



# General Assembly

Distr.: General  
21 September 2020

English only

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## Human Rights Council

### Forty-fifth session

14 September–2 October 2020

Agenda item 3

**Promotion and protection of all human rights, civil,  
political, economic, social and cultural rights,  
including the right to development**

## **Written statement\* submitted by Chinese Association for International Understanding, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status**

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[20 August 2020]

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\* Issued as received, in the language(s) of submission only.

GE.20-12157(E)



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## **Cultural Protection and Poverty Alleviation of Ethnic Minorities in China**

China is home to various ethnic minorities that have witnessed considerable economic, social and cultural progress in recent years. In 2019, China Ethnic Minorities Association for External Exchanges (CEMAEE), a Chinese non-governmental organization (NGO) engaged in enhancing the mutual understanding and friendship among ethnic minorities, hosted the “The Exhibition of Intangible Cultural Heritage along the Silk Road and Poverty Alleviation in Ethnic Minority Areas of China” and China folk music and dance performance “Silk and Road”. The exhibition displays the national representative intangible cultural inheritance projects and the achievement in the poverty alleviation of ethnic minority regions in China. The performance shows the music with Chinese ethnic character, horse-head fiddle, as well as dances with distinguished and folk songs with strong ethnic characteristics. The performance, with warm atmosphere, was spoken highly by the audience.

While preparing for the exhibition, it is noticed that cultural programs in ethnic minority areas in China are developing. Cultural development in ethnic minority areas are vigorously supported. Through such programs as the Frontier Cultural Corridor Project and National Cultural Information Resources Sharing Project, the public cultural service system in ethnic minority areas is improved. Many natural and cultural sites scattered in China's ethnic minority areas, including the Potala Palace in the Tibet Autonomous Region, were added to United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO)'s World Heritage List. Ethnic minority arts including Uygur Muqam of Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region were added to UNESCO's Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity, and the Qiang ethnic group's New Year Festival, were added to the List of Intangible Cultural Heritage in Need of Urgent Safeguarding. Ten experimental zones for cultural protection in ethnic minority areas have been established. A total of 479 ethnic minority heritage items have been included in the four lists of national representative intangible cultural heritage, and 524 trustees from ethnic minority groups have been put on the four lists of national representative trustees of intangible cultural heritage. The book series of explanatory notes on ancient books of ethnic minority groups, titled Synopsis of the General Catalogue of Ancient Books of Ethnic Minority Groups of China, was published in 2014.

In our field research for cultural heritage and relics of ethnic minorities in China, we are pleased to see that they are effectively protected. Traditional ethnic minority cultures are important components of Chinese culture, and the common cultural wealth of the whole nation. Laws are promulgated, specialized bodies are established, and spending is increased to inherit, pass on, and develop the cultures of ethnic minority groups. The Historic Ensemble of the Potala Palace of Lhasa, Old Town of Lijiang, Site of Xanadu, Cultural Landscape of Honghe Hani Rice Terraces, and Tusi Sites are all included in the UNESCO World Heritage List. Of all the cultural items from China included in the UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage List, 21 are related to ethnic minorities. At national level, 492 (36 percent) of the 1,372 cultural items included to date in China's intangible cultural heritage list are related to ethnic minorities. Of the 3,068 representative trustees of China's intangible cultural heritage, 862 (28 percent) are from ethnic minority groups. 21 national-level cultural preservation experimental areas are set up, 11 of which are located in ethnic minority areas. Twenty-five provinces and equivalent administrative units have institutions that catalogue and study ancient classics and recordings of ethnic minorities. About one million privately-held ethnic minority ancient classics and recordings (excluding books collected in museums and temples), including many rare editions, some of which only had a single extant copy, had been rescued and catalogued. The compilation of Collection of Ancient Classics and Recordings of Chinese Ethnic Minorities, including about 300,000 books, are also launched in China.

Meanwhile, when we are searching for material for the exhibition “Poverty Alleviation in Ethnic Minority Areas of China”, we have discovered that poverty eradication for ethnic minority groups has been accelerated. A series of special support policies were developed to accelerate poverty eradication for ethnic minority groups and regions inhabited by ethnic minorities. The Outline for Development-oriented Poverty Reduction for China's Rural Areas

(2011-2020) maps out 14 contiguous impoverished areas, 11 of which are in ethnic autonomous areas, and 592 key counties for national development-oriented poverty alleviation work, 263 of which are in ethnic autonomous areas. Of the 30,000 poor villages mapped out in the 12th Five-Year Plan for whole-village development-oriented poverty alleviation, 13,158 are in ethnic autonomous areas. The central government allocated billions of development funds for ethnic minority groups to advance a special campaign of developing border areas and improving local people's lives, to support development of ethnic minority groups with a small population, and to protect and develop ethnic minority villages with special features and traditional handicrafts. A national budget injects RMB5.5 billion to support border areas and areas inhabited by ethnic minority groups with a small population in infrastructure construction, in improving local working and living conditions, and in developing social programs. During the 12th Five-Year Plan period, the impoverished population of the five autonomous regions (Inner Mongolia, Guangxi, Tibet, Ningxia, and Xinjiang) and the three provinces with concentrated ethnic minority groups (Guizhou, Yunnan and Qinghai) had dropped from 39.17 million in 2011 to 18.13 million, a decrease of 21.04 million, down 53.7 percent. The poverty incidence declined from 27.2 percent to 12.4 percent, down by 14.8 percentage points.

It is noticeable and remarkable that the ethnic minorities and ethnic minority areas have leapfrogged in social and economic development. Over the last 70 years, the social and economic development of ethnic minorities and ethnic minority areas was highlighted in national development. Through a series of strategic measures such as large-scale development of western China, actions to enrich border areas and their residents, efforts to develop smaller ethnic groups, paired-up assistance, and special planning for ethnic minority undertakings, nation-wide investment was increased in the fight against poverty in ethnic minority areas, which has given a significant boost to local social and economic development.

We have also found the great input invested and amazing achievement made in poverty alleviation of ethnic minorities. The special fund for poverty alleviation of ethnic minorities in central government in 2019 amounted to 6.75 billion RMB, 2 billion RMB of the discounted-interest loan for the production and trade of ethnic minority were arranged. From 2012 to 2019, the impoverished population in the five autonomous regions of Inner Mongolia, Guangxi, Tibet, Ningxia and Xinjiang, and the three provinces of Yunnan, Guizhou and Qinghai where there are a large number of ethnic minorities, dropped from 31.21 million to 1.19 million, with the incidence of poverty reduced from 20.8% to 0.79%. This is unprecedented in the history.

The year 2020 is a decisive year to complete the building of a moderately prosperous society in all respects and fight against poverty. The sudden outbreak of COVID-19 has had a major impact on economic and social development and people's lives. It has also posed severe challenges to poverty alleviation in ethnic minority areas. Poverty alleviation in ethnic minority areas is the key to a decisive victory in the fight against poverty. On the basis of strengthening COVID-19 prevention and control, the Chinese government has taken targeted measures to minimize the impact of the epidemic on poverty alleviation in ethnic minority areas. With the implementation of policies and measures issued by local departments, the work of resuming work and production has been carried out in an orderly manner, and the emergency response levels of epidemic prevention and control have been gradually adjusted, the environment for poverty alleviation in ethnic minority areas will surely be further improved, and the subsequent impact of the epidemic on poverty alleviation in ethnic minority areas will be smaller and smaller.

In the days to come, we will continue to spare no efforts to enhance the development of ethnic minorities in China, promote exchanges of ethnic minorities all cross the globe and let the world have a better understanding of China.

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China Ethnic Minorities Association for External Exchanges (CEMAEE), an NGO without consultative status, also shares the views expressed in this statement.