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ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL RIGHTS

**Written statement* submitted by the Transnational Radical Party,
a non-governmental organization in general consultative status**

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

[2 February 2004]

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

The Transnational Radical Party has been following closing the situation of Economic Social and Cultural Rights in the Xinjiang province also known as Eastern Turkestan and has seen no progress in the ascertainment of human rights for the Uyghur people who, generally, are of Muslim faith. The total exclusion of the Uyghurs from the social and economical life of their region should be of concern for the international community.

Over the last half a century, the Uyghurs, after a brief period of internationally recognized independence have suffered from all forms of discrimination from the People's Republic of China. In fact, it was denied that China was a multinational country. Thus, no special economic policy was to be pursued, and all financial aid by the central government was stopped.

Natural resources were destroyed by the system of five-year planification that imposed the development of agriculture in regions where the conditions were unallowable. The minorities were forced to destroy their pastures, and become farmers, which immediately resulted in the shortage of livestock.

Traditional customs, language, and scripts were considered backward. All holidays and celebrations were forbidden, and those who still resisted were arrested as "counter-revolutionists." Factories that produced minority products were closed.

The minority press, newspapers, and radio broadcasts were shut down.

Almost all schools and colleges of the minorities were disbanded. The number of minority students dropped, which resulted in an increased illiteracy rate among minorities.

The "culturally inferior" minority cadres were replaced by Han cadres regardless of their training and advanced education.

The traditional health practices were banned and not replaced by official medicine.

The performance of traditional songs and dances, as well as wearing traditional clothes were prohibited as it was a "feudal, capitalist, revisionist, poisonous weed."

Among the most prominent policies of stabilization there were those targeting the strategically important Xinjiang-Uighur Autonomous Region. Several programs were launched to accelerate the cultural and ethnic assimilation of the region.

A campaign to stress ethnic unity and to condemn "splittism" and religious extremism began in 1997.

A new plan of "development of the West" adopted in 2000 involves new resettlements of Hans into Xinjiang.

The implementation of transliterated minority names into Chinese Pinyin, hence, the sinicization of the Muslim minorities' names starting in June 2002.

"To meet the growing needs of economic and social development" starting in August 2002, the universities in Xinjiang started to teach major subjects in Chinese rather than in Uighur. Since September 2003, this program is implemented in secondary and primary education.

Despite the People's Republic of China's ratification of the International Covenant on Economic Social and Cultural Rights, systematic violations of those rights still occur all over the country impeding millions of people to live a decent life in accordance with their millenary cultures and traditions.

Even if Xinjiang was given the status of Autonomy, with the adoption of laws protecting their human rights, culture, language, and religion, the strict control from the centre never gave the Uyghurs a chance to maintain their own system of life and rights.

Throughout the twentieth century the Chinese policy toward its Muslim minorities and the Uighurs in particular, has drastically shifted from integration to assimilation. The cultural aspects of assimilation were carefully implemented from the 1980s and are gaining ground to this day.

The TRP is also particularly concerned by the lack of freedom to live, develop and prosper according to their ancient cultures and traditions for dozens of communities living in central and Latin America, where plants used for the production of narcotic drugs grow. In fact, the international legal arsenal created with the adoption of the 1961, 1971 and 1988 UN Conventions on Narcotics prohibits the cultivation of coca bush in the same way cocaine is prohibited.

The TRP, which has always been particularly critical of prohibition on drugs - as it believe that after some three decades of failures, the time has come to initiate a process of comprehensive reform of current drug control policies – believes that coca bus, as well as poppy seed and cannabis for that matter, should be reclassified from schedule I to schedule IV of the 1961 Single Convention of Narcotic and Psychotropic Substances in order to allow thousands of peasants to grow their traditional product legally for its production of goods other than narcotics. Coca bush can be used to produce flour, condiments, medicines, dietary supplements, tea and paper, among other things.

Coca leaf, but also cannabis derivatives, is also part of many religious traditions in the Andes, its prohibition has also a dramatic impact on the cultural rights on thousands of people, who, oftentimes, live at the margin of their countries' social life. The TRP welcomes a more pragmatic approach shown by some countries during the last few years, but remains particularly concerned by the fact that the Commission on Narcotic Drugs has not taken them into due consideration and has refused to foster a debate along the lines of economic, social and cultural rights concerning those regions where raw materials are grown.

The TRP, which in the late 1990s was at the forefront of the international mobilization to indict then Yugoslav President Slobodan Milosevic for his responsibilities in the crimes against humanity, war crimes and genocide in the former-Yugoslavia, is particularly concerned of the lack of positive developments in the Kosovar province. In fact, some 70% of the population under the age of thirty remains unemployed. With a significant retreat of international presence scheduled for the end of 2005, the situation could only become worse.

The TRP believes that such an uncertain economic future will need some thorough presence of the UN and its institutions such as the World Bank to facilitate the process of privatization, which, the TRP believes, remains a difficult undertaking as there is no clarity on the final status of the province. Because of this lack of “sovereignty”, the World Bank cannot provide loans to Kosovo unless the United Nations agrees to accept these loans on its behalf. Recently both the United States and the United Kingdom have agreed to support World Bank lending to Kosovo, the UN has not yet agreed to borrow the money on behalf of the province creating a worrying state of affairs. The TRP hopes that over the next few month such a standoff will be overcome in a positive way.
