



China Newsletter

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Toward greater progress along the path of human rights development with Chinese characteristics

Foreword by Wang Yi, minister of foreign affairs of the People's Republic of China, to the book of *New Achievements of Human Rights in China (2012-2017)*

The past five years since the 18th National Congress of the Communist Party of China in November 2012 have seen an extraordinary journey by China. The CPC Central Committee with Comrade Xi Jinping as its core has led the people across the country in achieving tremendous progress in all fields, including the protection of human rights in China.

The past five years have seen continuous development and improvement of China's human rights theory. Over the past five years, the CPC Central Committee has put forward a broader vision and a new thinking on China's theory of human rights. General Secretary Xi Jinping, in his congratulatory messages to the Beijing Forum on Human Rights and the International Seminar on the 30th Anniversary of the Adoption of the UN Declaration on the Right to Development and remarks made at major national and international events, has elaborated in depth on human rights and related issues. He points out among others:

"China experimented with constitutional monarchy, imperial restoration, parliamentary democracy, multiparty system and presidential government, but none had worked for China."

"The Chinese Communists have found a path suited to China's national conditions through continuous practice and careful consideration of different theories."

"The political system of a country must be designed and developed by considering both history and reality of the country, integrating theory with practice and balancing form and content. It must proceed from the country's prevailing conditions and reality."

"China always seeks to combine universal principles of human rights with its own reality and has embarked on a path suited to its prevailing conditions."

"It is important to strengthen the mechanism of judicial protection of human rights so that our people can feel fairness and justice in every judicial case."

"China is ready to have frank and constructive dialogue and exchanges on human rights with other countries on the basis of equality and mutual respect."

"We need to strengthen confidence in the path of socialism with Chinese characteristics, our theories, system, and culture."

General Secretary Xi's brilliant exposition gives answers to the questions of what banner to hold, what path to take, what objective to achieve and how committed and open-minded we should be in promoting and protecting human rights. It demonstrates the fact that we now have a deeper understanding of human rights. General Secretary Xi's thought on human rights is our guidance on the fundamental principles that we should follow in pursuing the human rights development path with Chinese features and promoting and protecting all human rights in China.

The past five years have seen continuous strengthening of top-level design for the protection of human rights in China. Over the past five years, the CPC Central Committee has always viewed and approached the protection of human rights in the context of the "two centenary goals" and the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation.

The 18th CPC National Congress has identified the "full respect and effective protection of human rights" as an important goal in building a moderately prosperous society in all respects, highlighting the strategic significance of China's human rights cause.

At its third plenary session, the 18th CPC Central Committee put forth a proposal on "strengthening the judicial protection of human rights." This is the first time that a CPC Central Committee has ever come up with a proposal of this kind, charting the way forward for strengthening institutional guarantee for the protection of human rights.

At its fourth plenary session, the 18th CPC Central Committee made clear that "strengthening the judicial protection of human rights" would be part of the country's reform program, specifying further measures for the protection of human rights.

At its fifth plenary session, the 18th CPC Central Committee adopted its proposal on China's 13th Five-year Plan (2016-20) on National Economic and Social Development, adding a new dimension to the protection of human rights from the perspective of promoting sound and sustainable development of the economy and society.

At its sixth plenary session, the 18th CPC Central Committee launched a new program for an all-around strict enforcement of the Party disciplines. This has served to consolidate the foundation for the protection of human rights.

Over the past five years, China has enacted or amended a number of laws, such as the General Provisions of Civil Law, the Charity Law, and the Anti-Domestic Violence Law, taking solid steps toward a better and stronger framework for the protection of human rights in China under the new circumstances.

The past five years have seen continuous progress in China's economic and social development. Over the past five years, China has maintained its position as the world's second largest economy and contributed to 31.6 percent of global growth each year on average, with multiple economic

indicators among the highest in the world. China's per capita GNI rose from \$5,940 to \$8,260. More than 13 million new jobs have been created every year. The nine-year compulsory education and the social security system achieved universal coverage. China's impoverished rural population has fallen significantly with over 13 million people rising above poverty each year on average. By the current national rural poverty threshold, the number of the rural poor declined from 98.99 million to 43.35 million nationwide. The basic living needs have been met for the 260 million elderly people, 85 million people with disabilities and more than 60 million urban and rural residents living on subsistence allowances. An international organization survey suggests that 70 percent of Chinese young people feel very happy to live in China. According to China National Human Development Report 2016 published by the United Nations, "as one of the countries that have achieved rapid development in the area of human development over the past 30 years, China has stepped into the group of countries with high-levels of human development."

The past five years have seen continuous improvement of democracy and the rule of law in China. Over the past five years, the 18th CPC Central Committee has set forth a series of strategic tasks to fully advance law-based governance and accelerate the building of a socialist rule of law country, and incorporated law-based governance into its four-pronged comprehensive strategy (Note: This refers to making comprehensive efforts to complete the building of a moderately prosperous society in all respects, deepen reform, advance the law-based governance of China, and rigorously enforce strict Party disciplines.) It has adopted a holistic approach to the development of a rule of law in China, charting a new and faster journey toward stronger rule of law.

Over the past five years, our socialist legal system with Chinese features has improved. This could be seen from among others the release and implementation of an Outline on the Implementation of Building a Law-Based Government (2015-2020), the adoption of a guideline for criminal procedural reform centered around court trials, the establishment of the world's largest website for court judgments, and the successful and law-based efforts to overturn 34 major false criminal convictions. From

2013 to 2016, a total of 16,889 cases involving government compensation were processed. At its fourth plenary session, the 18th CPC Central Committee focused exclusively on the issue of comprehensively advancing the law-based governance of China and adopted a resolution. This was unprecedented in the 90-year-plus history of the CPC and the 60-year-plus history of the People's Republic of China.

The past five years have seen China's greater involvement in international human rights governance. Over the past five years, China has been fully engaged in international human rights cooperation and pushed for the establishment of a just and equitable international system for human rights. China has earnestly fulfilled its international obligations in the area of human rights and successfully completed its second cycle of the UN Universal Periodic Review. China is widely recognized as a role model in accepting reviews on the implementation of multiple human rights conventions such as the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment.

China has introduced a new national action plan on human rights for the years 2016 to 2020 which outlines the goals and tasks of human rights protection in the decisive stage toward a moderately prosperous society in all respects. China has been twice elected to the UN Human Rights Council by a great majority of votes. This speaks volumes about the recognition by the international community of China's achievements in promoting and protecting human rights. The concept of "a community of shared future for mankind", an idea originating in China, has won extensive support from the wider international community ever since it was put forward by General Secretary Xi Jinping, and has been written into Human Rights Council documents. China's proposition of addressing differences through dialogue resonates well with the Council members. The China-sponsored resolution on the contribution of development to the enjoyment of all human rights was adopted by the Council. China twice foiled the attempts by some countries

to interfere in China's internal affairs under the pretext of human rights at the Human Rights Council. The victory has upheld justice and China's image. Over the past five years, China has held more than 50 dialogues on human rights with over 20 developed and developing countries, enlarging its circle of friends to include as many countries as possible.

It is China's firm commitment to a human rights development path with Chinese features that has made its tremendous achievements possible in the promotion and protection of human rights.

This is a path based on China's prevailing circumstances. The path is rooted in China's history, culture and values, and fit for China's political system and level of development. It took China only decades to achieve what took developed countries centuries, a great miracle indeed in the history of mankind. The defining feature of China's path of human rights development is that it builds on the strength of the socialist system with Chinese characteristics, that it integrates the universal principles of human rights with China's specific conditions, that it promotes democracy and people's well-being in parallel, and that it upholds peace, development and dignity in a holistic way. History has made it abundantly clear that only socialism enables China to survive and that only socialism with Chinese features enables China to thrive.

This is a people-centered path. Its ultimate goal has always been to improve the well-being of the Chinese people and serve their best interests. General Secretary Xi Jinping's thought on people-centered development embodies the values of putting the people first and is of great significance in both theory and practice.

From a political perspective, General Secretary Xi's thought on people-centered development upholds the supremacy of the people, guarantees and supports their position as the masters of the state and safeguards their political rights. It will serve to improve democracy, diversify its forms and expand its channels.

From an economic perspective, General Secretary Xi's thought on people-centered development ensures that Chinese people of all ethnic groups can enjoy the benefits of development and lead a more secure, fulfilling and happier life because it focuses on improving people's well-being, promoting their all-around development and boosting sustainable progress toward common prosperity. As a proverb goes, only the wearer knows if the shoes fit. The Chinese people know the best about China's human rights situation and are in the best position to decide on China's path of human rights development. The path of ours is a choice of the Chinese people.

This is a path where development is a top priority. This path values practice as the only way to test its validity and viability. China always sees development as its most important task and has been endeavoring to liberate and grow its social productive forces and provide better safeguards, more satisfying jobs and a more comfortable living environment for its people. China maintains that the right to subsistence and development is a fundamental human right and has taken effective steps to implement the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. China is committed to promoting coordinated economic, social and environmental progress and leaving no one behind in the eradication of extreme poverty worldwide. China puts its own development in the larger context of world development so that it can help boost global economic growth and contribute to a better life of all mankind. This is the call of the times.

This is a path guided by the rule of law. Fairness and justice are a pursuit of all peoples and nations. It is also what the Communist Party of China has been aspiring to achieve. China is seriously addressing issues that adversely affect judicial justice and credibility, and pressing ahead with reforms to improve judicial accountability and litigation system and make judicial services more easily accessible to its people so as to safeguard the last defense for social equity and justice. China is of the view that all countries are equal regardless of their size. China rejects the politicization of human rights and the practice of double standards in the protection of human rights. China champions international justice and strives to let the rule of law shine over every corner of the world.

While trying to enlarge the pie of economic development, China is working to distribute the pie fairly among its people by making income distribution more reasonable and better-organized. This is the value that defines China.

This is a path where opening-up is the driving force for growth. China supports the establishment of a multipolar world, economic globalization and cultural diversity. It values all outstanding achievements and all advanced human rights theories and best practice of other countries and seeks to improve its own human rights development path and practice through reform. We respect the development path and human rights protection model of other countries that are determined by their own free will. We stand for dialogue, exchanges and cooperation on human rights on the basis of equality and mutual respect and deem it important to draw on each other's strength for common progress and steady advancement of the international human rights cause. This is the trend of today's world.

We will pursue an innovation-driven, coordinated, green, open and inclusive development and advance our overall plan for promoting all-around economic, political, cultural, social, and ecological progress and the four-pronged comprehensive strategy in a coordinated manner so as to make progress in both economic and social development. China will eradicate poverty and complete the building of a moderately prosperous society in all respects by 2020. Also can be expected in five years' time is a law-based government that will be up and running and the protection of human rights will be up to a higher standard.

All great achievements are born of generations of hard work and all great endeavors need to build on past successes. I am pleased that the book of New Achievements of Human Rights in China (2012-2017) is under compilation in the final run-up to the 19th CPC National Congress. The book will take stock of China's achievements and successful experience in the promotion and protection of human rights and contribute to the advancement of this great cause to a new height.