

Progress made by the Chinese Government in Implementation of the “Beijing Declaration” and Program of Action” as well as the “Outcome Document” of the United Nations General Assembly at its Twenty-Third Special Session

Part One: Overview

The Chinese Government attaches great importance to the development of women and is committed to protecting the rights of women. China has not only made gender equality one of its basic national policies but has also incorporated the development of women into the overall plan for national economic development. As a result, the principle of fairness and justice, including the concept of gender equality, has become an important element in the efforts to build a harmonious society. At the same time, the Chinese Government has been actively implementing the United Nations’ Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, while making great efforts to protect women’s rights and interests and to promote women’s all-round development, by implementing various economic, legal and administrative measures as well as through various public media.

1. The legal system for protecting women’s rights and interests and for promoting women’s development has now taken shape. In the current process of economic and social development and deepening reforms, the Chinese government has consistently stepped up its efforts in building up the legal system for safe-guarding the rights and interests of women and in reflecting this basic national policy on gender equality in various fields of law and policy formulation, and in their actual implementation and monitoring. Since 1995, China has gradually set up a wholesome legal and regulatory system for protecting the rights and interest of women, based on its Constitution and the Law on the Protection of Women’s Rights, including a number of other related laws and regulations aimed at pursuing the development of women.

2. The operational system for implementing “the National Program for the Development of Women” has now been established basically. The Chinese government has successively formulated “the National Program for the Development of Women” for the period of 1995-2000 and the period of 2001-2010, whereby the major objectives and tasks for the development of Chinese women are clearly defined. Various local governments and departments concerned as well as those social organizations and groups have also formulated development plans and implementation programs accordingly, so as to break down and assign the responsibilities for implementing the women’s development goals to the official functions of the relevant government departments, social organizations and groups, provinces, autonomous regions and municipalities, and to ensure the timely delivery on the major objectives of the Program. The Central Government and local governments at various levels will gradually increase their financial inputs on a yearly basis, so as to guarantee the funding for the achievement of these goals. The Government will carry out scientific and objective assessments on the implementation status by using various quantitative indicators adopted for this purpose. As of now, the operational system for implementing “the National Program for the Development of Women” has been set up basically, with the core functions of formulating, delivering on, and assessing the progress made during this implementation process.

3. An institutional system to promote women's development and protect women's rights and interests has basically been established. In 1990, the State Council set up the Working Committee for Women and Children, a national body to promote gender equality. At present, governments at all levels have set up agencies for women and children. In addition to government agencies, non-governmental organizations such as the All-China Women's Federation, Committee on Women of the All-China Federation of Trade Unions, and the Association of Women Entrepreneurs of China have actively participated in national legislation and law enforcement supervision, promoted the development and improvement of laws and regulations on the protection of women's rights and interests, assisted the government with major cases involving violations of women's rights and interests, and carried out campaigns to raise awareness and capacity of women to protect their rights in accordance with the law.

4. There has been a growing awareness of gender equality as a basic national policy and an improved environment for women's development. Regular and special meetings on women and children have been held respectively in the State Council and at provincial, regional and municipal levels for the planning of work on women and children. As a result, all parties are actively contributing towards women's development. In addition, the media has become more proactive in awareness-raising advocacy on gender equality. A majority of media agencies are able to balance financial considerations with social benefits; with an enhanced awareness of social responsibilities, they have voluntarily refrained from disseminating information and products contradicting the concept of gender equality. Due to improved supervision from business administrative authorities, there has been a decline in the number of advertisements advocating the outdated and traditional gender-based division of labor or the commercialization of women; public service advertisements that advocate gender equality are well received. With the efforts of governments at all levels and society as a whole, gender equality and respect for women have gradually taken root in people's hearts.

5. The fundamental rights of women have been further advanced, and women's sense of ownership and capacity-building greatly improved. The fundamental rights of women in China are manifested in six major areas: (1) ensured rights to participate equally in the administration of national and social affairs; (2) expanded employment and improved career structure; (3) reduced gap in the overall level of education between men and women; (4) better health and higher quality of life; (5) legally protected personal rights and rights in marriage and family; (6) enhanced sense of ownership and capacity.

Part Two: Policies and Measures for Gender Equality and the Development of Women

The Chinese government has formulated, in 1995 and in 2001 respectively, "the National Program for the Development of Women (1995-2000)" and "the National Program for the Development of Women (2001-2010)", covering 34 major objectives in the political, economic, education, health, social and other fields. Relevant goals in the National Programs are incorporated in "the Tenth Five-Year Plan Outline for the National Economic and Social Development".

“The National Program for the Development of Women” is a program of action promoting women's development at the state-level. Since the enactment of the Program, local governments and departments concerned formulated regional and sectoral plans and implementation programs in accordance with the requirements of the program of the region. To implement “the National Program for the Development of Women”, governments and departments concerned at various levels took concrete measures to intensify their efforts in promoting women's participation in decision-making, protecting women's equal access to economic resources and employment, developing women's education, safeguarding the rights and interests of women workers and their community health service network, raising the level of women's health to improve women's living environment, and firmly cracking down on the illegal and criminal activities against women's personal rights, thus achieving a remarkable success in the advancement of women.

(A) The Participation of Women in Administration and Decision-Making

Chinese women participate in the administration of state affairs mainly through the following channels: participating in the consideration and formulation of state laws by gaining access to legislative institutions; participating in the administration of State and social affairs by assuming leading posts of government at all levels; participating in representative government through the CPPCC; voicing their views and defending their rights through women's federations and trade unions for women workers at various levels; expressing their views and suggestions directly to the relevant governments and departments.

The Chinese Government has always attached importance to women's participation in political activities. It is clearly provided in China's “Constitution”, and “the Law on the Protection of Women's Rights” that women and men enjoy equal political rights. In order to further promote women's participation in state and social affairs administration and decision-making, China formulated the major objectives and initiatives of specific strategies, for women's participation in decision-making and administration, enhancing the training of women cadres, giving full play to the role of non-governmental organizations, understanding women's views and demands, expanding channels for democratic recommendation, democratic participation, democratic administration and democratic supervision. With the advancement of women, Chinese women have become increasingly involved in the State political activities and the administration with the following characteristics: firstly, the ratio of women is increasing in the leadership of governments at all levels; secondly, the number of women cadres is on the increase; thirdly, women are having an ever greater say in the building of grass-root democratic administration.

(B) Poverty Alleviation and Economic Empowerment of Women

The Chinese Government has actively promoted the employment and entrepreneurship of women, with an aim to provide real guarantee for the economic rights of women. Departments concerned implemented “the Employment Promotion Act” by actively expanding employment and business opportunities for all groups, including women. Five networks targeting rural women have been initiated and developed, to cover education and training, technology demonstrations, information service, cooperative businesses, poverty alleviation and relief and assistance. Agro-

technology demonstration centers for women have been established. Women have been assisted in their participation in cooperatives, which have been developed into economic entities that share information, technologies and risks. Women who are laid off or unemployed are given access to free consultations and information on policy matters, job vacancies, career advice and placement services, so that their chances of re-employment can be expanded. An “Entrepreneurship Mentor Action for Women University Graduates” is also underway in China.

(C) Women and Education

Substantial progress has been made in women’s education as a result of increased input in human resources development of women in China. According to the 5th national census in 2000, the disparity in years of education between men and women in China dropped from 1.4 years in 1995 to 1.07 years. By 2003, enrolment of school age girls in the country reached 98.61%. The difference of school enrolment between boys and girls has gone down from 0.7 percentage point to 0.08 percentage point. Furthermore, the Chinese Government has carried out vocational training for rural women, which includes: (1) literacy courses to improve women’s general education and knowledge; (2) practical agro-technology training, so that women participants can master at least one or two skills; (3) training in new technologies and new crop varieties; (4) training in agro-businesses, standard knowledge and new technologies in vegetable farming; and (5) training in Internet applications so that rural women can engage in online business operations. Women who are model farmers or pioneering entrepreneurs have been invited on study tours in more developed countries and regions.

(D) Women and Health

Attaching great importance to women’s health issues, the Government of China actively provides health services to women and children, and endeavors to improve the health of Chinese women. At present, there are more than 3,000 health care institutions for women and children with nation-wide coverage, and there are more than half a million medical personnel dedicated to the health of women and children, thus forming a relatively sound health care network for women and children at the county, township and village levels, and taking care of the health of women and children nation-wide. In urban and some parts of rural areas, women of childbearing age have access to the health care system. In addition, the relevant institutions also engage in large-scale health projects for women and children, for example, “the Reduction of the maternal mortality rate and the elimination of neonatal tetanus” project jointly organized and implemented by the Ministry of Health, and the Ministry of the Finance, and the “For mother’s health express” project led by All-China Women’s Federation, which have enhanced women’s health awareness, and improved the health of women and children through government intervention, financial subsidy, social support, and health and sanitation. In recent years, the health of women and children in China have been improved steadily, with maternal mortality rate reduced from 88.9 per 10,000 in 1990 to 36.6% per 10,000 in 2007, and the average life expectancy of women has increased from 70.5 years of age in 1990 to 74 years of age in 2005.

(E) Protection of Women's Human Rights and Elimination of Violence against Women

The Government of China has adopted various measures to safeguard the human rights of women and eliminate violence against women. In August, 2005, China revised "the Law of People's Republic of China on the Protection of Women's Rights and Interests", and enhanced the applicability, relevance and maneuverability of the law. As of September 2007, 25 provinces, autonomous regions and municipalities have enacted relevant laws and regulations and regulatory documents on the prevention of domestic violence, 13 provinces, autonomous regions and municipalities have completed their revision on the rules governing the implementation of the Law on the Protection of Women's Rights and Interests. In 2008, China promulgated the document entitled "A number of views on the prevention and suppression of domestic violence."

In 2005, the All-China Women's Federation has established a national women's legal assistance center, and set up a service hotline to protect women's rights and interests and another hotline to combat domestic violence. More than 3,200 tribunals have been set up by local courts, including "tribunals on the protection of rights and interests", "collegiate panel on the protection of rights and interests", and "collegiate panel on combating domestic violence"; more than 27,000 service sites and women's legal assistance institutions have been established by the judicial administrations; more than 12,000 stations for making complaints and calling the police against domestic violence have been established by the public security departments; more than 400 women's shelters and relief stations have been established by the civil affairs departments; and more than 350 centers have been established by the medical system to determine the severity of injuries as a result of domestic violence. Some grass-roots cadres of the Women's Federation have also been invited to serve as people's jurors and arbitrators in labor and land arbitration, playing an important and positive role in providing services and assistance in protection of the rights and interests of women.

Part Three: Institutional Building

In order to promote women's development in China and achieve the internationally-agreed goals of women's development, the Chinese government established the National Working Committee on Children and Women (Hereinafter referred to as "NWCCW") under the State Council on February 22, 1990. The committee is headed by a director, who is also a State Council Member, with the participation of 27 State ministries and commissions and six non-governmental organizations.

The basic functions of NWCCW are to organize, coordinate, guide, supervise and facilitate the relevant government departments to carry out various activities effectively to safeguard the rights and interests of the children and women, develop and implement the Program for the Development of Women and Children, provide necessary human, material and financial support for efforts to promote the rights and interests of women and children and the development of women and children, guide, supervise and inspect the work of the all the Women and Children Working Committees and offices at the level of the provincial, autonomous region and municipal levels.

All governments above the county level in China have established relevant working committees on women and children, forming an organizational system for protecting the rights and interests of women and promoting the development of women, providing the necessary organizational guarantee for promoting the implementation of “the Law on the Protection of Women’s Rights and Interests” and “the Program for the Development of Women”. NWCCW coordinates and facilitates the government departments concerned in carrying out the basic functions of “the Law on the Protection of Women’s Rights and Interests”, building a working platform of coordination and supervision for promoting the implementation of the laws on women.

Part Four: Dealing with Challenges

Due to the constraints of historical factors and the current level of social development, women’s development in China is still faced with challenges. The Chinese government and various circles are working together to further promote the participation of women in the administration of state and social affairs, safeguard the equal rights of women in employment, labor protection and equal pay for equal work, eliminate the impacts of the traditional concept that men are superior to women and the obstacles to equal right of education, and the imbalance of opportunity between urban and rural areas.

“The Eleventh Five-Year Plan Outline for National Economic and Social Development” of China dwells upon, among other things, the issue of the protection of the rights and interests of women and children, calling for the protection of women’s rights of equal access to education, employment, social security, marital property and the equal participation in social affairs, and enhancing the efforts to promote women’s health care, poverty reduction, labor protection, economic assistance to women. The upcoming “National Human Rights Action Plan”, which will be promulgated soon, devotes special chapters to promoting the protection of women’s human rights. The Chinese government will adhere to the basic national policy of equality between men and women, develop and implement the new program for the development of women effectively, protect women's rights and interests, promote the cause for women, promote greater progress in women’s participation in economic, political and social life, in accordance with the requirements of the outline of the national economy and social development.