet the financial needs of poverty alleviation through developing local industries with special characteristics, relocating people from impoverished areas, and providing employment and schooling for the impoverished population. To support the poor in developing their businesses and increasing incomes, the government has developed innovative methods of microfinance that provide registered poor households with collateral-free small loans, up to RMB50,000 on a three-year term, at benchmark interest rates, with interest rates subsidy from government poverty alleviation funds and risk compensation from county-level funds. Poor households had received small loans of RMB120 billion by the end of 2015. China has endeavored to promote inclusive finance in impoverished areas and improve the payment service systems in rural areas to reach out to villages and households. The government has improved targeted financial measures for poverty alleviation, set up a poverty alleviation relending program, which offers loans to the poor at even lower interest rates than those of the agricultural relending program, leveraged multiple financial policy tools, and directed more financial resources to the impoverished areas and people. The government has also explored methods to alleviate poverty through insurance.

Land use policy toward development for poverty alleviation has been further improved. The state has adjusted and improved overall land use planning, taking into full account the need for development-oriented poverty alleviation and the need for population relocation as a method of poverty alleviation, and has taken a holistic approach to planning the scale, structure and distribution of land used for construction, giving priority to land used for poverty alleviation. More flexible policies toward the administration of land resources have been adopted. To ensure all needs relating to poverty alleviation are covered, in the process of development-oriented poverty alleviation and population relocation the government has reinforced support for linking the increase in land quota for urban construction with the decrease in land quota for rural construction, allowing any valid surplus quota to circulate within each province. According to the principle of industry nurturing agriculture and cities supporting rural areas, the benefits from the linking have been promptly returned to impoverished areas. The state has given policy support in terms of construction land quotas to areas in western and central China inhabited by ethnic minorities, and to contiguous impoverished areas with serious difficulties, in order to use unproductive hills, valleys, mounds and wasteland to develop agritourism.

Targeted poverty alleviation policy has been effectively implemented. A total of 320 units of the central government and the Party have taken responsibility for helping to lift their targeted areas out of poverty, and 592 counties that are key targets in the state poverty alleviation development program have received help from units with which they are paired. The Party and government has improved the leading unit contact mechanism and designated nine units as the leading units responsible for contacts in poverty alleviation pair work. A total of 68 central government-owned enterprises have carried out a campaign in the 108 counties in the disadvantaged former revolutionary base areas with which they are paired, helping more than 10,000 poor villages address water, electricity, road and other infrastructure problems. During the 12th Five-Year Plan period (2011-2015), the Party and government units appointed a total of 1,670 personnel to temporary posts working on poverty alleviation in the aforementioned 592 key counties, sent RMB11.86 billion in poverty alleviation funds and materials into these counties, helped them absorb investments totaling RMB69.58 billion, and organized the export of 310,000 workers from these counties. The People's Liberation Army and the Chinese People's Armed Police Force have set up over 26,000 contact outposts in 401 townships of 35 counties with which they are paired, and helped 3,618 poor villages there.

The eastern region intensifies its assistance in the alleviation of poverty in the western region. Nine provinces (municipalities directly under the central government) and nine cities in eastern China have given support to 207 key counties in ten provinces and equivalent units in western China. Beijing, Shanghai, Tianjin, Liaoning and Shandong have established a mechanism of steadily increasing assistance funds to their target areas in western China, at an annual rate of 8 percent to 10 percent. During the 12th Five-Year Plan period, eastern provinces provided disadvantaged western areas with assistance funds of RMB5.69 billion, donations of RMB380 million from all sectors of society, and investments of RMB1.2 trillion from enterprises. A total of 684 Party and government officials from the east were assigned to temporary posts related to poverty alleviation in the west while 1,150 personnel from the west were assigned to temporary posts in the east; eastern provinces conducted training for 778,000 people from the west on exporting labor services and helped the west export 2.403 million workers.

Private enterprises, social organizations and individuals participate in poverty alleviation. In 2014 the state set October 17 as the annual Day for the Eradication of Poverty and has since carried out relevant activities to mark the date, raising funds amounting to RMB15 billion in 2014 and 2015. Campaigns to nominate advanced collectives and individuals for Social Poverty Alleviation Awards and announce the China Poverty Eradication Award have been implemented. The "10,000 enterprises assisting 10,000 villages" campaign was launched, in which private enterprises help targeted poor villages, with Wanda, Evergrande, and some other private enterprises taking the lead in pairing up with poor counties to engage in poverty alleviation actions, and Suning and Jingdong and other E-commerce enterprises becoming actively involved in poverty alleviation. The China Foundation for Poverty Alleviation and other social organizations have raised large amounts of funds for targeted poverty alleviation. The China Association for the Promotion of Poverty Alleviation Volunteer Services and the website of China Social Participation in Poverty Alleviation and Development were founded, aimed at building platforms for the entire society to participate in poverty alleviation.

Poverty alleviation working mechanism has been improved. China has adopted a leadership responsibility system with the Central Authorities making integrated planning, governments of provinces and equivalent units taking overall responsibilities, and governments of cities (prefectures) and counties responsible for implementation. The system is characterized by clear roles and responsibilities specific to each individual, and an effective performance review system is in place. Party committees and governments at every level have signed letters of commitment on poverty alleviation, and performance in poverty alleviation has been included as a major criterion in the assessment of leaders in impoverished counties. The state has implemented an annual report and supervision system on poverty alleviation and a level-by-level inspection and accountability mechanism, strictly investigating any ineffective performance of departments and areas at all levels from province, city, county, township to village, and enforcing accountability. The mechanism of stationing officials in villages to work on poverty alleviation has been improved, and 188,000 outstanding officials have been selected from all over the country and sent to serve as first secretaries of Party committees of poor villages. In total 128,000 work teams and 530,000 personnel are involved, covering all poor villages across the country. The state has adopted a poverty exit mechanism that applies strict, standardized and transparent criteria, procedures and verification methods to deregister from the poverty alleviation list all households, villages, and counties that have been lifted out of poverty. The incidence of poverty is the main criterion for this deregistration process, with a threshold set at 2 percent for the central region and 3 percent for the western region.

Democratic supervision mechanism has been continuously enhanced. A nationwide information network for poverty alleviation has been set up and each poor household and poor village has been identified and registered through a process of application, appraisal, announcement to the public, and level-by-level approval, to ensure the public's right to know and to participate. The state has applied democratic and scientific decision making, given full respect to the development interests of people in need, and invited them to participate in decision-making concerning poverty alleviation, and the implementation, management and supervision of programs. The government publicizes funding arrangements and program updates to ensure transparent operation and institutionalize access to information as a regular practice. The state has entrusted relevant scientific institutions, social organizations and other independent third parties to assess the accuracy of processes to identify and to deregister the poor population, to measure the satisfaction of those receiving assistance tailored to the conditions of their own household or village, and other indexes. Other political parties have been encouraged to exercise supervision over poverty alleviation work. The central committees of China's eight non-CPC parties have been paired up with the eight poorest provinces and equivalent units in central and western China, their main role being to supervise the activities for identifying the poor, and lifting them out of poverty. The state has strengthened supervision over disciplined execution and auditing in poverty alleviation, and launched a special campaign to prevent and address abuses of power in this field. The government has improved the information disclosure mechanism, and set up the hotline "12317" to allow the reporting of misconduct in poverty alleviation work, giving full play to the role of the public in supervision.

VI. Poverty Reduction at a Crucial Stage

The remarkable achievements of China's poverty reduction strategy will figure prominently in the history of mankind's fight against poverty. However, the Chinese government is fully aware that the fight remains tough as the country still has a large population living in profound poverty, and the solutions to their problems are becoming increasingly costly and complex. Faced with these major problems, China has entered the crucial stage of poverty reduction - this will prove a hard nut to crack.

Most of the targets of China's poverty reduction efforts are now those living in extreme poverty, and this poses formidable problems for the country. The first issue is the scale of the problem. By the end of 2015, there were still 14 contiguous poor areas with special difficulties, 832 impoverished counties, 128,000 registered poor villages, and 55.75 million people living in poverty - this is the equivalent of the entire population of a medium-sized country. The second problem is the nature of the challenge - the increasing cost and complexity resulting from the extreme degree of poverty afflicting the majority of these people, and their weak capacity for development. The third is time pressure - China has set itself the goal of lifting 10 million people out of poverty every year from 2016. The fourth is the high risk of a return to poverty - a large number of poor households struggle to remain free of poverty, and can be pushed back into poverty as a result of factors such as natural disaster, illness, or issues involving education, marriage and housing; they therefore rejoin the existing impoverished population.

Chart: Rural population lifted out of poverty from 2011 to 2015 totaling 109.92 million



Graphics shows that rural population lifted out of poverty from 2011 to 2015 totaling 109.92 million, Oct. 17, 2016. (Xinhua/Zhou Daqing)

It is an essential requirement of socialism as well as a key mission of the CPC as the ruling party to eradicate poverty, improve people's living standards, and achieve common prosperity among the people. Since the 18th CPC National Congress held in 2012, aimed at eliminating poverty and better protecting the people's rights to live and to develop in impoverished areas, the CPC Central Committee led by General Secretary Xi Jinping has committed China to pursuing innovative, balanced and eco-friendly development featuring openness and sharing, to making best use of its political and institutional strengths, and to implementing the basic strategy of taking targeted measures for poverty alleviation. The Central Authorities are determined to mobilize all members of the Party and the society to achieve poverty eradication by ensuring that progress in development-oriented poverty alleviation is coordinated with overall economic and social development, by combining two strategies-applying targeted measures for poverty alleviation and developing contiguous poor areas with special difficulties, by attaching equal importance to poverty alleviation and ecological protection, and by integrating poverty alleviation with social security. The CPC Central Committee and the State Council jointly issued the Decision on Winning the Fight Against Poverty at the end of 2015, and defined the overall goals of poverty eradication for the 13th Five-Year Plan period (2016-2020). By 2020, the state is committed to ensuring that the impoverished rural population has stable access to adequate food and clothing, compulsory education, and basic medical services and housing; to realizing a growth rate of per-capita disposable income in poor rural areas higher than the national average; to achieving indices of major basic public services close to the national average levels; to ensuring that the rural population living below the current poverty threshold and all impoverished counties are all lifted out of poverty; and to solving the problems of regional poverty. In March 2016, the Outline of the 13th Five-Year Plan for National Economic and Social Development was released, laying out strategies for striving toward the overall goals of poverty alleviation.

Based on statistics collected at the end of 2014 for the population living in poverty, the government has worked out specific schemes to actualize the overall goals: first, helping 30 million people who have the ability to work and possess productive skills to escape from poverty by supporting them in developing their industries; second, helping 10 million people escape from poverty by transferring them to locations where they can find employment; third, helping 10 million people whose land does not provide subsistence to escape from poverty by relocating them to other places; fourth, bringing all the impoverished population under the coverage of the rural subsistence allowance system and eradicating poverty through the guarantee of social security. The government has pledged to lift 10 million people out of poverty every year from 2016 on the basis of 2015 figure of 14.42 million.

Based on the National Plan for Poverty Alleviation in the 13th Five- Year Plan Period and the Annual Poverty Reduction Plan, central government departments have drawn up specific schemes and guidance for poverty alleviation. Local governments of the provinces and equivalent units have comprehensively implemented the central government plan, worked out local plans for poverty alleviation in the 13th Five-Year Plan period, and published their "1+N" targeted poverty alleviation policies (one over-all policy plus a number of supporting policies). All sectors have included poverty alleviation into their specialized industrial plans in the 13th Five-Year Plan period, and made poverty reduction a priority in implementation.

The government will provide solid financial support to achieve victory in the fight against poverty. In the coming five years, the state will ensure that its funding keeps pace with the needs of poverty alleviation. The central government will continue to increase transfer payments to impoverished areas and ensure substantial growth in central government funds for poverty alleviation. General transfer payments, specialized transfer payments concerning people's well-being, and investments within the central budget will be tilted in support of impoverished areas and population.

China remains an active advocate of the cause of world poverty alleviation, as well as a faithful practitioner and vigorous promoter of the cause of international human rights. China's commitment to lifting the entire impoverished population in rural areas out of poverty by 2020 is a prerequisite for completing the building of a moderately prosperous society, and a crucial step in implementing the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, embodying its sense of responsibility to the world as a major country. China will continue to honor international obligations commensurate with the stage and status of its own development. It will strengthen exchanges and cooperation with developing countries and international organizations in the fields of poverty alleviation and human rights. It will promote the sharing of advanced concepts and experience in these fields through multiple channels such as foreign aid, project cooperation, technology transfer, and think-tank exchanges, in order to advance the vigorous development of the causes of poverty alleviation and human rights throughout the world.