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ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL RIGHTS

Written statement*/ submitted by the International League for Human Rights, 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.

[29 June 2001]

*/ This written statement is issued, unedited, as received in English, from the submitting non-governmental organization(s).

1. The right to development belongs fundamentally to peoples and originates in their right to self-determination. Articles 1 and 2 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights emphasize that it is "by virtue of" the right to self-determination that peoples enjoy the right to "freely pursue their economic, social and cultural development" and to "freely dispose of their natural wealth and resources." Self-determination means that peoples must participate in the design and implementation of a genuine sustainable development policy. Any state "development" policy that proceeds without participation by the peoples it affects is not development; it is exploitation.
2. Article 2 of General Assembly Resolution 2542 (XXIV) makes clear that the right to development requires the "immediate and final elimination of all form of . . . [the] exploitation of peoples." Indeed, the exploitation of a people renders sustainable development impossible and violates the full range of human rights that can only be guaranteed when a government respects its peoples' right to self-determination.
3. For these reasons, we wish to call the Sub-Commission's attention to the ongoing exploitation of the Tibetan people's land and resources by China. China repeatedly states that it considers the right to development paramount. In the words of its most recent White Paper, "50 Years of Progress in China's Human Rights" (Feb. 17, 2000): "[T]he Chinese government has always put the people's rights to subsistence and development first." It is therefore tragic that China has pursued a policy of exploiting Tibet's resources, with neither the participation nor the consent of the Tibetan people.
4. In Tibet, "development" policies are formulated by Beijing without meaningful participation by Tibetans and Beijing's projects do not benefit the Tibetan people. Virtually all of the natural resources extracted from Tibet enrich the eastern regions of China. Even the benefits of those development projects that could benefit Tibetans accrue instead almost exclusively to the millions of Chinese -- businessmen, investors and cadres -- who have moved to Tibet because of China's population transfer policies. In 1997, for example, the International Commission of Jurists noted that "[p]rofitable returns to the state are generated by high profit levels of monopoly state enterprises reliant on *Tibetan* raw materials as their primary inputs, obtained at prices below market rates Transfer pricing is a systematic feature of the extraction of Tibet's resources for Chinese use."
5. China refers to Tibet as *Xizang*, which means "Western Treasure House." In June 1999, President Jiang Zemin officially proclaimed the so-called "Western Development" campaign and Beijing has aggressively promoted it during 2000 and 2001. In theory, this refers to a policy of reducing poverty by developing western China through improvements to economic infrastructure and encouraging outside investment. In practice, it represents an escalation of the long-standing Chinese policy of extracting the natural and mineral resources that exist in Tibet and Xinjiang for the benefit of the Chinese people. This conduct is inconsistent with the Tibetan people's right to participate in formulating a sustainable and environmentally-sound development policy that will begin to alleviate the devastating poverty in Tibet.
6. This year, China has finalized plans, and may have started construction on, a railroad line through eastern Tibet into Lhasa. According to TIN, however, the purpose is to facilitate the movement of settlers and soldiers *into* Tibet and the extraction of raw materials and goods *out of* Tibet.

7. Current development policies in Tibet are conceived and implemented without any meaningful participation by Tibetans. According to the Tibet Information Network (TIN), “the policies being implemented, imposed from the top down and failing to address key local needs, may be extremely detrimental to people living in the western regions.” One witness told TIN that “as far as ordinary people . . . were concerned this [development] policy may well have dropped out of the sky.”

8. Officially, the rationale for the Western Development campaign is to alleviate the disproportionate level of poverty in western China. TIN’s research indicates that the central government’s policies of development over the past twenty years have produced a dramatic gap: “[I]n 1998, the per capita income of coastal [eastern] farmers was 3600 yuan, nearly three times that of farmers in the west.” But the evidence suggests that poor farmers and nomads, who make up 80 percent of the west’s population, will gain little from the new large-scale development and mineral exploitation projects. Rather, the principal beneficiaries will be the urban Chinese settlers, whose small businesses and employment opportunities will flourish as a result of the priorities set by the central government in Beijing.

9. For example, of the ten large-scale “Western Development” projects that China has launched for the year 2000, not one is located in the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR) or other rural Tibetan regions, where many of the poorest inhabitants live. Instead, Beijing has determined they should be constructed in the wealthier western regions with better infrastructure. These regions are primarily dominated by Chinese settlers, not Tibetans. In 1995, China explained the theory behind this apparent injustice in “The Progress of Human Rights in China”: “While some areas and some people become rich first, they are encouraged to help poor areas and people get rich.” This “trickle down” theory has yet to bring any appreciable benefits to the vast majority of the peoples of Tibet and Xinjiang.

10. A tremendous proportion of China’s energy resources, including oil, gas, and hydropower, are located in Xinjiang and in the Tibetan regions of Qinghai. This year, construction will be completed on a pipeline carrying natural gas from eastern Tibet into China, confirming TIN’s report that “[e]nergy resources, including hydropower and gas, are being exploited primarily for use in eastern China, rather than to assist industrialisation in the west.” Not only do Tibetans enjoy none of the benefits of their land’s energy resources, these projects are being pursued in an environmentally destructive manner.

11. According to the International Commission of Jurists, per capita spending on healthcare, education, and subsistence is lower in the TAR than anywhere else in China. This means, that Tibetans have neither the economic resources nor the education to compete for the new jobs and positions that “Western Development” policies in their lands do create. Thus, the current development policy perpetuates the very inequities it is ostensibly designed to remedy. A report issued in 2001 by the International Committee of Lawyers for Tibet notes that while development accelerates in Tibet, Tibetan children continue to struggle for access to education, and what education exists is designed to suppress their culture. Tibetan children are also suffering nutritionally because of Chinese economic policies in Tibet to such an extent that the average size of young Tibetan children is *shrinking*. In addition, as the need for political control increases to accommodate economic exploitation, the study of Tibetan children shows that even they are subject to arrest and torture for “political” offenses. Finally, TIN has reported this year that as Chinese settlers move in, officials are increasing enforcement of draconian birth control regulations on Tibetan woman.

12. The purpose behind "Western Development," as Chinese economist Hu Angang candidly acknowledged, is to preserve political control in Tibet: "The worst case scenario – and what we're trying to avoid – is China fragmenting like Yugoslavia. Already, regional [economic] disparity is equal to – or worse than – what we saw in Yugoslavia before it split." The central government's "development" policies in Tibet, in other words, are intended first and foremost to ensure political "stability" in Tibet, not to bring what is desperately needed by Tibetans and other poor inhabitants in the West: better healthcare, education, and employment opportunities.

13. An similar example of this kind of exploitation is the current plan to construct an oil pipeline between Chad and Cameroon. The World Bank, Chad, Cameroon and a consortium of oil companies believe the oil reserves will help alleviate the poverty of Chad's seven million people. But here again, (i) Chad's people, have not been consulted; (ii) Chad's government has an atrocious human rights record; and (iii) according to Andrea Dubin, an environmental expert, the pipeline threatens key water and river systems.

14. Mr. Chairman, China's exploitation of Tibet's natural and mineral resources, which proceeds without Tibetan participation and which does not benefit the Tibetan people, is inconsistent with respect for the human right to development. Only when Tibet's people enjoy genuine self-determination, including the right to control the disposition of their natural resources within a framework of environmental responsibility and international cooperation, can they truly enjoy the right to development. We therefore urge the Commission to adopt a resolution calling on the Chinese government to end its economic exploitation of Tibet, including population transfer and the denial of the Tibetan people's right to self-determination.
