

Chinese State Council White Paper on Human Rights (excerpt) (1995)

THE PROGRESS OF HUMAN RIGHTS IN CHINA

Text of the Chinese State Council White Paper on human rights 1995

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Xinhua news agency Chinese-language version of the "full text" of White Paper entitled "The progress of human rights in China"; notes in square brackets describe differences from the Xinhua English version

Beijing, 27th December The Progress of Human Rights in China, published by the Information Office of the State Council (Xinhua English version reads "Following is the full text of the white paper entitled "The progress of human rights in China" published by the Information Office of the State Council here today.")

Table of Contents:

Foreword

I. People's Right to Existence and Development

II. Civil and Political Rights

III. Judicial Work in Safeguarding Human Rights

IV. The Right to Work of Citizens and the Rights and Interests of Workers

V. The Right of Citizens to Education

VI. Protect the Legitimate Rights and Interests of Women and Children

VII. Guarantee of Rights of Minority Nationalities

VIII. Guarantee of Rights and Interests of the Disabled

IX. Developing the Study of Human Rights and Popularizing the Knowledge of Human Rights

X. Working Hard to Promote the Healthy Development of International Human Rights Activities

(Xinhua English version omits Table of Contents)

Foreword

In November 1991 the Chinese government published "The Status of Human Rights in China", (Xinghua English version uses "White book Human Rights in China" without any quotation marks) which made clear to the international community China's basic position and practice on human rights. In the last four years the cause of human rights in China has seen new progress.

The four years since 1991 marked an important historical period for the overall implementation of the Eight Five-Year Plan on the national economy and social development, which have advanced by leaps and bounds. The plan to quadruple the 1980 GNP by 2000 was realized ahead of schedule in 1995. The Chinese people's life has improved greatly and they are working hard to achieve a comfortable life. Today political stability, economic development and social progress are characteristics of China's new social order, along with ethnic unity, domestic harmony and a continually rising standard of living, thereby demonstrating the overall improvement in human rights. Practice has proved that it suits China's conditions and the basic interests of all the Chinese people to give priority to the people's right to existence and development and improve the situation of human rights in an all-round way under circumstances of reform, development and stability. This has won worldwide recognition.

In the last four years China has actively safeguarded the aim and principle of promoting human rights and basic freedoms set forth in the United Nations Charter and firmly opposed some countries' hegemonic acts of using a double standard for the human rights of other countries, especially developing countries, and imposing their own pattern on others or interfering in the internal affairs of other countries by using "human rights" as a pretext. China's principled stand on human rights has won support from many countries of the world. China has made effective efforts to maintaining world peace and promoting the healthy development of international human rights.

Through great achievements have been made in the last four years in promoting the development of human rights in China, some human rights situations are not so satisfactory because of the limitations of history and level of development. It is still a long-term task for the Chinese people and government to safeguard and promote the development of human rights and improve the human rights situation for all the people.

II. Civil and Political Rights

Freedom of religious belief in China is guaranteed by law. Normal activities of different religions can be carried out in China according to their rights prescribed by the constitution and law. Buddhism and Taoism are comparatively widespread in China, but there is no correct estimate of the number of their devotees. There are now over 9,500 Buddhist temples and monasteries with about 170,000 monks and nuns in the country. There are over 6,000 Taoists priests and nuns who live in the temples, with more than 600 temples. Muslims and more than 600 temples. Muslims and more than 26,000 mosques, about 4 million Catholics, including 18,000 missionaries, 8,000 churches and

20,000 simply equipped meeting places in China. China now has 2,000 religious social organizations and 48 religious schools and colleges. Religious scriptures, books and magazines are published by various religions. China's Constitution stipulates that the state protects normal religious activities. No one may make use of religion to engage in activities that disrupt public order, impair the health of citizens or interfere with the educational system of the state. In order to ensure that citizens really enjoy the freedom of religious belief, religious bodies and religious affairs are not subject to any foreign domination.

III. Judicial work in safeguarding human rights

In recent years China has promulgated and put into effect the Police Law, the Public Procurators Law, the Judges Law, the Prison Law and a series of other laws. In addition, many other measures have been taken to further strengthen judicial work in safeguarding human rights.

"People's police work for the people." This is a popular saying among the Chinese people. In order to standardize the conduct of the people's police in safeguarding human rights, China promulgated and implemented the Police Law in February 1995. It stipulates that the police enforce the law strictly to effectively safeguard the security of the people and give timely help and assistance to citizens whose personal safety and that of their property are infringed upon; it strictly forbids the police to unlawfully deprive citizens of or curtail their freedom of person; the police, while performing their duties, must accept the supervision of society and its citizens; citizens have the right to report to the department concerned and bring a charge against police who have acted against the law and discipline. As a result of implementing the law, relations between the police and the people have become closer and the departments concerned have received fewer accusatory letters and more commendatory letters. China today has 862,752 police, accounting for 7.4 persons per 10,000 of the total population, much lower than the figure of 20 persons per 10,000 in some major Western countries.

The Public Procurators Law and the Judges Law were promulgated in February 1995 and went into force in July of the same year. These two laws stipulate that public procurators and judges have the right, according to law, to independently exercise procuratorial power and judicial authority without interference from any administrative organs, social communities and individuals; they must base themselves on fact, take law as the criterion, decide a case according to law and be honest in performing their official duties in all judicial activities. These principles, set in the past, are now further standardized, specified and implemented more strictly. The law-enforcement level of the court and procuratorate has been raised remarkably.

The rapid development of the ranks of Chinese lawyers in recent years has reinforced the judicial guarantee of human rights. By the end of 1994 there were 83,619 lawyers in the country, almost double the 1990 figure and exceeding the target of 75,000 planned for 1995. There are now 6,419 law offices, an increase of 25 per cent over the figure for 1993. Some foreign law firms have been allowed to set up agencies or offices in China.

Presently Chinese lawyers are busy providing society with legal assistance. Legal assistance funds have been established in Beijing and other places, and legal assistance centres have been set up in Shanghai and Guangzhou to answer questions concerning the law from citizens and provide them with other legal services.

China is a country with a relatively low crime rate. At the end of 1994 China's prisons had a total of 1,286,000 prisoners, or 10.7 persons per 10,000 of China's total population, which is much lower than the figure (of 56.5 persons per 10,000) [p.Xinhua English version omits the parentheses] in some Western developed countries.

China's criminal law has set clear demarcations between crime and non-crime. Only those who have violated state law are dealt with according to law. Included in China's criminal law are crimes of counterrevolution, which refer to crimes that endanger state security and aim at subverting [p.Xinhua English version reads: Overthrowing"] the political power of the country, namely, acts with the subjective goal of overthrowing the political power of the country and acts that objectively endanger state security. Holding different political views but committing no act endangering state security does not constitute a crime. [p.Xinhua English version reads: Those who hold differing political views, but have committed no act endangering state security, have committed no crime."]

Following the principle of combining punishment with reform and education with labour, Chinese prisons aim at reforming criminals and turn them into law-abiding citizens. The chief means to achieve this goal is education, including education in law, ethics, culture and technology. Meanwhile, prisoners are organized to participate in whatever labour they are capable of.

China protects, according to law, those rights of the prisoners that have not been taken away or curtailed. In December 1994 China promulgated and put into force the Prison Law, more than 20 of whose 78 articles are related to the protection of prisoners' rights. Article 7 in the general provisions states clearly: "Prisoners have the right of immunity from insult to their dignity and from infringement on their personal security and legal property; they have the right of defense and the right of appeal, complaint and accusation as well as other rights that have not been taken away or curtailed by law." The Prison Law also stipulates specifically that prisoners have the right of immunity from corporal punishment and abuses, the right of appeal, the right of communication, the right of meeting visiting family members and relatives, the right to education, the right to rest, the right to receive remuneration for work the right to labour protection and labour insurance. and the right to receive medical treatment; they enjoy equal rights with other citizens upon their release after completing their sentence term. In order to safeguard the proper rights of prisoners, the Prison Law sets strict and concrete demands on prison police. Article 14 lists all the offences against the law that are prohibited while prison police perform their duties. Standardization of the conduct of prison police prevents infringement of the proper rights of prisoners.

China opposes the practice of forcing confessions and giving credence to them and strictly prohibits the use of cruel punishment in every link of the judicial work; it has

adopted a series of laws in this regard. In 1988 China formally acceded to the Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment. Chinese procuratorial organs have set up special office and stationed special personnel in prisons and detention houses to inspect and supervise as to whether prisoners are subject to cruel punishment or other abuses. Once such a case is found, it is investigated and seriously dealt with. In 1994 Chinese procuratorial organs placed 409 cases of extortion of confession on file for investigation and prosecution, and completed the investigation of 398 cases. Public security officers, police and other people involved were punished, including meting out the death sentence.

China has achieved remarkable results in reforming criminals. In 1994 over 210,000 prisoners received graduation and completion of study certificates in culture and techniques from the special schools run by prisons. In the same year 282,000 prisoners were granted reduction of sentence terms and release on provisional parole, accounting for 21.96 per cent of the total prisoners. In 1994 the national reconviction rate remained between 6 and 8 per cent, a very low rate compared to that of other countries in the world. The reconviction rate in some Western countries stands between 20 and 30 per cent, and sometimes as high as over 50 per cent.

V. The right of citizens to education

To better protect citizens' right to receive an education, China in recent years has formulated and put into effect the Law on Compulsory Education, Regulations for the Work of Eliminating Illiteracy, Regulations of Education for the Disabled and other educational regulations. In March 1995 the NPC Standing Committee adopted the PRC Law of Education. It prescribes in a comprehensive way citizens' right to education and restates the basic principle that all citizens enjoy an equal right to education according to law, regardless of ethnic status, race, sex, occupation, property status and religious belief. It also stipulates that the state will help develop education in areas inhabited by China's minority nationalities, assist remote border regions and poor areas to develop education, and support and develop education for the disabled.

In order to ensure that all citizens enjoy an equal right to education, regardless of sex, ethnic status and the economic conditions of their respective regions, the Chinese government has since 1990 adopted effective measures to steadily narrow the gap between them in receiving an education. According to the statistics of the State Education Commission, the difference in the enrolment rate between girls and boys dropped from 2.9 per cent in 1991 to 1.3 per cent in 1994; the difference in the enrolment rate between rural children and city children dropped from 2.5 per cent in 1990 to 0.9 per cent in 1994. With regard to the five minority nationalities autonomous regions of Guangxi, Xinjiang, Inner Mongolia, Tibet and Ningxia and the three provinces of Qinghai, Yunnan and Guizhou which have a comparatively large number of ethnic minority groups, the difference in the average enrolment rate between their children and children of the country as a whole dropped from 2.5 per cent in 1990 to 1 per cent in 1994.

VI. Protect the legitimate rights and interests of women and children

The state respects a woman's right to give birth and protects her health when giving birth.

In China women have the right to family planning and the freedom to choose not to give birth. Relevant departments have the duty to provide couples at the child-bearing age with safe and effective contraceptives and techniques and ensure that women receiving a birth control operation (Xinhua English version reads: taking birth-control measures) are safe and healthy. In recent years, as the economy has developed and society progressed, more and more women are making their own decisions about giving birth. Cases of women being discriminated against by their fathers- or mothers-in-law or estranged by their husbands because they are infertile or given birth to girls have declined steadily.

The family planning policy implemented by the state according to the Constitution represents the longterm interests of state and social development. It also meets the demands of women to raise the level of their health and family life. Women all over China have fully supported this policy. The birth-control-rate of married women rose from 75 per cent in 1990 to 83 per cent in 1994, and in some areas it was above 90 per cent. The birth-rate dropped from 21.06 per 1,000 in 1990 to 17.7 per 1,000 in 1994. The natural population growth rate dropped from 14.39 per 1,000 to 11.21 per 1,000. Women's total birth-rate dropped from 2.31 to about 2.0. At the same time, the health level of women giving birth has risen considerably. Around 98 per cent of urban women and 70 per cent of rural women have prenatal examinations. The death rate of pregnant women or women giving birth dropped from 94.7 per 100,000 in 1990 to 67.3 per 100,000 in 1993.

China's family planning policy is a great contribution to the world's human rights. According to statistics issued by the UN's population foundation, the present world population is 5.7 billion. Without exercising control, it will reach 11.9 billion by the year 2050. The world will face the crisis of a "population explosion". The family planning policy enabled China to postpone its "1.2 billion day" for nine years.

Children are the future of the country and society. In recent years, through legislative, judicial, administrative and other types of measures, the state has greatly improved children's conditions.

In September 1991 the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress passed the Law on the Protection of Minors of the People's Republic of China. It clearly stipulates that "the state ensures that personal, property and other legitimate rights of minors not be infringed". It also gives provisions on various principles guiding the protection of minors and the responsibilities of family, school, society and judicial institutions in this respect. As a result, the protection of children is now within the scope of law. In 1992 the State Council issued An Outline Programme for Chinese Children's Development in the 1990s. It gives concrete stipulations on the main goals and measures for the development of Chinese children in this century.

To counter the criminal activities of kidnapping and selling women and children, which have recurred in some areas in recent years, judicial departments at various levels have

dealt out severe punishment according to the Regulations on the Severe Punishment of Criminals Who Kidnap and Sell Women and Children passed in 1991 by the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress. Many criminals were brought to justice. Cases of kidnapping and selling people have declined since 1991, down 35.2 per cent in 1992, 9 per cent in 1993 and 27.3 per cent in 1994.

To ensure the health of children, China has taken great steps to develop health care for women and children and improve the healthware level of kindergartens and nurseries. There are now nearly 450,000 kindergartens and nurseries all over the country. In big and medium-sized cities the demand for kindergartens and nurseries is basically met. There are 3,164 health-care institutions for women and children throughout China. To control and prevent infectious diseases, China has an immunity programme for all children. In 1994 the rate of children inoculated against whooping cough, diphtheria and tetanus was 92.76 per cent. The rate of children inoculated with BCG, measles and polio vaccine was 93.96, 89.37 and 93.74 per cent respectively. The rate of inoculated children in China is close to the average level of developed countries. The Chinese government has promised to wipe out polio in China. Since 1991 the infant mortality rate and that of children under five years of age have declined at an annual rate of 4.6 per cent and 4.9 per cent.

VII. Guarantee of rights and interests of minority nationalities

There are 55 minority nationalities in China. To guarantee the legitimate rights of minority nationalities, China's Constitution and laws stipulate that all nationalities are equal. There are clear stipulations that help is to be extended to minority nationalities and national autonomous areas for the development of their economy, culture and other undertakings and that the customs and habits of minority nationalities are to be respected in social life. This is the fundamental reason that all nationalities in China have for a long time united closely, lived in harmony and helped one another.

The minority nationalities' right to be represented in the highest organ of state power as well as in local organs of power at various levels has been continuously and specially guaranteed. Deputies to the Eighth National People's Congress include 439, or 14.7 per cent, of minority nationality. This percentage is much higher than the percentage (8.04) of population of minority nationalities in the country's total population. The state pays much attention to training and selecting cadres of minority nationalities to work in governments at various levels. About 10.5 per cent of all cadres at provincial or ministerial level are from minority nationalities and 7.9 per cent of cadres at prefectural or bureau level are from minority nationalities.

China has instituted a system of regional autonomy in minority areas. In order to implement the Law on Regional National Autonomy, since 1991 China has formulated more than 20 regulations on regional national autonomy and some special regulations. This has further guaranteed autonomy in the national autonomous areas. In China the chairman of an autonomous region and the head of an autonomous prefecture or autonomous county are invariably citizens of the nationality that exercises regional autonomy. Other members of the people's government of an autonomous region,

autonomous prefecture or autonomous county are also to be made up, as far as conditions permit, by citizens of the nationality that exercises regional autonomy or citizens of other minority nationalities in that area. The law stipulates that autonomous organs can apply for permission from higher state organs to make alterations in or desist from implementing resolutions, decisions, orders and instructions made by higher-level state organs if they are not in accordance with the situation in autonomous areas. The autonomous organs in national autonomous areas guarantee that citizens of all the local nationalities have the freedom to use and develop their own spoken and written languages and to maintain or reform their customs and habits, and, according to law, guarantee that citizens of all nationalities enjoy freedom in religious belief.

In recent years the state has continued to pay more attention to guaranteeing the rights and interests of ethnic minority groups living in scattered communities. In November 1993, with the State Council's approval, the State Nationality Affairs Commission promulgated Regulations on Administrative Work of Nationality Townships, and Regulations on Urban Nationality Work. They give detailed provisions on how to guarantee the political, economic and cultural rights and interests of scattered ethnic minority groups.

The state has always implemented a preferential policy for the economic development of areas where people of ethnic minority groups live in compact communities, providing funds, technology and personnel aid. In December 1991 the State Council issued a document requesting governments at all levels to increase input to the autonomous areas and to speed up the aid scheme whereby economically developed areas give aid to minority nationality areas. It required banks at all levels to give appropriate preferential treatment to autonomous areas in terms of loans for projects of investment in fixed assets. More funds and materials allocated for assisting poor areas should be directed to poor minority nationality areas.

Aid provided by the state and developed areas to national autonomous areas has promoted their economic development. The total output value of industry and agriculture of autonomous areas in 1994 increased by 73.8 per cent over that of 1990, the agricultural output value increasing 28.1 per cent, the industrial output value increasing 109.1 per cent and the mileage of [p.Xinhua English version omits the words "the mileage of") railway lines open to traffic increasing 27.5 per cent. The life of ethnic minority groups has improved greatly. In 1990 the average yearly salary for workers and employees in autonomous areas was 2,040 yuan. It was 3,970 yuan in 1994. In 1990 the average yearly income for peasants and herders was 546 yuan. It was 944 yuan in 1994.

Because of its high altitude, poor natural conditions and the dark rule of the feudal serf system for an extended period in the past, Tibet is comparatively backward economically and culturally, so the state has given special care to Tibet's development. In July 1994 the central government decided that the rest of China should help Tibet with 62 construction projects with an estimated investment of 2.38bn yuan. The projects include mainly infrastructure, such as water supply, electricity, roads, power, telecommunications, schools and hospitals. The purpose is to lay a good foundation for the full-fledged

development of Tibet. More than 40 projects have been completed and handed over for use. Actual investment has risen to over 3bn yuan. Completion of these projects has vigorously promoted economic development in Tibet, improved the production and living conditions of Tibetans and raised their standard of living.

Because of historical and geographic reasons, there is still a big gap between areas inhabited by ethnic minority groups and inland and coastal areas in terms of economic and social development. The Chinese government has made great efforts to narrow the gap and has achieved obvious results. It will continue its efforts to bring about a change for the better in backward minority areas.

The Chinese government has always respected and valued the traditional culture of ethnic minority groups. It has allocated large sums of money for the protection and maintenance of historical relics and sites of ethnic minority-groups. Between 1989 and 1994 the government invested 53mn yuan to completely renovate the world-famous Potala Palace in Tibet and finished 111 projects. This is the biggest renovation of the Potala Palace since it was constructed early in the Qing dynasty in the mid-17th century. In 1991 the government invested more than 30m yuan and provided manpower and material for the renovation of the Kumbum Monastery, a Tibetan Buddhist establishment in Qinghai.

The government makes great efforts to nurture and develop the culture and art of minority nationalities. In March 1992 the third China Art Festival was held in Kunming, Yunnan Province, with 56 nationalities participating. In January 1995 a music and dance invitation performance of 56 nationalities was held in Shanghai, promoting the development and prosperity of national music and dance. With government support, a number of cultural and artistic troupes of minority nationalities have visited foreign countries.

The government has always respected and guaranteed minority nationalities' right to use and develop their own spoken and written languages. In the performance of their functions, the autonomous organs in autonomous areas use one or several local languages according to the regulations of autonomy set by the autonomous areas. Broadcasting, television, cinema, books, newspapers and magazines in autonomous areas use one or several local languages. On 19th June 1991, the State Council approved the Circular on the Report Regarding Further Improving Work on the Spoken and Written Languages of Minority Nationalities submitted by the State Nationalities Affairs Commission and referred it to those concerned. The circular demanded strengthening the formulation of laws governing the use of nationality languages, standardizing the languages and information processing of the various nationalities, and promoting translation, publishing, education, news, broadcasting, television, films, the collating of ancient books, academic research, cooperation, and exchanges in nationality languages and the training of personnel.

Since 1991, with the support of the government, the traditional medical sciences and pharmacies of minority nationalities have been enriched and developed. More and more people are now engaged in Tibetan, Mongolian, Uighur, Kazak and Dai medical science

and pharmacy - over 6,000 to date. There are over 500 hospitals and folk clinics of nationality medicine.

Since the Chinese government respects and guarantees all the rights and interests of ethnic minority groups are entitled to enjoy under the law and since it pays much attention to and supports the political, economic, and cultural development of autonomous areas, in China's minority areas today the political situation is stable, the economy and culture are developing, and the life of ethnic minority groups is improving every year. All 56 nationalities in China live in harmony, are united and friendly to one another, and support and help one another.

IX. Developing the study of human rights and popularizing

the knowledge of human rights

China pays great attention to popularizing knowledge of human rights. In recent years the Information Office of the State Council of the People's Republic of China has issued in succession "Human Rights in China", "Tibet - Its Ownership and Human Rights Situation", "The Transformation of Criminals in China", "The Situation of Chinese Women" and other documents. All circles in society started extensive discussions on these documents. Publishing circles have published various study information and popular literature to introduce the origin and historical evolution of human rights and expound on the current state of human rights in the international community and China's basic position on the issue of human rights. Broadcasting stations, TV stations, newspapers and magazines have started special programmes and columns, which extensively propagate and heatedly discuss the issue of human rights. Some institutions of higher learning, research bodies, social organizations and relevant government departments throughout the country have run study groups to popularize basic knowledge of human rights.

China closely integrates publicity and education on human rights with the state's construction of a legal system. When the Law on the Protection of Women's Rights and Interests, the Law on the Protection of Minors, the Law on the Protection of Disabled Persons, the Labour Law, the Law of Administrative Procedure and the Compensation Law were promulgated and implemented, China started publicity and education activities focused on strengthening citizens' consciousness of rights and laws. At present publicity and education on human rights have been included in national education and vocational training. Almost all institutions of higher learning and training organizations hold special lectures on human rights, and some universities have a human rights course to systematically teach theories of human rights. The widespread human rights publicity and education activities have improved all citizens' ability, quality and level in exercising and enjoying human rights according to law and strengthened their sense of being masters of their own affairs as well as a sense of responsibility, thus creating a favourable environment for public opinion and social conditions for the cause of human rights.

X. Working hard to promote the healthy development of international human rights activities

China respects the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations related to the promotion of human rights and fundamental freedoms. In recent years China has, as always, actively supported and participated in international activities in the human rights field and has made new efforts to promote the healthy development of international human rights since the Cold War.

In April 1994 Qian Qichen, vice-premier and concurrently minister of foreign affairs of the Chinese government, reiterated while meeting with the former UN Secretary General Kurt Waldheim, "China respects the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Proclamation of Tehran, the Declaration on the Right to Development, and other international documents related to human rights" and "will, as always, make a joint effort with the international community to further strengthen international cooperation in the sphere of human rights".

China takes an active part in UN activities in the human rights field. In recent years China has consecutively been reelected a member of the UN Human Rights Commission and sends a delegation to the commission's annual session. The human rights experts recommended by China have continually been elected members of the Subcommission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities. China also sends observers to the annual session held by the subcommission. In addition, China has successively been elected a member of the UN Commission on the Status of Women, and Chinese experts have continually been elected members of the UN Commission on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women. China has many times sent delegations or officials to attend various conferences on human rights sponsored by the United Nations. In the aforementioned bodies and sessions China always conscientiously performs its duty, actively participates in the examination and discussion of subjects on human rights, and elaborates its views, making its contributions to constantly enriching the connotation of human rights and promoting universal respect for human rights.

With an active and constructive attitude, China took part in the World Conference on Human Rights held in Vienna in 1993. From beginning to end, China participated in the preparatory work of the conference, attended the four preparatory meetings held by the United Nations and the Asian Regional Preparatory Meeting, and served as vice-chairman of the First Preparatory Meeting, the Asian Regional Preparatory Meeting, and the World Conference on Human Rights, thus playing an important role in the conference's preparation and success. At the Asian Regional Preparatory Meeting China, along with other Asian countries, made an active effort to reach agreement on the Bangkok Declaration and systematically elaborate the basic position of the Asian countries on human rights. During the World Conference on Human Rights, China actively made clear its position and frankly and sincerely exchanged opinions with the countries attending the conference. Together with many [p.Xinhua English version omits the word Wmany] other countries, China resolutely resisted and opposed the rude and unreasonable attitudes and actions of a small number of Western countries that provoked confrontation and

forced their views on others, trying to hinder the smooth progress of the conference. During consultations over the conference's filial documents, the Chinese government delegation put forward many constructive plans and suggestions and handled and coordinated the problems and contradictions that occurred during the drafting of documents on the basis of adhering to principle and, with a flexible and cooperative attitude, taking the situation as a whole into account, thus helping all countries to reach unanimity through consultation and achieve the smooth adoption of the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action.

China always supports the efforts of the United Nations to improve the status of women and promote equality between men and women. China successfully held the UN Fourth World Conference on Women and the '95 Nongovernmental Organizations Forum in Beijing in September 1995, thus contributing to the progress of the world's women and to the realization of women's human rights. It was the largest international conference since the founding of the United Nations. More than 46,000 people from 197 countries and regions gathered in Beijing and heatedly discussed various subjects concerning women with the theme of "Equality, development and peace" as the core. Chen Muhua, head of the Chinese government delegation and vice-chairperson of the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress, was elected chairwoman of the conference. The Chinese delegation took an active part in the discussion of various subjects during the conference and expounded its opinions on the strategy to improve the status of women and promote equality between men and women and on some important international issues, making its own contributions to the adoption at the conference of the Beijing Declaration and the Programme for Action, of important historical significance. The Chinese government performed its duties as the host country in great earnest, actively cooperated with the UN organizations, all governments and the nongovernmental organizations concerned, put in huge human, material, and financial resources, and mobilized people all over the country and women from all walks of life to make tremendous efforts for the preparation and convening of the conference, to guarantee the great success of the conference. Hence China won popular praise from the international community. UN Undersecretary-General Kitani said that the conference, which laid the foundation for a new era of relations between China and the United Nations, was a milestone in the UN women's history.

Up to now China has ratified or [p.Xinhua English version reads "and"] acceded to 15 international human rights conventions, including the four Geneva Conventions of 12th August 1949 (and their two Additional Protocols; the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide; the International Convention on the Suppression and Punishment of the Crimes of Apartheid; the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women; the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination; the Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees; the Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees; the Convention Against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman, or Degrading Treatment or Punishment; the Convention on the Rights of Children; and the Convention Concerning Equal Remuneration for Men and Women Workers for Work of Equal Value. The Chinese government has earnestly performed its obligations prescribed in the conventions { it has acceded to, strictly implemented the stipulations of the conventions through legislative,

judicial and administrative measures, and submitted reports on implementation of the related conventions on time.

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