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**THE RIGHT TO DEVELOPMENT**

**Written statement\* submitted by the Society for Threatened Peoples,  
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.

[30 January 2004]

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

### **Right to development in the People's Republic of China**

The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) states that all peoples have the right to pursue their "economic, social and cultural development." In accordance with the United Nations Declaration on the Right to Development (UNDRD), governments must "formulate appropriate national development policies that aim at the constant improvement of the well-being of the entire population and of all individuals, on the basis of their active, free and meaningful participation in development and in the fair distribution of benefits resulting there from." The UN World Conference on Human Rights in Vienna in 1993 further recognized and established, "the right to Development, as a universal and inalienable right and an integral part of fundamental human rights." China has ratified the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights in the year 2001.

Since 2002 People's Republic of China states that development and modernity are improving the livelihood of the inhabitants of the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR). The highest authorities in Beijing and TAR officials have claimed that "Tibet has seen eight straight years of double-digit economic growth" and the "inhabitants of Tibet now have a standard of living which exceeds average for the rest of China." These claims are unfounded.

A report "China Human Development Report, 1997 and 1999", published by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), ranked the TAR lower than most other areas of China in the human development index, which uses indicators such as education, income, and health. The UNDP reported that "Tibet is the poorest and least developed region of China with a human development index of only 0.39 placing it within the bottom 12 of a list of the world's 49 officially recognized least developed countries, between Rwanda and Maldives." In June 2002, the official Chinese news agency Xinhua reported that new policies had been adopted to send more government cadres, soldiers, and "skilled people" to Tibet and other Western regions in order to support development. The past influx of 7.5 million Chinese settlers in Tibet who already out-numbered 6 million Tibetans had a dramatic economic and cultural impact on Tibetans. The level of unemployment among the Tibetan people is high- over 40% in some areas. Research of independent international NGO's indicates that Chinese farmers make more than three times the income Tibetan farmers earn. Development projects established in TAR primarily benefit urban Chinese settlers and hardly the poor Tibetan farmers and nomads who constitute 80% of the population of the region. Tibetans have neither the economic resources nor the education to compete for new jobs and positions that the "Western Development" policies set up in their land. A recent study of an International NGO concluded that the number of Tibetan women from rural areas working as prostitutes has increased considerably in TAR. Observers see this change as a direct result of the existing Western development projects that have widened the economic gap between urban and rural areas.

Since the Western Development Programme has been launched in June 1999, the industrialized regions in Eastern China took the biggest profit from extraction of natural resources (coal, oil, natural gas and other mineral resources) and the use of hydropower in

TAR and the Xinjiang Autonomous Region. Unfortunately these projects are developed and implemented without consulting Tibetans or assessing their impact on the fragile environment.

We are calling upon the Commission to urge the Chinese Government to ensure participation of and consultation with the local people at all levels of development projects which are being undertaken in Tibet Autonomous Region and Xinjiang Autonomous Region. The Chinese government should encourage sustainable small-scale local projects that directly meet the basic needs of farmers and nomads in the Western Regions. Such projects will improve the livelihood of the poor people. Furthermore the Commission should call upon the People's Republic of China to stop the population transfer of Chinese settlers into Tibet under the pretext of development. The massive influx of Chinese settlers has contributed to a widening of the economic gap between urban and rural areas in Western China.

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