



**Economic and Social  
Council**

Distr.  
GENERAL

E/CN.4/2005/NGO/230  
9 March 2005

ENGLISH ONLY

---

COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS  
Sixty-first session  
Item 10 of the provisional agenda

**ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL RIGHTS**

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

[11 February 2005]

---

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

## ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL RIGHTS IN THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA

In a White Paper, published on May 23, 2004, the People's Republic of China has asserted many claims and quoted statistics to project how much Tibetans have benefited and today have become masters of their own affairs with the help of China. Surveys conducted by independent researchers indicate that poverty is still pervasive in the Tibetan Autonomous Region (TAR) and other traditional Tibetan regions. Compared to rural eastern China, Tibetans clearly have a long way to go, even in the better-off areas. For example, in the year 2003 none of the 13 villages we studied had running water in houses, and only the village immediately adjacent to a county seat had a running water tap for the village. Similarly, only that village had electricity. None of the areas had improved dirt roads, let alone paved roads.

China's White Paper on autonomy quotes many statistics, obviously generated by officials and cadres. The official statistics appears unreliable, a concern shared by former Premier Zhu Rongji too in regard to Chinese economy. For example, the above-mentioned survey questions the accuracy of official statistics on poverty:

Moreover, roughly 14% of sample households were poor by our criteria, and another 28.5% fell into the category of lower-middle households. In Medrogonkar, 47.2% of the households reported they were not producing enough grain for their own subsistence from their land. By contrast, government statistics for China as a whole report that less than 5% of the rural was below the poverty line.

Surveys of independent China experts confirm the practice of tax in the form of manual labour: There have also been increases in taxation and fees for services previously provided free by the government, salaries of local leaders and health care. All individuals 18 to 60 years of age are required to provide 20 days of free labour annually.

Yet, the White Paper claims: Another example is that Tibet is the only place in China to enjoy a preferential taxation policy at a rate three-percentage point lower than in any other part of China, and where farmers and herdsmen are exempt from taxes and administrative charges... Also, farmers and herdsmen receive free medical care, and their children go to school with board and lodging free of charge....

Although these exactions are not counted in official statistics, there is consistent evidence from social science researchers that Tibetans experience the cadres as rent seeking, and sometimes even predatory. As the central state downshifts responsibility for financing local services to users, and requires cadres operating local commodity marketing bureaus to finance their own salaries from local revenues, the pressure on nomads and farmers intensifies.

This leaves Tibetans doubly disadvantaged, suffering both from its interior location, and, within Tibet, from the urban bias of the state investments on which the TAR economy depends in the absence of adequate internal revenues. For these reasons it is the Tibetans who are most disadvantaged, as they are the rural population whose livelihoods are compromised by rent-seeking officials, who must pay up front for basic human services such as healthcare and education, in the absence of any responsibility taken by government.

According to Chinese government statistics, tourism accounts for 26 percent of the TAR's Gross Domestic Product with a 20 % rise in tourist numbers every year. But Tibetans did not benefit from this expanding tourist industry. The tourist guide is one of the viable jobs for Tibetans in urban areas. However, due to authorities' fear of Tibetans not being trust worthy as guides, in April 2003, a group of 100 Chinese tour guides were sent in to Tibet Autonomous Region to replace Tibetan tourist guides.

The revised *Guidelines for International Development Projects and Sustainable Development in Tibet* released on April 14 acknowledges the potential of tourism. The Guidelines have expressed concerns about present system of mass packaged tourism controlled by a few state-owned enterprises and based on economic exploitation of Tibetan culture; this largely excludes Tibetans, who are best able to explain and interpret their own cultures, even from employment as tour guides. More than 160 Tibetan tour guides who had received education in India and returned to Tibet were reportedly dismissed by January 2003 by TAR government. The dismissal of Tibetan tour guides violates the International Convention on Elimination of all forms of Racial Discrimination, which was ratified by China in 1981.

China claims to have been given much attention to ecological improvement, and 18 state- and provincial-level nature reserves have been built, covering 33.9 percent of the region's total land area, effectively protecting Tibet's fragile plateau ecology and the living environment in the urban and rural areas. At present, the ecology in Tibet basically maintains its pristine state, and it is the place where the environment is best protected in China.

Society for Threatened Peoples International expresses its strong reservations about the implementation of China's present development policies on the Tibetan plateau. Major projects relating to dam construction and hydropower generation, land reclamation, settling nomads and fencing of grasslands, afforestation, conversion of farmland to grassland and forests, all sound impressive on paper. But China experts question whether these policies are well thought, appropriate and will be beneficial to both China and Tibet in the long term.

Society for Threatened Peoples International calls on the UN Commission on Human Rights to urge the Government of China to:

- create and implement economic development programs in Tibet with active participation and support of the Tibetan people that are consistent with the Tibetan people's distinct history, cultural, traditional economic practices and environmental concerns;
- encourage sustainable projects respecting the basic needs of farmers and nomads, which constitute 85% of the Tibet's population;
- respect the sentiments of the Tibetan people in any development work undertaken inside TAR;
- strengthen the ongoing dialogue with the representatives of the Dalai Lama in order to find a mutually acceptable solution to longstanding problems of Tibet.

- - - - -