



Introductory Statement
by
H.E. Ambassador Wu Hailong
Head of Delegation of the People's Republic of China
At the Review of
The Second Periodic Report of China
On the Implementation of the International Covenant
On Economic, Social and Cultural Rights

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Mr. Chairman,
Distinguished members of the Committee,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am greatly honored to present on behalf of the Chinese government its Second Periodic Report on the implementation of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. Your Committee has contributed greatly to promoting the purposes of the Covenant and monitoring its implementation. I would like to pay tribute to the Committee and all its members.

The Chinese government has sent a high-level delegation composed of the central government and the governments of Hong Kong Special Administrative Region and Macao Special Administrative Region. Delegates from the central government come from the Supreme People's Court, United Front Work Department, Ministry of Education, State Ethnic Affairs Commission, Ministry of Civil Affairs, Ministry of Human Resources and Social Security, Ministry of Culture, National Health and Family Planning Commission, State Administration for Religious Affairs, State Council Information Office, National Working Committee on Children and Women under the State Council and other key departments in economic, social and cultural fields.

Mr. Chairman,
Distinguished members of the Committee,

In October 2009, the Chinese Foreign Ministry led the establishment of a cross-departmental coordinating body comprising of more than 30 legislative, judicial and administrative departments to examine the issues covered by the Covenant. We submitted on time our second periodic report and the

accompanying core document running over 100,000 words. We again submitted on schedule replies in over 80,000 words to the list of issues raised by the Committee, and coordinated the drafting and submission of the reports and replies of Hong Kong SAR and Macao SAR.

My government attaches great importance to the participation of NGOs in this process. We held many rounds of consultations with nearly 20 national NGOs and academic institutions, including the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences and the All China Women's Federation, and adequately considered and accepted their recommendations and suggestions on issues relating to women, children, persons with disabilities, the right to education and the right to health. Public input was also sought through the website of the Foreign Ministry. NGOs were supported in running a quiz on the Internet concerning the content of the Covenant. A symposium was held jointly with a foreign partner on how to draft the periodic report.

Mr. Chairman,

Distinguished members of the Committee,

Now I would like to briefly present the progress we have made in economic, social and cultural fields since we last submitted our report.

Firstly, we have undertaken efforts to further improve on the legal framework underpinning economic, social and cultural rights. In 2004, the phrase "the State respects and protects human rights" was incorporated into the Constitution. This was a milestone in our endeavour to protect human rights and promote the rule of law. To translate that constitutional principle into practice, China has taken further moves to improve the system of human rights protection, including by incorporating human rights strategies into the 11th and 12th National Plans for Economic and Social Development. In response to the

Committee's recommendations in 2005, we launched in 2009 the first National Human Rights Action Plan (2009-2010), followed by a second one for 2012-2015 in 2012. Both plans covered economic, social, cultural, civil and political rights. It should be mentioned in particular in this connection that the Third Plenary Session of the 18th Central Committee of the CPC took far-reaching decisions on improving the judicial system for human rights protection.

Secondly, we have constantly given priority attention to the right to subsistence and the right to development. China makes guaranteeing those two rights to its 1.3 billion people the number one task. From 2003 to 2012, the Chinese economy grew on average by 10% a year. That positive trend was maintained in 2013 with a growth rate 7.7%. In the meantime, the disposable income of city dwellers and the net income of rural residents were up by 7% and 9.3% respectively. China declared war on poverty and was the first country to reach the poverty reduction goal of the MDGs ahead of schedule.

During the past decade, our food production rose continuously, contributing to the overall realization of the right to food. The implementation of urban affordable housing project met the housing needs of over 36 million city households. The adoption of the Law on Food Safety and the establishment of the Food Safety Committee have led to more stringent regulation in the field. As a next step, we will direct our efforts to addressing three problems each involving one hundred million people, i.e. granting urban residency to around 100 million rural people who have moved to cities, renovating shanty areas and so-called urban villages where 100 million people currently live and bringing urbanization to 100 million people in the central and western regions.

Thirdly, we have always taken as our starting point the need to improve people's living standard and promoting equity. In 2007, China adopted the Law

on Employment Promotion, putting in place a policy framework, institutional guarantees and long-term mechanisms in this field, including a system of employment assistance and of public employment service. In the aftermath of the international financial crisis in 2008, we invested 4 trillion RMB in various projects, of which 65% are devoted to maintaining and improving standard of living. This was followed by the adoption of the first National Plan on Employment Promotion (2011-2015). China currently has a working population of over 760 million.

Our basic old-age pension scheme is expanding steadily its coverage. Last February, my government has unified the two separate old-age insurance systems for urban and rural residents. This will lead to further improvement on the social security system and the management service system, with an expanded coverage giving equal access to all urban employees, and efforts to revamp the social security system in the countryside.

Fourthly, we will spare no efforts to ensure the right to education and cultural right. We now have a full-fledged legal system comprising of the Education Law at its core and other laws like the Compulsory Education Law, Vocational Education Law and the Law on Promoting Private Education. Meanwhile, 9-year compulsory education has been put in place, covering the entire population. From 2006, we have absolved in two stages all students covered by the compulsory education programme of tuition fees and other charges in rural and urban areas in a drive for a nationwide free compulsory education system benefitting 150 million students. To reach the goal set by the government of speeding up the establishment of a public cultural service covering all sectors of society, the central government from 2003 to 2012 invested 58.011 billion RMB, at an expansion rate of 82.2% per year. China now has completed the nationwide cultural information resource project, which grants the general public free access to libraries, cultural centers, museums, art galleries and

neighbourhood cultural facilities. In the future, we will divert more educational resources to the central and western areas and to the countryside with the aim of promoting a balanced and equitable compulsory education service as a way of ensuring better enjoyment of the right to quality culture by all on an equal footing.

Fifthly, we are stressing the importance of a healthy environment and public health. As part of a mounting effort to address climate change by reducing emissions and conserving energy, the Chinese government has begun to tackle comprehensively the air pollution in cities. Compared with 2010, emission of ammonia nitrogen, nitrogen dioxide and nitrogen oxides fell by 7.1%, 9.9% and 2% respectively nationwide in 2013. At the same time, China has drafted an Action Plan to Prevent Atmospheric Pollution as a sign of its determination to fight against smog and to protect our homeland. On 24 April 2014, the Standing Committee of the National People's Congress adopted an amendment to the Law on Environmental Protection, which strengthens the punishment on pollution and exercises strict protection on sensitive and vulnerable areas of ecological environment. The quality of drinking water in towns and countryside is getting better, with 98.2% of city residents having access to safe drinking water.

China attaches great importance to setting up a public health service system and a medical care system. We have by now put in place a national medical insurance system covering all urban and rural residents. On January 1, 2004, we started setting up a network for the direct reporting of infectious diseases and an information and reporting management system for sudden outbreak of public health incidents. When H1N1 influenza broke out in 2009, China became the first country to complete the research and registration of a vaccine followed by its production. China has established and improved the emergency response mechanism to strengthen the control and medical treatment of people

affected by H7N9 avian influenza and constantly lowered the case fatality rate. We are also stepping up public health monitoring by carrying out yearly inspections and strengthening disease controls.

Sixthly, we have further enhanced the protection of special groups. All Chinese citizens are equal before the law and enjoy equally all the rights enshrined in the Covenant. China's Constitution, the Law on the Protections of the Rights and Interests of Women, the Law on the Protection of the Rights and Interests of the Elderly, the Law on the Protection of Minors, the Law on the Protection of Persons with Disabilities all contain explicit prohibition on discrimination based on gender, age, disabilities or any other grounds. China has successively formulated three national programmes for women's development with a view to promoting gender equality and women's development. The average life expectancy of women reached 77.37 years in 2010. Women's employment figure amounts to 46% of the total working population, a ratio that has been constant over years.

The Chinese government has taken various measures to guarantee the right to education for persons with disabilities, to facilitate their employment, and to lift them out of poverty. By 2013, school enrollment of children with disabilities in the compulsory education period reached 71.9%. Special welfare enterprises across the country employ a total number of 597,000 persons with disabilities. 10.24 million persons with disabilities in both urban and rural areas are now covered and supported by the Subsistence Security System. China has also formulated a national development programme for the elderly in order to ensure a decent life for every elderly person.

Seventhly, we pay great attention to promoting development in the ethnic minority regions. China is a unified multi-ethnic country. Each ethnic group is an equal member of the Chinese nation. The Chinese government is committed

to the system of regional ethnic autonomy and takes most seriously the implementation of related policies and measures in support of these groups. Currently, all autonomous regions and prefectures have their executive head from the local ethnic groups. Each ethnic group has its own deputies seated in the National People's Congress and the National People's Political Consultative Conference. A variety of preferential treatment is applied in the ethnic minority regions, including fiscal policy, taxation, and school enrollment. In 2013, the State earmarked 3.69 billion RMB for the Ethnic Minority Development Fund, a 30% increase over the previous year. In the years to come, China will continue its endeavour towards ensuring the harmonious coexistence and development of all ethnic groups in the country.

Eighthly, we have actively engaged in international cooperation in the field of human rights. China maintains close relations with OHCHR, UNDP, UNICEF, WHO and other international organizations and agencies, and has extensive cooperation with them in the fields of human rights education, poverty elimination, child protection, gender equality, prevention of HIV/AIDS, etc. At the same time, guided by the principle of equality and mutual benefit, China has throughout the time provided, to the best of its ability, economic and technical assistance to over 120 developing countries, in a sincere bid to help these countries achieve the right to development. In addition, China is party to 26 international human rights instruments and implements its treaty obligations in all seriousness. China enjoys good cooperation with UN human rights mechanisms, and makes contribution to OHCHR. China has received visits by a number of special procedure mandate holders in the economic, social and cultural fields, such as the right to food, right to education and women's rights.

Mr. Chairman,

Distinguished members of the Committee,

There is always room for improvement when it comes to human rights protection and promotion. While China has the second largest economy in the world, its average per capita GDP only ranks around the 80th. Development remains unbalanced between urban and rural areas and among different regions in the country, while per capita endowment of resources is low and its economic and social development is hamstrung by bottlenecks in energy, resources and environment. By UN standard, China still has more than 100 million people living in poverty.

Satisfying the wish of the people is at the heart of all government endeavours in China. The 18th Congress of the Communist Party of China unveiled a clear blue print for the country's development for the next stage, spelling out two centenary goals:

First, China will double its GDP and average per capita income of urban and rural residents by 2020 on 2010 levels and Chinese society will have achieved moderate prosperity in all its aspects.

Second, by the middle of the century, China will become a modern socialist country enjoying prosperity, democracy, civilization, and harmony, thus realizing the Chinese dream of the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation. I am confident that as China moves steadily forward in its socialist economic, political, cultural, social and environmental endeavours, people will witness greater progress in the protection of economic, social and cultural rights in China.

Mr. Chairman,

Distinguished members of the Committee,

China resumed the exercise of sovereignty over Hong Kong and Macao on 1st

July 1997 and 20th December 1999 respectively and established two special administrative regions invested with a high degree of autonomy under the principle of “one country, two systems”. Under the Basic Law of the People’s Republic of China on Hong Kong Special Administrative Region and the Basic Law of the People’s Republic of China on Macao Special Administrative Region, while the central government is responsible for the international obligations and duties arising from the application of the Covenant in the two SARs, the implementation reports in those two regions are compiled and presented by their own representatives.

Now with your permission, I would like to give the floor to the two deputy heads of my delegation, Mr. Lau Kong-wah from Hong Kong SAR and Mr. Chan Hin Chi from Macao SAR to present the implementation of the Covenant in Hong Kong and Macao respectively.

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Thank you, Mr. Chairman and distinguished members of the Committee.