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**Introductory Statement by H.E. Mme. Song Xiuyan, Head of the
Chinese Delegation, at Consideration of China's Combined
Seventh and Eighth Periodic Reports by the Committee on the
Elimination of Discrimination against Women**

Geneva, 23 October 2014

Madam Chairperson,
Members of the Committee,

It is my great privilege and honor to make this introductory statement on behalf of the Chinese government. I wish to take this opportunity to pay tribute to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) for its important contributions to the achievement of the purposes of the Convention and monitoring of the implementation of the convention, and to express our sincere thanks for the valuable assistance and strong support to China in its efforts to eliminating gender-based discrimination. The Chinese government also values and appreciates the positive contributions made by the relevant NGOs to China's implementation of the Convention.

The Chinese government has sent a high-level delegation to this meeting, which is composed of representatives from the central government, the government of Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (Hong Kong SAR) and the government of Macao Special Administrative Region (Macao SAR). Delegates of the central government are from 15 ministries and departments. Delegates of the Hong Kong SAR government are from 4 departments and delegates of the Macao SAR government are from 6 departments. We are ready to engage in active and constructive dialogue with the Committee in an open, candid, and responsible manner.

Madam Chairperson,
Members of the Committee,

The Chinese government has made conscientious efforts to implement the Convention and attaches great importance to the consideration by CEDAW. After the consideration in 2006, we shared the concluding observations of CEDAW with all the relevant Chinese departments and ministries in a timely manner, and held a seminar in May 2007 to study the concluding observations and work out implementation measures. In 2010, we established a working group composed of 29 ministries and departments to draft the periodic reports. We also held meetings, sought the views of the relevant NGOs and academic institutions, and extensively solicited public opinions on the reports through the website of the National Working Committee on Children and Women under the State Council. In August 2014, a written reply of more than 20,000 words in reply to the list of issues and questions was submitted. In the meantime, Hong Kong SAR and Macao SAR also prepared and submitted their separate implementation reports and written replies. This fully demonstrates the great emphasis the Chinese government places on the issue and the transparent, open, and responsible approach it adopted.

Madam Chairperson,
Members of the Committee,

China is a developing country. Of its 1.3 billion people, 663 million are women. As a Chinese saying goes, "Women hold up half of the sky." China has all along attached great importance to women's development and gender equality. China declared gender equality as its basic state policy in 1995 at the Fourth World Conference on Women held in Beijing. In 2005, gender equality was incorporated into the Law of the People's Republic of China on the Protection of Rights and Interests of Women, and in 2012, the 18th National Congress of the Communist Party of China further underscored China's position of making gender equality its basic state policy and protecting the legitimate rights and interests of women. The basic state policy of gender equality has become a legal basis and fundamental guideline for China's endeavors to eliminate discrimination against women, and promote women's development and gender equality.

Now I would like to brief you on the progress China has made in implementing the Convention since the consideration in 2006, especially since the submission of the combined seventh and eighth periodic reports of the Chinese government.

1. Improve laws and regulations on the elimination of gender-based discrimination

Since 2006, China has formulated and amended over 10 laws and regulations concerning protection of women's rights and interests, which all include explicit provisions on the elimination of discrimination against women and the promotion of gender equality. For example, the Law on the Promotion of Employment formulated in 2007 includes a chapter on "Fair Employment", which requires employers not to refuse or raise the thresholds for recruitment of women on the basis of sex. The Organic Law of the Villagers' Committees amended in 2010 stipulates that there shall be women members in a villagers' committee and women shall account for over one third of all participants of the villager representatives' conference.

In September 2013, the Standing Committee of the 12th National People's Congress (NPC) included formulation of a law against domestic violence in its five-year legislation plan. The legislative process officially started in March 2014. By 2013, of the 31 provinces, autonomous regions and municipalities in China, 29 had promulgated special local regulations or policies on prevention and prohibition of domestic violence, and more than 90 cities had formulated the relevant local regulations and policies. All 31 provinces, autonomous regions and municipalities have drawn up or revised rules for implementation of the Law on the Protection of Rights and Interests of Women.

2. Improve the working mechanism for promotion of gender equality

Explore and develop gender equality evaluation mechanisms for laws and policies. China National Program for Women's Development

(2011-2020) identifies the objective of strengthening gender equality evaluation for laws and policies. Currently, Jiangsu, Zhejiang, Beijing, Anhui, among others, have established gender equality evaluation mechanisms for laws and policies. Through gender equality evaluation for laws, regulations and policies, the principle of gender quality has been incorporated into China's legislative and legal practice. By August 2014, the law and policy gender equality advisory and evaluation committee of Jiangsu Province had participated in formulation and amendment of about 20 local laws, regulations and policies such as the Draft Regulations on Employee Maternity Insurance of Jiangsu Province, and 41 of their recommendations, including the one about establishing and developing a maternity welfare system for all Childbearing-age women, were incorporated into laws and regulations.

Establish research and dissemination mechanisms for gender-related issues. A total of 21 women or gender research and training bases have been set up in China, with annual meetings or regular academic meetings held. Since 2009, Chinese mainstream media outlets have released annual news reports on women's rights and interests and held activities such as selection of top ten news events related to gender equality, with a view to drawing public attention to the issue of women's development and gender equality.

3. Take special measures to promote women's development

Work vigorously to promote women's employment. In 2009, to offset the impact of the international financial crisis on women's employment, China introduced policy of providing micro loans for women with interest paid by the government. By the end of June 2014, an accumulative amount of 193.15 billion RMB yuan (about 32.3 billion USD) of micro loans had been provided to women, with 13.518 billion RMB yuan (about 2.3 billion USD) of loan interest provided by the central and local governments. Some 4 million women each received 50,000 to 80,000 RMB yuan (about 8,300-13,000 USD) of micro loans on average. The measure created jobs for more than 10 million women.

Promote women's participation in policy making and management. China National Program for Women's Development (2011-2020) identifies "women's participation in policy making and management" as one of its priorities, and draws up explicit provisions on the percentage of women NPC deputies, women civil servants and women members in villagers' committees. In 2013, women accounted for 23.4% of all deputies to the 12th NPC, an increase of 2.07% over the 11th NPC. The proportion of women civil servants is also on the rise. Women accounted for 40.3%, 44.5% and 47.8% of all civil servants employed by central government departments and their directly affiliated agencies in 2011, 2012 and 2013 respectively. To ensure women's participation in grassroots democratic management, China enacted the Procedures for Villagers' Committee Election in 2013, clearly identifying women's priority in being nominated as candidates and confirmed as winners if elected. In 2013, over 90% of villagers' committees have women members, with women making up 22.6% of all villager committee members.

Promote women's health. Thanks to the maternity and infant safety initiative, the hospitalized delivery rate rose from 88.4% in 2006 to 99.2% in 2012 and the maternal mortality rate dropped from 41.1/100,000 in 2006 to 23.2/100,000 in 2013. A project has been carried out to provide free cervical cancer and breast cancer screening for rural women. From 2009 to 2013, the central budget invested 1.09 billion RMB yuan (about 182 million USD) in the project, and as a result, an accumulative number of 37.49 million rural women received free examination. A sum of 50 million RMB yuan (about 8.33 million USD) is earmarked annually from the central lottery charity fund to replenish the special fund set up to help poverty-stricken mothers suffering from cervical or breast cancer. This fund has helped a total of 20,175 rural women.

Formulate blueprint to promote women's education. Both the National Outline for Medium and Long-term Education Reform and Development (2010-2020) and China National Program for Women's Development (2011-2020) have clearly identified the objectives and requirements for

women's equal access to various kinds of education at various levels. In 2012, the net enrollment rates of boys and girls in primary schools stood at 99.84% and 99.86% respectively, and the proportions of female students at the levels of junior high school, senior high school, undergraduate study, postgraduate study and doctorate study reached 47.1%, 47.7%, 51.4%, 51.5% and 36.5% respectively.

Create conditions for the success of talented women. In 2011, China formulated the Proposals on Promoting the Development of Women Talents in Science and Technology, which offers policy support for the development of women science and technology professionals. Thanks to a project dedicated to studying the development of high-level women talents and facilitating their success, the age limit for women candidates for the Chinese Young Female Scientist Award and the Chinese Youth Science and Technology Award was extended from 40 to 45 in 2010 and the age limit for female applicants for Youth Science Fund was extended from 35 to 40 in 2011. After the implementation of the policy, the number of candidates for the Chinese Young Female Scientist Award increased by 70%, the ratio of female winners increased from 15% in the 11th Chinese Youth Science and Technology Award to 28% in the 12th Award, and the numbers of female applicants and beneficiaries of the Youth Science Fund both more than doubled.

4. Focus on protecting the rights and interests of special groups

Attach importance to protecting the rights and interests of ethnic minority women. From 2006 to 2013, the central budget allocated 5.3 trillion RMB yuan (about 88 billion USD) to ethnic minority areas in transfer payment, markedly promoting the economic and social development of ethnic minority areas and bringing benefits to millions of ethnic minority women. In 2013, the government invested 28.27 billion RMB Yuan (about 4.7 billion USD) to support educational development in 8 ethnic-minority provinces and autonomous regions, continuously improving education environment for ethnic minority women. Efforts are made to promote ethnic minority women's participation in decision making and management. Ethnic minority women deputies accounted for 41.3% of all

ethnic minority deputies to the 12th NPC.

Strengthen protection of the rights and interests of elderly women. More investment is put into serving the elderly. There are about 36,000 elderly nursing homes in China, which provide 25 beds for every 1,000 elderly people above the age of 60. Priority is given to strengthening the social welfare and service system for the elderly in rural areas, and 60 million elderly women in rural areas have benefited from this policy. Efforts have also been made to upgrade medical care for elderly women in rural areas. All women above the age of 65 enjoy free physical checkup, health guidance and chronic illness services.

Strengthen special protection of disabled women. The establishment of the subsidy system for the disabled living in poverty and the special care subsidy system for the severely disabled has benefited more than 2 million disabled women. Since the implementation of the "Sunlight Home Project" in 2009, over 3,000 sunlight homes have been built to provide health care, recuperation, and training services to 50,000 disabled women.

Take measures to provide education, medical care, employment and social security services to 236 million migrant population and their children. The National Regulation on Basic Public Health Services amended in 2011 includes rural migrant workers and their children in the public health service and management system. Migrant women have been included in the management system of the places of their residence to improve their health through measures such as free physical checkup and limited-price childbearing. Policies have been made to ensure participation of children of migrant workers in entrance exams to schools in places of their residence, so as to ensure their equal access to education. As of 2014, 28 provinces have unveiled policies that allow children of migrant workers to participate in university entrance exams in places of their residence.

Strengthen protection of the safety and security of the girl child. The National Plan of Action on Combating Human Trafficking (2013-2020),

the Proposals on Punishing Criminals of Sexual Abuse against Minors and the Proposals on Preventing Children from Sexual Abuse were formulated in 2013 to strengthen prevention and protection, punish the perpetrators and protect the safety and security of the girl child.

5. Improve the national gender statistics system

The Comprehensive Statistics System on the Status of Women and Children was amended in 2012. By the end of 2013, the system produced more than 40 statistics charts and nearly 500 indicators, forming a statistics indicator system that comprehensively reflects the status of women's development in China. All 31 provinces, autonomous regions and municipalities have established local comprehensive statistics systems for women's development, basically forming a sex-disaggregated statistics network at the national, provincial and prefectural levels. The formulation of the monitoring and statistics indicator system of China National Program for Women's Development (2011-2020) has provided data support for dynamic monitoring of gender equality in China.

Since 2008, Gender specific data are included in the annually published Statistics on the Status of Chinese Women and Children. Facts and Statistics -- Women and Men in the Chinese Society, Progress of the Society, Millennium Development Goals in China and the International Conference on Population and Development and China's National Objectives, which were published successively since 2007, all included sex-disaggregated data.

Madam Chairperson,
Members of the Committee,

The Chinese government has conducted active international cooperation and exchanges in implementing the Convention, maintained good cooperative relations with the relevant UN agencies, and carried out human rights dialogues and practical project cooperation with other countries and regions to implement relevant international conventions and promote women's development.

Madam Chairperson,
Members of the Committee,

The Chinese government has consistently followed the basic state policy of equality between men and women, and made vigorous efforts to promote women's development and eliminate gender-based discrimination. Nevertheless, we are soberly aware that there still exist many problems and challenges in eliminating discrimination against women. The Chinese government will listen attentively to the observations and recommendations of the Committee, continue to work earnestly to fulfill its obligations under the Convention, make unremitting efforts to implement the basic state policy of equality between men and women, and continue to promote gender mainstreaming, in an effort to provide a highest degree of protection to the rights and interests of women and promote the all-round development of women.

The 18th National Congress of the Communist Party of China held in 2012 initiated the concept of the Chinese Dream of the great renewal of the Chinese nation. It is about strength and prosperity of the country, revitalization of the nation and wellbeing of its people. The meeting also identified the objectives of bringing about a moderately prosperous society in China when the Communist Party of China celebrates its centenary and building China into a modernized socialist country that is prosperous, democratic, harmonious and culturally advanced when New China celebrates its centenary. The development of Chinese women is always closely linked with the development of the country and the nation. The Chinese Dream and the above two centenary objectives will no doubt provide historic opportunities for women's development and gender equality in China. It is our firm conviction that, as we make the Chinese Dream come true and reach the two centenary objectives, we will also score new achievements in promoting women's development and gender equality.

Madam Chairperson,
Members of the Committee,

Since the Chinese government resumed exercise of sovereignty over Hong Kong on 1 July 1997 and Macao on 20 December 1999, the Convention has been applicable to Hong Kong SAR and Macao SAR. In accordance with the Basic Law of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region of the People's Republic of China and the Basic Law of the Macao Special Administrative Region of the People's Republic of China, Hong Kong SAR and Macao SAR enjoy a high degree of autonomy. The governments of Hong Kong SAR and Macao SAR therefore prepared their own implementation reports, and their representatives will elaborate on how the Convention is implemented in their respective special administrative regions.

Now, please allow me to invite two members of the Chinese delegation, Ms. Annie Tam from Hong Kong SAR and Ms. Chu Lam Lam from Macao SAR, to brief you on implementation of the Convention in the two special administrative regions.

Thank you, Madam Chairperson and members of the Committee.