

Full Text: Human Rights in Xinjiang - Development and Progress

The State Council Information Office of the People's Republic of China published a white paper titled "Human Rights in Xinjiang-Development and Progress" on Thursday. Following is the full text of the white paper:

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Foreword

Realization of full human rights is an ideal, one that humankind has pursued for as long as we can remember. It is also a goal that the Chinese people, including people of the various ethnic groups in Xinjiang, have worked hard to reach.

Before the founding of the People's Republic of China (PRC) in 1949, the ethnic groups of Xinjiang suffered oppression from invading foreign forces, the feudal exploiting class and the privileged religious hierarchy. At the bottom of the social ladder, they were deprived of basic human rights. The founding of the PRC and the socialist system prepared a fundamental political prerequisite and laid the institutional basis for the people of Xinjiang's ethnic groups to enjoy such rights. In 1955, the system of regional ethnic autonomy was implemented in Xinjiang, offering further guarantee to the Xinjiang people in exercising their right as masters of the country. Since 1978, when China launched its epoch-making reform and opening-up drive, a new historical phase has been ushered in the economic and social development of Xinjiang, and people of the various ethnic groups in Xinjiang have seen great progress in the protection of their human rights.

The central government has over the years set great store by Xinjiang. It has taken effective measures to develop the economy, improve people's living standards, enhance the well-being of the public, promote ethnic unity and progress, and safeguard the basic rights of all ethnic groups. In particular, since the 18th National Congress of the Communist Party of China (CPC) was held in 2012, the CPC Central Committee with Comrade Xi Jinping at the core has worked hard to promote economic, political, cultural, social and ecological progress across the country. This means following the people-oriented principle, and forging new ideas of innovative, coordinated, green, and open development shared by all. Committed to the progress of Xinjiang and its people, the CPC Central Committee has pooled the strength of the nation to develop the region. In recent years, it has, proceeding from the overall development of the causes of the Party and state, constantly enriched and developed its core strategies for the development and governance of Xinjiang by making maintaining the social order and lasting political stability the overall objective

of work in relation to Xinjiang. It calls for governing Xinjiang in accordance with law, maintaining stability in Xinjiang through ethnic solidarity, and being committed to the development of Xinjiang for a long time to come; keeping to the goal of all ethnic groups working together for common prosperity and development; making energetic efforts to press forward with the development of various undertakings in Xinjiang and focusing on the protection and improvement of the people's living standards; and taking all necessary steps to ensure the people of various ethnic groups the equal right to participation and in development, and equal access to the fruits of development.

I. Political Rights

Xinjiang has been home to numerous ethnic groups since remote antiquity, and there are now 56 ethnic groups residing on this vast piece of land. Irrespective of their size of population, degree of development, and religious faith, the people of all Xinjiang's ethnic groups enjoy the same status and the same rights, and must fulfill the same obligations in accordance with the law. Their political rights as citizens are fully protected.

The system of regional ethnic autonomy is in place. Based on the principle of safeguarding national unity, the system of regional ethnic autonomy provides a strong institutional guarantee for the ethnic groups of Xinjiang to exercise their right of autonomy, administer their own local affairs, and participate as equals in administering State affairs. According to China's Constitution and relevant State laws, the legislature of the autonomous region, while enjoying the legislative power entitled to provincial-level administrative divisions as prescribed by law, has the power to enact regulations on the exercise of regional autonomy and other particular regulations in line with the local political, economic and cultural conditions. By the end of 2016, the autonomous regional people's congress and its standing committee had formulated in total 372 local regulations (including 153 already in effect), passed 52 regulatory resolutions and decisions, and approved 113 separate regulations and other regulations submitted by the various cities, autonomous prefectures or autonomous counties.

The right to vote and right to be elected are fully protected. In Xinjiang, as elsewhere in China, citizens aged 18 or above enjoy the right to vote and the right to be elected in accordance with the law. As the Constitution and relevant state laws prescribe, people of all ethnic groups in the autonomous region directly elect deputies to the people's congresses at county (city or urban district) and township (town) levels, and these deputies then elect deputies to the prefecture (prefecture-level city) people's congress, the people's congress of the autonomous region, and the National People's Congress (NPC). The 12th NPC has a total of 60 deputies from Xinjiang, of whom 38 (63 percent) are from ethnic minority groups. The 12th People's Congress of Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region is formed by 550 deputies, of whom 363 (66 percent) are of ethnic minority origins.

Steady progress has been observed in consultative democracy. Within the institutional framework of consultative democracy, the CPPCC (Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference) organizations at all levels in the autonomous region have actively innovated the forms, enriched the content and developed platforms of consultation to encourage more extensive participation and

administration of state affairs by people from all ethnic groups and all walks of life, thus bringing into place initially a wide-ranging and multi-tiered regular framework of consultative democracy. Members of CPPCC organizations at all levels have conducted in-depth research and drafted bills that actively reflect social conditions and public opinion; they constantly pursue initiatives to facilitate democratic scrutiny. Among members of the 12th CPPCC National Committee, 31 come from Xinjiang, of whom 18 (58 percent) are members of ethnic minorities. The 11th CPPCC of Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region has 479 members, of whom 228 (48 percent) are members of ethnic minorities. As of March 2017, the 11th CPPCC of Xinjiang had submitted a total of 4,920 proposals covering politics, the economy, culture, education, science and technology and other fields.

The right of ethnic minority groups to participate in public affairs is guaranteed. Xinjiang is the only autonomous region in China with all three levels of autonomous divisions (i.e., autonomous region, autonomous prefecture and autonomous county). It now has under its jurisdiction five autonomous prefectures and six autonomous counties. People's congresses and people's governments of these autonomous administrative divisions at different levels exercise the autonomous power to administer their local affairs. Chairperson of the autonomous region, governors of autonomous prefectures, and heads of autonomous counties are all citizens from the ethnic groups exercising regional autonomy of the said areas. In 1950, there were only about 3,000 ethnic minority officials in Xinjiang. By 1955, this figure had increased to 46,000. In 2016, the number of ethnic minority officials in the region's civil service reached 91,076, accounting for 40 percent of the region's total. Of them, women officials of ethnic minority origins accounted for more than 66 percent of the total of female officials in Xinjiang. Community-level democratic rights are guaranteed and respected. The Measures of Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region for Implementing the Organic Law of the Villagers' Committees of the People's Republic of China, the Procedures of Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region on the Election of the Villagers' Committee, and the Implementation Measures of Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region on Making Village Affairs Transparent have been revised and implemented. The Opinions on Regulating and Strengthening Community Work, and the Implementation Opinions on Building Stronger Service Capabilities for Town and Township Governments have been formulated. Steady improvement has been seen in the community-level legal framework. The system of community-level self-governance is being strengthened, while systems of democratic election, democratic management, democratic supervision, and publicity of affairs have kept improving. Well-defined systems, standards and procedures are being followed in community-level democratic consultation.

II. Civil Rights

Xinjiang fully respects and effectively guarantees the civil rights of its citizens in accordance with the law, by respecting and protecting life and property, safeguarding the right to a fair trial, and promoting free expression.

Life and property are respected and protected. Since the 1990s, violent terrorists, nationalist separatists, and religious extremists have plotted and committed a series of violent terrorist crimes, causing loss of life to and damaging the property of people of all ethnic groups. In 2009, the July 5

riot in Urumqi killed 197, injured more than 1,700, and caused colossal damage to property. The Kunming railway station terrorist attack of March 1, 2014 caused 31 deaths and injured another 141. The Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region has taken a series of measures designed to strike against violent terrorist crimes, strengthen social protection and control, modernize the governance system and capacity, and safeguard the lives and property of all the people of Xinjiang, whatever their ethnic group. These measures include the promulgation and implementation of the Measures of the Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region on Enforcement of the Anti-Terrorism Law of the People's Republic of China.

The right to fair trial is maintained. Judicial organs in Xinjiang uphold the principles of legally prescribed punishment, presumption of innocence, and evidentiary adjudication, and fully protect citizens' right to fair trial at all stages from investigation to prosecution, to trial and execution. The right of suspects and criminal defendants to defense is guaranteed in accordance with the law. Citizens' right to use the spoken and written languages of their own ethnic groups in legal proceedings is protected. By implementing the Interim Measures for Legal Assistance of the Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region, the right to legal assistance for disadvantaged groups is guaranteed. With constant improvement in the judicial relief system, the legitimate rights and interests of indemnity claimants are safeguarded, and the right to relief of disadvantaged groups is protected. In 2016, people's courts at various levels in Xinjiang settled 298 state compensation and judicial relief cases, deferring, reducing or exempting the litigation costs to a value of RMB26.7 million. A platform for judicial openness was established to release information on judicial proceedings, so as to ensure the public's right to information. From 2014 to 2016, people's courts at various levels in Xinjiang released more than 210,000 effective judgment documents on China Judgments Online. In 2016, there were 4,569 lawyers in Xinjiang.

The right to freedom of expression is protected. To safeguard the public's right to free expression as prescribed by the Constitution, and to expand, diversify, and improve access to the required channels, Xinjiang has created a wide range of Internet infrastructure and websites (or platforms), while continuing to promote traditional media, such as radio, television, newspapers and magazines. As a result, the citizens' right to information, right to participation, and right of scrutiny are guaranteed. The number of netizens in Xinjiang rose from 448,000 in 2002 to 12,960,000 by the end of 2016. This growth rate ranked 3rd in China, with a rate of penetration of 54.9 percent, which ranked 1st in the western region.

III. Economic Rights

Over the years, Xinjiang has maintained a constant focus on economic development. It thereby strives to improve standards of living, benefit the local economy, and encourage unity. It ensures that all the people share the fruits of development, and effectively protects the various economic rights of citizens. Public well-being has improved.

The right to development has been promoted. Prior to the founding of the PRC, most of the farmland in Xinjiang was owned by serf owners and landlords, and most livestock, water sources and pasturelands were controlled by the nobility and tribal chiefs. Peasants and herdsmen, accounting for 93 percent of the local total population, did not even possess a basic livelihood and

the means to work. At the time, Xinjiang's production capability was extremely low, as agriculture, mainly based on kantumanhoes and ox-drawn plows, was wholly outdated. It had no industry, and could not even produce basic industrial items like steel nails and matches. It lacked the basic conditions for development. Since the founding of the PRC, Xinjiang has improved its preconditions for development, and gradually set up a modern agricultural system and a comprehensive manufacturing industry. The autonomous region's society and economy have been transformed. Since the launch of China's reform and opening-up drive in 1978, Xinjiang's GDP has soared from RMB3.9 billion to RMB961.7 billion in 2016. Its per-capita GDP has grown from RMB313 to RMB40,427 in the same period. The per-capita disposable income of urban residents has risen from RMB319 to RMB28,463 and that of rural residents from RMB119 to RMB10,183. A better quality of life has been guaranteed. Great improvements have been seen in the living conditions of people of all ethnic groups in Xinjiang. Farmers and herdsmen living in high mountainous, and cold or remote areas have gradually been provided access to power, tap water and modern transport facilities. The Engel coefficient of urban households decreased from 57.3 percent in 1980 to 29.1 percent in 2016; that of rural households from 60 percent to 31.7 percent. The autonomous region has directed a considerable effort to infrastructure construction in tap water, power and gas. By the end of 2016, the eight million rural population was guaranteed access to safe drinking water, and 72.5 percent of rural households had access to tap water. A series of programs were in place, involving rural safe housing subsidy, nomadic settlement subsidy, and urban low-income housing. The per-capita living space of urban residents rose from 3.5 sq m in 1978 to more than 31.1 sq m in 2016, while that of rural residents increased from 9.46 sq m in 1994 to more than 25.7 sq m in 2016. Transport has also been improved and the people now have access to convenient and rapid traffic facilities. From 1978 to 2016, the kilometrage of roads open to powered vehicles increased from 23,800 km to 182,100 km, and rail kilometrage grew from 1,435 km to 5,868 km. Expressways and high-speed railways developed from scratch, reaching 4,395 km and 717 km, respectively. About 97 percent of administrative villages now have access to metalled roads, and 96 percent have access to bus services. There are 18 civil airports in Xinjiang. Further improvement has been made in the quality of life and daily living conditions of the impoverished. Xinjiang has implemented targeted and effective measures in poverty alleviation. Appropriate projects have been planned and carried out for the benefit of specific impoverished groups and even individual impoverished households. Aid workers have been assigned to villages according to specific conditions, and funds have been used effectively to achieve concrete results. Southern Xinjiang has been taken as the focus of the poverty-relief program. More funds and more social resources have been directed to the area. Ten special projects involving employment-based poverty reduction have been implemented. Infrastructure and basic public services have been improved. By the end of 2016, the incidence of poverty had dropped to 10 percent or less, thus better safeguarding the poor's rights to life and development.

The right to work has been effectively guaranteed. To achieve this, Xinjiang has given priority to promoting equal employment opportunities, and encouraged different sectors to create more jobs through multiple measures. It has emphasized the development of labor-intensive industries and promoted the growth of micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises, private enterprises and labor export service enterprises. It has stabilized employment by means of employment transfer, start-up enterprises, and industrial employment. At the end of 2016, 12.63 million people in rural and

urban areas of Xinjiang were employed and the registered urban unemployment rate was 3.22 percent, with 455,000 new jobs created in urban areas over the course of the year.

The autonomous region has made every effort to develop vocational education, and arranged a variety of employment training programs. It has provided growing support to key population groups, such as college graduates, impoverished families, urban residents who have difficulty in finding jobs, excess peasant and herdsman labor, and rural women. It has established a long-term mechanism to constantly ensure that every family has at least one member in work. It has gradually improved the salary and bonus system. The coordination mechanism for labor relations has been further enhanced. The government has strengthened scrutiny over the enforcement of laws and regulations on employees' rights and employers' duties and the handling of disputes over labor relations, given labor unions and employees' rights protection organizations scope to play their due role, and effectively protected the basic right to work and the essential interests of the people. The Safe Production Year campaign has continued. The government has intensified workplace safety and the prevention and control of accidents, and tried hard to address prominent problems and deep-rooted issues that might create risks. The number of victims killed in workplace accidents fell by 26.5 percent between 2015 and 2016, and the workplace death rate per RMB100 million of GDP fell by 16.8 percent. Xinjiang has also improved the prevention and control of occupational diseases. There are now 111 occupational health examination organizations, and 41 occupational disease diagnosis organizations in the autonomous region, and all employees have received training in occupational health.

IV. Social Rights

Standards of living in Xinjiang were very low when the People's Republic of China was founded in 1949. Following more than 60 years of unstinting effort, protection of the citizens' rights to social security, health, and education has reached unprecedented levels, as evidenced in the following:

Social security has been improved. Once the People's Republic was founded, the government provided generous funding to reinforce Xinjiang's social security system. Now a multi-layered basic social security system with wide coverage is in place. In 2016, Xinjiang launched serious illness insurance for urban and rural residents and urban workers, and personal accident insurance was made available to all residents free of charge. By the end of 2016, each of the following goals had been achieved:

A total of 3.42 million employees were covered by basic old-age insurance (excluding those who joined the plan following the reform of old-age insurance in government bodies and public institutions).

A total of 5.40 million people had subscribed to rural basic old-age insurance, and the coverage of old-age insurance for urban and rural residents stood above 95 percent.

The basic medical insurance system covered 6.88 million people in urban areas, and 11.26 million rural residents had joined the new rural cooperative medical care system.

The total number of people participating in unemployment insurance, work-related injury insurance, and maternity insurance reached 7.39 million.

The government had issued 12.07 million social security cards, covering 55.4 percent of Xinjiang residents.

The level of social security has been improved over the years. By last year, the basic pension benefits for enterprise retirees had been increased for 12 years in a run. Corresponding figures for work-related injury insurance benefits and unemployment insurance benefits were 12 years and 5 years, respectively. Timely adjustments have been made to the contribution basis by linking social security with price levels. To ease the burden on urban small-business owners and self-employed persons, their old-age insurance contribution bases were lowered in 2014. Policies have been enacted to ensure that workers, and especially migrant workers who come to work in cities, are able to join the urban basic old-age insurance scheme. The new rural social old-age insurance system has been brought into line with urban old-age insurance in terms of benefits received, from RMB55 to RMB115 per person per month. The social assistance system is playing an active role. In Xinjiang, a social assistance system for needy urban and rural residents was established at the beginning of the PRC. Between 2009 and 2016, the monthly subsistence allowance for urban residents increased from RMB172 per capita to RMB384 per capita, while that of rural residents rose from RMB69 to RMB249.5. For rural households enjoying the "five guarantees" (access to proper food, clothing, medical care, housing and funeral/educational expenses), subsidies for those living in nursing homes increased from RMB3,036 to RMB6,936 per year, and the subsidies for those living at home grew from RMB2,280 to RMB4,586 per year. Social welfare institutions of various types had 44,000 beds and 26,000 persons are under their care. By the end of 2016, 95 percent of villages, townships, and urban communities had opened "one-stop" assistance offices, spending RMB1.85 billion to help 173,000 households in need. In 2016 Xinjiang's social welfare lotteries raised funds to the value of RMB1.26 billion, which were mainly spent on supporting the elderly, orphans, persons with disabilities, and people in need. In the same year a total of RMB736 million was allocated for disaster relief and reconstruction, providing assistance to 4.78 million victims of natural disasters.

There is marked improvement in ensuring access to healthcare. Before the founding of the PRC, Xinjiang's medical services were in a poor state; there was a shortage of doctors and medicines, and epidemics of diseases, such as the plague, smallpox, and cholera, were commonplace. People had no guaranteed access to healthcare. In 1949, Xinjiang had only 54 medical institutions with 696 beds, placing the medical service capacity at 1.6 beds and 0.19 doctors per 10,000 people. After more than 60 years of development a basic medical care system has been established, with medical institutions covering urban and rural areas. By the end of 2016, there were 15,721 medical institutions of various kinds - including 707 hospitals with 144,500 beds - and 51,000 doctors, and 56,000 nurses. With 60.3 beds and 21.2 doctors serving every 10,000 persons, Xinjiang is now above the national average in terms of medical service capacity.

Medical service contracts have been signed between general practitioners and urban residents, and

between doctors in rural areas and farmers and herdsmen, to provide them with medical services. Epidemic prevention institutions have been set up, and a relatively complete urban-rural epidemic prevention system has been formed, bringing major epidemic and endemic diseases under effective control. Public health has seen a steady improvement. From 1949 to 2016, the mortality rate dropped from 20.82 to 4.26 per thousand. The average life expectancy has increased from 30 years to 72.35 years. Beginning in 2016, urban and rural residents can have a free health checkup every year.

The right to education is fully protected. Before 1949, the educational level in Xinjiang was very low, and the general public had very little chance of acquiring an education. Since the founding of the PRC, Xinjiang has gone to great lengths to develop its education with support from the central government. From 1949 to 2016, the number of elementary schools has increased from 1,335 to 3,526, secondary schools from 9 to 1,416, secondary vocational schools from 11 to 167 (excluding skilled workers schools), and higher education institutions from 1 to 41. The number of university students has risen from 400 to 420,100, and secondary vocational school students have increased from 2,000 to 235,100. A total of 1,022,100 students have graduated from colleges and universities. The nine-year compulsory education is now generally available to all children. In southern Xinjiang, all children have access to three years of preschool education and a 12-year basic education. Further progress has been made in adult education, and a multilayered and diverse vocational training system has been established. Expenditure on education accounts for over 5 percent of the total fiscal revenue, and continues to grow as government revenues increase. Compulsory education has been included in public finance, and schools offering compulsory education in both urban and rural areas now operate according to the same public expenditure baseline. Subsidies for boarding schools, smaller schools, schools in northern Xinjiang with winter heating, special education schools, and students with disabilities have risen steadily. In 2016, the government allocated RMB2.95 billion to subsidize the public expenditure and heating fees of 2.71 million students from rural families receiving compulsory education. It also provided living subsidies for 452,000 boarders from needy rural families, and distributed free textbooks to 2.63 million students receiving compulsory education in rural areas and some elementary and secondary school students in cities. In 45 counties and 26 schools running special classes for students from less developed areas in Xinjiang, a nutrition enhancement program has been introduced for compulsory-stage students from rural families. By the end of 2016, 91,000 students from Xinjiang had received high-school or secondary vocational education at special classes in more developed areas of the country.

V. Cultural Rights

Xinjiang is committed to providing equal access to basic public cultural services, to using the spoken and written languages of ethnic minorities, and to protecting cultural heritage, thereby safeguarding the citizens' cultural rights.

Equal access to basic public cultural services is steadily improving. Before the founding of the PRC, there was only one library in Xinjiang. Thanks to efforts made since then, significant development has been made in the autonomous region's public cultural service undertakings. By the end of 2016, there were 107 public libraries, 90 museums, 53 galleries, 119 cultural centers,

and 1,170 township (community) cultural activity venues, all offering free access to the public. A Rural Library Project covering all administrative villages provides farmers with books, periodicals, newspapers and audio and video products. There is now a basic public cultural service system in place at four levels (the autonomous region, the cities (prefectures), the counties and the townships). There are six radio stations, 10 TV stations, and 93 radio and TV stations. Almost 97 percent of the rural population has access to radio and TV.

Spoken and written languages of ethnic minorities are widely used. The Constitution stipulates that the state promotes the nationwide use of Putonghua in accordance with the law; meanwhile, it safeguards the rights of various ethnic groups to use and develop their own spoken and written languages. Spoken and written languages of ethnic minorities are extensively used in such areas as judicature, administration, education, press & publishing, radio & television, the internet and social public affairs. Xinjiang now has 13 publishing houses publishing books, audio and video products, and e-publications in six languages - Uygur, Han Chinese, Kazak, Kirgiz, Mongolian and Xibe. Xinjiang publishes 110 newspapers, including 52 in ethnic minority languages, and 200 periodicals, including 120 in ethnic minority languages. Published in four languages - Uygur, Han Chinese, Kazak and Mongolian - the official provincial-level newspaper, Xinjiang Daily, boasts the most editions of different languages in China. Qapqal News is the world's only newspaper published in the Xibe language. Xinjiang People's Broadcasting Station now provides 15 radio channels in five languages - Uygur, Han Chinese, Kazak, Mongolian and Kirgiz. Xinjiang TV provides 12 TV channels in four languages - Uygur, Han Chinese, Kazak and Kirgiz; it is, therefore the provincial-level TV station with the most channels and broadcasts in different languages throughout the country.

Cultural heritage has been effectively protected. Following the founding of the PRC, the government of the autonomous region (then a province) issued the Order on the Protection of Historical Sites, giving priority to the conservation of the Thousand Buddha Caves Sites in Kuqa County and Baicheng County. For many years, the central and local governments have funded the conservation and renovation of many historical and cultural sites in Xinjiang, including the Gaochang Ancient City Ruins, Beiting Ancient City Site and Kashi's Id Kah Mosque. More than 3,000 precious cultural relics have been conserved and renovated. By the end of 2016, Xinjiang had two world cultural heritages, five national historical and cultural cities, 113 cultural relic sites under state key protection, and 558 cultural relic sites under autonomous regional protection, with more than 616,000 tangible cultural relics being collected and kept in 182 state-owned units. Currently, Xinjiang has three projects on the UNESCO Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity and the List of Intangible Cultural Heritage in Need of Urgent Safeguarding - the Art of Xinjiang Uygur Muqam, the Epic of Manas, and the Meshrep. All ethnic groups in Xinjiang possess intangible cultural heritage items at both autonomous region and/or state levels.

VI. Environmental Rights

Xinjiang upholds the basic national policy of conserving resources and protecting the environment. Giving priority to environmental protection, it pursues ecology-friendly and sustainable development on the path toward a future of economic development where life is prosperous and a

healthy environment is conserved, so as to constantly promote harmony between man and nature and effectively ensuring the people's environmental rights.

The framework for eco-environmental protection has been further improved. Over 30 local regulations and rules, including the Regulations of Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region on the Implementation of the Water and Soil Conservation Law of the People's Republic of China, and the Regulations of Urumqi City on the Prevention and Control of Atmospheric Pollution, Regulations on Wild Plants Protection, Regulations on Wetland Protection, and Regulations on the Environmental Protection for the Development of Coal, Petroleum and Natural Gas have been promulgated and implemented. The Regulations on Environmental Protection have been amended twice. Water Function Zoning of Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region has been implemented, and work on creating and revising the Environmental Function Zoning of Xinjiang has been accelerated, which will provide a basic technical foundation for the drawing of ecological red lines. A framework of ecological protection, pollution control, radioactive environment monitoring, and monitoring of hazardous waste and nuclear safety is in place.

Solid progress has been made in ecological development. Xinjiang has carried out a number of projects, including natural forest protection, returning farmland to forest or grassland, returning grazing land to grassland, prevention and control of desertification, ecological management and restoration, and wildlife protection, to constantly improve the ecological environment and create secure zones for ecological security. Since 2016, projects involving high energy consumption, serious pollution, and high emissions have been strictly prohibited in Xinjiang. A "one-chop" examination system has been enforced for the development of energy and mineral resources before approval obtained from the government of the autonomous region, besides a "one-veto" system for issues concerning environmental protection. As of the end of 2016, oasis forest coverage had reached 24 percent, grassland comprehensive vegetation coverage had reached 41 percent, and the forest network was providing effective protection to 95 percent of the farmland. Every year, Xinjiang improves 20 million mu (approximately 1,333,333 hectares) of grassland suffering from degradation, desertification and salinization, reducing the expansion of decertified land to 82.8 sq km a year. Of the 79 major rivers, 94 percent have high water quality. Wetlands total more than 3.94 million hectares in area. There are 29 state - and autonomous region-level nature reserves, 28 state-level wetland parks, and one world natural heritage.

Urban living environment continues to improve. Xinjiang has worked to promote urban ecological restoration in an all-around manner, to speed up construction of urban ecological gardens and urban wetland resources, and to continuously enhance the quality of urban green space and comprehensive service functions. As of the end of 2015, the greening rate of urban built-up areas had reached 35 percent, the green coverage rate had reached 37 percent, and per capita park green area had reached 11.5 sq m. There are 20 State - and autonomous region-level garden cities, 44 State - and autonomous region-level green countytowns, and one State-level urban wetland park. Effective measures have been adopted for pollution control. Xinjiang has intensified efforts in pollution prevention and control, strengthened water pollution prevention and control, and built centralized sewage treatment facilities in industrial agglomeration areas, as well as urban sewage treatment and recycling facilities. It has accelerated the pace of constructing waste disposal

facilities, and improved the disposal capacity and level of up-to-standard discharge.

Obvious results have been seen in energy conservation and emission reduction. Xinjiang has actively adjusted and optimized energy consumption and the industrial configuration, and developed a circular economy and energy-conserving and environment-friendly industries. In 2016, its wind and photovoltaic generation capacity reached 17.75 million kilowatts and 8.93 million kilowatts, respectively, ranking second and first among China's provincial-level administrative divisions. A strict system for mothballing outdated capacity has been implemented, which has decommissioned a total of 21 million tons of outdated capacity in thermal power, iron and steel, cement, coking and other sectors, and saved energy equivalent to about 4.18 million tons of standard coal. During the 12th Five-Year Plan period (2011-15), emissions of sulfur dioxide, nitrogen oxides, chemical oxygen demand, and ammonia nitrogen decreased by 39 percent, 38 percent, 44 percent and 43 percent respectively compared to the previous five-year plan period, showing that Xinjiang has achieved the national targets for controlling the discharge of these four major pollutants. Xinjiang has also given more financial support to energy conservation and emission reduction in industry, construction, transport, public institutions and other key sectors. A mandatory standard of 65 percent reduction in energy consumption has been followed for newly built houses, and 95 million sq m of existing residential buildings have gone through transformation in heating metering and energy conservation. Xinjiang has developed urban public transport, and encouraged residents to use green means of transport. It has strengthened energy efficiency supervision in large public buildings, and 59 public institutions have been included in the national list of energy efficiency demonstration units. A policy of special electricity prices for power plants with desulfurizing and dedusting equipment has been fully implemented. Xinjiang has launched a pilot program of paid use and trading of emissions permits, and actively explored a market regulation mechanism for paid use of environmental resources. In 2016 the Xinjiang Emissions Trading Reserve Center was formally established, marking institutionalization of the pilot work of the use and trade of emissions permits.

Mechanism of environmental monitoring has been improved. Since 2015, inspection of environmental law enforcement has been carried out in more than 30 percent of prefectures (districts or cities) and 5 percent of counties (cities or districts at the same level). A "grid" of environmental supervision has been established in which key objects for supervision are determined and levels of supervision are classified, and a system that supervisors shoulder a lifelong responsibility for case quality has been established. Regarding environment-related complaints and reports, a responsibility system has been implemented, in which the first person who receives the complaint/report shall make sure the case is handled properly. A 12369 hotline for reporting environmental problems has been opened. A mechanism of exposing typical cases of environmental violation has been launched. Publicity concerning environmental credit evaluation and information about polluting enterprises has been strengthened, and information on rectification and enforcement actions against those violating laws and rules is regularly publicized. Illegal activities detrimental to the environment are punished. Xinjiang has strengthened environmental protection responsibilities for government and enterprises, and strengthened the investigation and punishment of those responsible for illegal activities detrimental to the environment. It has conducted thorough investigations into and comprehensive cleanup of

construction projects violating relevant laws and rules. It has established a joint meeting system between environmental protection departments and police, courts, procuratorates, and supervisory departments for joint investigation, case briefing, case transfer, and information sharing. It has also invited citizens, legal persons and other organizations to participate in supervision in relation to environmental law enforcement, making public the whole process of law enforcement.

VII. Right to Freedom of Religious Belief

Subject to the basic principles of "protecting the lawful, banning the unlawful, containing the extremist, resisting penetration, and punishing crime," the State and the autonomous region fully implement the policy of freedom of religious belief, protecting normal religious activities and ensuring the public's freedom of religious belief in accordance with the law.

Freedom of religious belief is respected and protected. It is stipulated in the Constitution of China, "Citizens of the People's Republic of China enjoy freedom of religious belief." This principle is also reflected in the Regulations on Religious Affairs promulgated by the State Council and the Regulations on Religious Affairs of the Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region. It is up to the individual concerned to make his or her free decision to believe in or not to believe in any religion, and to believe in one religion or another. Citizens shall not subject to discrimination or unfair treatment because they believe in, or do not believe in, any religion. Anyone who encroaches on the citizens' freedom of religious belief shall bear legal liability. Xinjiang has strengthened its management of religious affairs in accordance with the law, protecting venues for lawful religious activities. It has implemented a policy for planning and organizing pilgrimages to Mecca, and has strengthened services to ensure that all such pilgrimages are safe and orderly.

Normal religious needs have been satisfied. Xinjiang has published translations of the religious classics of Islam, Buddhism, and Christianity in multiple languages. It has printed and distributed 1.76 million copies of the Quran and Selections from Al-Sahih Muhammad Ibn-Isma'il al-Bukhari. Xinjiang Muslims, a periodical established in 2015, publishes in Uygur, Han Chinese, and Kazak. An internet portal for Xinjiang's Muslims is available in Uygur and Han Chinese. Religious organizations have organized training courses on religious knowledge and etiquette for citizens with religious beliefs.

Legitimate rights of religious organizations have been effectively safeguarded. Xinjiang has 112 religious organizations, which receive help from the government to improve their conditions and allow them to play a broader role. Steady improvements have been made in the training system to cultivate clerics, by offering them systemic training, enhancing their overall qualities, and raising religious organizations' capacity of self-management. The government organizes trips for Xinjiang's clerics to study in the more developed parts of China and exchange with their counterparts there, so that they may broaden their vista and improve their overall qualities. The central government supports the Xinjiang Islamic Institute in expanding its campus, improving teaching conditions, and enrolling more students.

Overseas religious exchanges have been conducted in increasing depth. Xinjiang's religious circles have sent delegations to international academic exchanges and seminars, and its clerics and

students at religious institutes have won prizes in competitions for reciting the Quran. Since 2001, Xinjiang has sent more than 70 clerics and students from the Islamic Institute to study at institutions of higher learning in Egypt, Pakistan, and other countries, and has set up scholarships to award those who achieve outstanding performance. It has organized delegations of religious figures to visit other countries, briefing the international community on Xinjiang's socio-economic development and its freedom of religious belief, so as to enhance mutual understanding and friendship.

Penetration of religious extremism has been curbed in accordance with the law. Influenced by international religious extremism, religious extremism has been spreading in Xinjiang in recent years. Extremist forces distort Islamic theology, bewitching the public, and force their extremist ideas onto others. They have masterminded large-scale incidents of violence and terrorism, injuring and killing innocent people of any ethnic group, even their fellow Islamic clerics and Muslims. To ensure citizens' right of freedom of religious belief, Xinjiang has worked hard to combat extremism. It has implemented the Regulations on Anti-extremism of the Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region, strengthened management of religious affairs in accordance with the law, and prevented and neutralized religious extremism, effectively curbing its spread.

VIII. Rights of Women, Children, the Elderly and Disabled

The Xinjiang Uygur autonomous region respects and guarantees the rights of women, children, the elderly and the disabled, who enjoy all civil rights on an equal footing in accordance with the law. Both the central and the autonomous regional governments have taken targeted measures to meet their special needs.

Women's rights have been safeguarded. Xinjiang has gradually created and improved a range of systems for safeguarding women's rights and interests, by eliminating gender discrimination in employment, ensuring that men and women get equal pay for equal work, promoting women's employment and encouraging and helping women to start businesses, and strengthening special labor protection for women employees. Steady increase has been observed in the number of women participating in the management of public affairs; female officials increased in number from 14,661 in 1955 to 435,000 in 2015. The autonomous region prevents and strikes hard at serious crimes encroaching upon women's right of the person, including rape, abducting and trafficking of women, and organized and forced prostitution. It implements the Anti-domestic Violence Law of the People's Republic of China and the Regulations of the Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region on Preventing and Prohibiting Domestic Violence and explores joint-action mechanisms against domestic violence, and has set up pilot "anti-domestic violence work stations". Free cervical cancer and breast cancer screenings have been held for women living in urban communities, and free health examination for impoverished women. By the end of 2016, 95.45 percent of pregnant and lying-in women were receiving prenatal examination, the hospital delivery rate had reached 98.78 percent, and the mortality rate of pregnant and lying-in women had dropped to 33.14 per 100,000.

Children's rights have been fully protected. By the end of 2016, the mortality rates of infants and children under the age of five had dropped to 16.43 per thousand and 26.31 per thousand,

respectively, and the EPI (endemic planned immunization) coverage rate had surpassed 90 percent. The autonomous region has carried out a series of programs, including the Spring Bud Project, Happy Homes for Children, Heng'ai Action, Reborn Action - the poor family's children with cleft lip and palate operation rehabilitation program and the Chunmiao Project - a program that provides free medical care to children in Xinjiang who suffer from congenital heart diseases. It has established a network for the protection of homeless children and a mechanism for early prevention and intervention in this regard. It took the lead in the country to start the program of "taking street children home", by such means as improving mechanisms for the life, education, management, return, placement and security of vagabond children, and correcting some serious misbehavior. The autonomous region has established more professional service organizations for nursing and caring for the orphaned and disabled children, protecting street children, and rehabilitating disabled children. The minimum basic living standard for orphans in welfare institutions has increased from RMB360 per month in 2009 to RMB900 per month in 2016. A special project has been carried out on the joint guardianship of left-behind children in rural areas to strengthen intervention over and assistance to key individuals, especially the unsupervised, with a view of providing all rural left-behind children with effective guardianship by the end of this year. Primary attention has been made on improving children service systems at county, township and village levels, and on building a protection and assistance mechanism incorporating compulsory reporting, emergency disposal, assessment and assistance, and guardianship and intervention. Ten courts have set up independent comprehensive juvenile tribunals, in addition to 24 fixed collegial panels and 42 courts that appoint special personnel to handle juvenile cases. There are in total 215 trial judges who are directly involved in the trial of juvenile cases in Xinjiang. The mechanism for protecting the rights of the elderly has constantly improved. To meet the multilevel and diverse healthcare needs of the elderly, the autonomous region promotes the coordinated development of universal and customized services. It has increased coverage of community-based care for the elderly, and has explored day-care for the elderly and other ways within communities. From 2010 to 2016, Xinjiang had invested a total of RMB4.18 billion in building 504 nursing institutions for the aged, RMB430 million in building care centers for elderly people with disabilities and dementia, and RMB81 million in building nursing homes, social welfare institutes, township service and welfare centers, community day-care centers, rural elderly people's homes and other programs. It has also formulated and implemented policies whereby government purchases pension services, and welfare institutions are founded by government but operated privately. By the end of 2016, there were 1,998 social organizations and institutions, 4,328 full-time and part-time personnel, and 47,053 volunteers providing services for the aged. Xinjiang has also set up and improved an old-age network at five levels - autonomous region, city (prefecture), county (county-level city, district), township (residential district) and village (community).

Marked progress has been made in the protection of the rights and interests of the disabled. Xinjiang has now 1.07 million people with disabilities. Of these, 225,000 are covered by the subsistence allowances for urban and rural residents, and 298,000 have participated in the basic old-age insurance schemes respectively for urban and rural residents. Personal contributions of the disabled living under the prescribed poverty lines are paid by the government on their behalf. About forty thousand people with severe disabilities have been provided with nursing services,

and 364,000 impoverished people with disabilities and severe disabilities have been granted living allowances and nursing subsidies. Xinjiang has implemented national key rehabilitation programs and regional rehabilitation, relief and care projects for impoverished disabled people. It now has 168 rehabilitation institutions of various types and 1,738 community rehabilitation centers. By the end of 2016, it had provided rehabilitation treatment and service to 1.14 million recipients, performed 214,300 cataract operations, and distributed 156,900 assistive devices for free. The autonomous region endeavors to build barrier-free environments in cities and counties, and has carried out barrier-free transformation for 25,360 impoverished households with disabled family members. By the end of 2016, 67,000 jobs had been provided to disabled people in urban areas, and 223,000 to those in agricultural and pastoral areas. Colleges and universities generally recruit students with disabilities. In total, 7,537 disabled students are now studying in general elementary and secondary schools, and 2,927 in 29 special education schools. 747 vocational training bases have provided training to a total of 110,000 disabled people in urban and rural areas, and the illiteracy rate of the disabled has dropped from 57 percent in 1987 to today's 31 percent. Xinjiang has built 358 poverty alleviation bases for the disabled, and has provided support to more than 20,000 people with disabilities to improve their living conditions. The autonomous region and more than half of its cities (prefectures) have developed special broadcasting programs for people with disabilities and TV news programs in sign language, set up 16 Braille and audio book reading rooms for the blind, and built five sports training bases for people with disabilities. In the Beijing Paralympic Games, London Paralympic Games and other major sports events, disabled athletes from Xinjiang have won 201 gold medals, 132 silver ones and 125 bronze ones. Organizations for disabled persons are found in 1,073 townships (residential districts) and 9,207 communities (villages), and 226 legal assistance, coordination and working organizations have provided legal services to 167,564 recipients.

The socialist system with Chinese characteristics has provided a solid institutional guarantee to human rights development in Xinjiang; the rapid economic and social development has provided a solid material foundation; and the harmonious and stable political environment has ensured a satisfactory social environment. It is a principle of the Constitution to respect and protect human rights. To promote progress in human rights is the consistent pursuit of all Chinese people, including the ethnic groups of Xinjiang. Under the leadership of the Communist Party of China and the Chinese government, and with the realization of the Two Centenary Goals and the Chinese Dream of rejuvenation of the Chinese nation, further improvement will be seen in the protection of human rights in Xinjiang, and all ethnic groups in Xinjiang will be sure to greet a brighter future.