

**Comments on CEDAW Committee's Concluding
Observations on the Ninth Periodic Report of China**

China attaches great importance to the consideration of its ninth periodic report of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW). A high-level Chinese delegation consisting of the Central Government and the Governments of Hong Kong Special Administrative Region and Macao Special Administrative Region participated in the consideration in Geneva, and held constructive dialogue with the Committee in an open and frank manner. The Chinese delegation gave a comprehensive and in-depth introduction of its efforts and achievements in protecting women's rights and interests and promoting gender equality since the last consideration. The Chinese delegation provided with detailed legal provisions, abundant statistics and specific examples, and did not shy away from difficulties and challenges, which demonstrated China's responsible and constructive attitude towards the consideration.

China has noted that the concluding observations recognised China's positive achievements, including the revision of the Law on the Protection of Rights and Interests of Women, the ratification of the Forced Labour Convention, 1930 (No. 29)

and the Abolition of Forced Labour Convention, 1957 (No. 105) of the International Labour Organization, the issuance of the Outline for the Development of Chinese Women (2021-2030), and the adoption of the Anti-Domestic Violence Law. China will carefully study the recommendations put forward by the Committee. At the same time, China notes with regret that the concluding observations cited some false information on issues related to Xinjiang and Tibet, and made some comments and recommendations that are not in line with the facts. China firmly opposes the relevant comments and recommendations, regrets that the Committee ignored the relevant explanations provided by the Chinese delegation during the consideration, and would like to clarify once again its position on the relevant issues as follows:

1. Concerning paragraph 42 (g), “Prohibit coercive employment measures, including forced labour of Uyghur women, immediately discontinue any such measures, release all women subject to forced labour”, the vocational education and training centers were, in essence, schools established in accordance with the law to de-radicalize trainees. The personal liberty of trainees at the education and training centers was protected in accordance with the law. The centers prohibited stringently any insult or abuse in any forms, not to mention forced labor. Trainees in the education and training centers

received vocational skills training, but did not attend any production activities. By October 2019, all trainees had completed their training courses.

Like other workers, Uyghur women choose freely their jobs and working places, and sign labour contracts with enterprises upon their own will. Their personal freedom is never restricted. Their legitimate rights and interests, such as equal employment opportunities, remuneration, social insurance, rest and vacation, and occupational safety are guaranteed by law. The government helps workers, including Uyghur women, to achieve full employment, by providing necessary employment services. In recent years, Xinjiang held more than 2,000 online and offline job fairs annually, providing approximately 500,000 job positions. Workers of all ethnic groups get better pay and a better life through their own work.

2. Concerning paragraph 52 (b), “all cases of forced interethnic marriages of Uyghur women are effectively investigated”, China advocates freedom of marriage, monogamy, and equality between men and women. Marriage and family are protected by the law. Arranged marriages and other acts of interference with freedom of marriage are prohibited. Uyghur women's right to freedom of marriage is fully protected by law, and it is their personal choice and right to marry whomever and person from whichever ethnic group, and there is no such thing

as forced inter-ethnic marriages. Uyghur women have the right to defend their legitimate rights and interests by seeking help from women's federations and resorting to law against illegal interference in their marriages.

3. Concerning paragraph 44 (d), “take immediate action to end...forced abortions, forced sterilizations, other forms of gender-based sexual violence and other cruel, inhuman or degrading family planning practices” and “investigate effectively...victims receive adequate compensation”, the population of ethnic minorities in Xinjiang increases from 4.45 million (according to data from the 1st national census conducted in 1953) to 14.93 million (according to data from the 7th national census conducted in 2020), with an increase of 1.95 million from 2010 to 2020 alone. Among them, the Uyghur population increases from 3.6 million in 1953 to 11.62 million in 2020, with an increase of 1.62 million from 2010 to 2020. Such growth rate is leading at national level. Family planning was first applied to the Han people in Xinjiang in the early 1970s. Ethnic minorities were exempt from family planning policies until the mid and late 1980s, and preferential policies were implemented for them. Although the population growth rate of Xinjiang has declined in recent years, it is still higher than that of the whole country. From 2000 to 2020, the average annual growth rate of Xinjiang's Uyghur population was 1.67%, far higher than the

average annual growth rate of 0.83% for ethnic minorities in the country during the same period. The decline of the population growth rate of Xinjiang reflects a general trend of China's economic, social and demographic development and has nothing to do with the so-called "forced sterilization". It is mainly due to the change of Xinjiang's young people's perception on relationships and marriages, and their pursuit for higher education and personal career development. The enhancement of women's social status partly explains it.

4. Concerning paragraph 40 (e), "abolish the coerced residential (boarding) school system imposed on Tibetan girls", the Compulsory Education Law of China stipulates, where necessary, the people's government at the county level may set up boarding schools so as to ensure that the school-age children and adolescents who are dwelling in scattered areas receive compulsory education. This is a policy promulgated by the Chinese government according to national conditions to guarantee people's equal right to receive education. Chinese boarding schools provide accommodations, meals and other necessary services, which are not operated in an enclosed or militarized way. They are fundamentally different from those "colonial boarding schools" for indigenous people established by some western countries in the last century. Now there are boarding schools established based on the needs of

local students in each province and autonomous region in China. Some areas in Tibet Autonomous Region are at a high altitude with scattered population, which makes it very inconvenient for children especially those from pastoral areas to commute to school. Scattered school running cannot ensure enough number of teachers and quality of education. The boarding schools are established based on the actual needs to guarantee children of all ethnic groups in Tibet to receive high-quality education. Based on the will and needs of the parents and students, they could shift from boarding to day reading or vice versa freely.

Like schools in other provinces of China, boarding schools in Tibet Autonomous Region prioritize students' family engagement in schooling, and invite parents to participate in boarding operation and design through family committee and open days alike. Students can go home on weekends, during holidays like Tibetan New Year, Shelton Festival, as well as winter and summer vacations. During school days, parents can visit their children or take them home if needed. Boarding schools provide courses on Tibetan, ethnic dances and other traditional cultures, as well as traditional food of the Plateau. Students can also wear ethnic clothes at school.

The Boarding schools have effectively guaranteed children's health, improved the level of education and their academic performance. Take Ali Prefecture of Tibet Autonomous Region as an example. From 2017 to 2019, the higher education

enrollment rates of the boarding high schools in Lhasa were 98.1%, 95.6% and 94.84% respectively, while those of the local high schools were only 37.3%, 31.4% and 26.67% respectively.

China believes that the Committee's concluding observations should be based on facts, and ensure to be objective, fair, comprehensive and balanced, with the aim to help States Parties better implement the Convention and better realize the purpose and objective of the Convention. China will continue to fully implement the provisions of the Convention, further guarantee women's equal exercise of democratic rights in accordance with the law, equal participation in economic and social development, and equal access to the outcomes of reform and development. At the same time, China will also continue to strengthen exchanges and deepen cooperation with the international community to jointly promote the development of global women's cause.