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**Promotion and protection of all human rights, civil,  
political, economic, social and cultural rights,  
including the right to development**

### **Written statement\* submitted by China Society for Human Rights Studies (CSHRS), 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.

[7 February 2022]

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\* Issued as received, in the language of submission only. The views expressed in the present document do not necessarily reflect the views of the United Nations or its officials.



## **Protecting Human Rights During the COVID-19 Pandemic**

More than two years ago, cases of pneumonia of unknown cause were detected and reported. The Chinese government acted quickly and the WHO set up the Incident Management Support Team in response. But it took some time for the world to realize that it is facing an unprecedented global challenge which will lead to a dramatic loss of human life and have a devastating impact on all aspects of society. Till now, more than 5.6 million people worldwide have lost their lives to COVID-19. As the Omicron sweeps the world, the fight against the virus continues. China, as always, keeps fully engaged in combating the pandemic and protecting people's human rights.

### **1. Progress and challenges in fighting COVID-19**

China has made great progress in containing the COVID-19 and protecting human rights. President Xi Jinping chaired a meeting of the Standing Committee of the Political Bureau of the CPC Central Committee which made the decision to set up a leading group for COVID-19 prevention and control and to send a steering group to Hubei. In order to relieve the overwhelmed hospitals, a total of 346 medical teams composed of 42,600 medical workers and 965 public health workers from across the country and the armed forces were dispatched to support Wuhan. With the Government's swift actions, support from the whole country and also the international community, the number of COVID-19 patients gradually dropped to zero. On April 8th, Wuhan, a city which once experienced more than ten thousands daily confirmed cases and witnessed so many struggles between life and death, finally won the initial victory over the COVID-19 and reopened after 76 days.

However, China does realize that this victory comes with great sacrifice. Economy can be rebuilt but lives lost cannot be recovered. That's why China has not let down the guard even after the newly confirmed domestic cases in mainland China dropped to single digits. It is no surprise that there are many challenges in preventing and containing COVID-19 the Chinese way. The Chinese government needs to ensure a high level of coordination and resources mobilization, and that the measures taken are in compliance with the law; while the people need to get used to temporary movement and gathering restrictions, taking classes and doing business online, wearing mask and getting temperature checks. As a result, number of the confirmed cases remains low and people's lives are gradually returning to normal.

### **2. Protecting right to life and right to health**

When fighting COVID-19, China has always put people's lives and health first. Right to life and right to health are at the frontline in this pandemic. As the UN policy brief COVID-19 and Human Rights says, all States have a duty to protect human life, it must remain the primary focus. And according to Art.12 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, everyone is entitled to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health. States should create a system of urgent medical care in cases of epidemics and similar health hazards to guarantee the right to treatment.

In order to make sure all patients could be hospitalized and treated during the Wuhan lockdown, Huoshenshan and Leishenshan hospitals were built in 16 days, providing 2,600 beds in total. Thanks to the hard work of more than thirty thousands construction workers and all the other people from different enterprises and industries, the two hospitals were able to receive patients from February 4th and 8th in 2020 respectively, just when Wuhan needed them the most. The Chinese government has also been actively promoting the prevention and treatment of COVID-19 by providing free vaccines and treatment. Until January 14th 2022, more than 2.9 billion COVID-19 vaccine doses have been administered across the country, over 1.22 billion people in China have been fully vaccinated. Also, according to the timely adjusted policies, all COVID-19 patients can receive subsidies from state finance for any medical bills not covered by basic medical insurance, serious disease insurance, or the medical assistance fund. All these measures demonstrate that China gives top priority to people's lives and health.

### **3. Protecting vulnerable populations**

China's COVID-19 prevention and responses aim to leave no one behind, especially vulnerable groups like children, pregnant women and older persons. At the end of the January 2020, the Ministry of Civil Affairs and the National Health Commission issued an urgent notice which urges the urban and rural communities to pay special attention to the needs of the people with chronic disease and older persons who cannot take care of themselves. A couple of days later, the Joint Prevention and Control Mechanism of the State Council issued a notice on COVID-19 prevention and control for pregnant women and children to make sure that maternal and child health care institutions, hospitals and other related institutions at all levels can provide sufficient protection for these vulnerable groups. Differentiated treatment approaches have also been adopted for children, pregnant women and older persons.

However, though children, pregnant women and older persons are to be protected as a priority during the pandemic, they could still face certain challenges and difficulties in their daily lives. To address their needs, some local governments have developed measures to help elder persons who do not know how to use cellphones and the health code software, so their travel will not be disproportionately affected. Green channels are created for pregnant women and elder persons to make sure they could get the COVID-19 test as soon as possible. This kind of measures are especially important for the cities on the frontline of the COVID-19. In Xi'an, anti-pandemic personnel and volunteers have paid special attention to food and medicine supplies for pregnant women and elder persons under lockdown. Cooked meals and door-to-door testings are arranged for elderly people who live alone or have limited mobility, groceries and daily necessities are also delivered to doorsteps.

### **4. Fighting COVID-19 through international solidarity**

No country can face the pandemic alone, greater international cooperation and solidarity are needed more than ever. Global anti-pandemic and recovery efforts should make sure that low and middle-income countries and the world's poorest and most vulnerable people are not left behind. But even though there are enough doses of vaccines globally, many developing countries still lack adequate access to available and affordable vaccines. Vaccine inequality remains the biggest obstacles in ending the COVID-19 pandemic. As the WHO Director General Dr. Tedros said, "No country can vaccinate its way out of the pandemic alone...We are all in this together".

China has been actively engaged in promoting global vaccine cooperation and supporting other developing countries. By the end of 2021, China had provided over 2 billion doses of COVID-19 vaccines to more than 120 countries and organizations, including 50 African countries and the AU Commission. And at the end of the November, Chinese President Xi Jinping announced that China would provide another one billion doses of vaccines to Africa, including 600 million doses as donation and 400 million doses to be provided through such means as joint production by Chinese companies and relevant African countries. China has demonstrated that international solidarity, but not selfishness, is the only way to overcome this global crisis.

### **5. Ensuring a safe Winter Olympics and Spring Festival**

As Omicron spreads across the world, China faces great challenges in delivering a "simple, safe and splendid" Winter Olympics and maintaining a safe and orderly Spring Festival travel rush. China is now hosting the Beijing 2022 Winter Olympics, which is attended by 2,892 athletes from all over the world. In order to ensure the safety of all the athletes, staff members and volunteers, daily testing for COVID-19 and the "closed-loop management system" are adopted. Smart cooking equipment, self-driving shuttle buses and different kinds of robots are deployed to reduce cross contact of people and lower the costs of epidemic transmission, prevention and control.

At the same time, China needs to ensure a safe Spring Festival travel rush with the number of passenger trips expected to reach 1.18 billion. Though may cause inconvenience, some

localities have carried out anti-pandemic measures including compulsory quarantine. People are advised not to travel to medium and high-risk areas. Still, COVID-19 responses for Spring Festival travelers should not be excessive. The Joint Prevention and Control Mechanism of the State Council has reminded the local authorities not to take a simplistic approach to COVID-19 containment by applying a one-size-fits-all policy or add excessive restrictions.

To conclude, hard as it may be, China will continue fight against the pandemic and effectively protect its people's rights.

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