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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 YouChange China Social Entrepreneur Foundation, 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.

[23 May 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.

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Closing Digital Gap by Promoting Computer Science in Rural Education

Computer science has led mankind into an era of high productivity and fast development. But like many other great advancements of our time, computer science can only do good to our society when it is accessible for all its people. It is written in SDGs 4&9 that quality education, sustainable industrialisation, and innovation should be inclusive and accessible to all. Incorporating computer science into education is an effective approach to close the so called "digital gap". In recent years, Chinese government has been stressing the importance of computer science in the country's compulsory education system.

While schools in urban areas in China have been advancing computer science education, many rural students have yet taken part in it due to the lack of qualified teachers and guidance to open courses. To change this situation, YouChange China Social Entrepreneur Foundation launched "Coding the Future" programme which aims at bringing graphical programming to rural areas by providing training and resources to rural teachers. Our programme is designed to promote programming education in rural areas at four levels.

At teacher level, the programme combines online and offline training to build a companion system in which teachers can continuously acquire new knowledge, improve their teaching skills, and gain professional development.

At student level, the programme helps teachers to open graphical programming courses and provides required material support. These courses not only help rural students master the basic skills of programming, but also stimulate their interest in science and cultivate their creativity and initiative.

At school level, various activities and special events are held in campus with the support from the programme, which allows students to present their work and attract teachers and students from other schools in the area to extend the influence of the programme.

Thanks to Chinese government's years of efforts to promote ICT infrastructure across the country, we have found recently equipped computers and fast internet connectivity in most rural schools we have visited. We are able to take advantage of these existing equipment to deliver our training faster and more adequate to teachers who are eager to learn and bring knowledge to their students.

So far, "Coding the Future" have recruited over 200 teachers from 10 remote counties in China, benefiting more than 12,000 rural students. It is not only codes we bring to these students, but the tool to present and achieve a future as they imagine. Our teachers are trained to encourage students to create with initiative, solve problems with analytical thinking, and define themselves as "persons of science". With skillsets and qualities that are required in this fast-changing world, these rural students, who may come from relatively disadvantaged socio-economic status, can stride more confidently toward their bright future.

"Coding the Future" is one of many initiatives of YouChange Foundation to promote a more efficient, more fair, and more sustainable society. Our other programmes include social enterprise incubation, poverty alleviation by industrial development, and gender development. Through our practice, a few conclusions can be drawn:

First, the greatest philanthropy is the development of humankind. All innovations and advancements should benefit all people of the society or shall be in vain. As practitioners of social development, we should be thinking how to bring the benefit of modern technology to even the farthest village and the people in the most urgent need.

Second, all stakeholders should be involved in the course of social development, and as the "third sector" of our society, NGOs should function as the bridge that brings people together. Working with private donors and public sector, we can amplify our resources and maximise our impact.

Third, education is one of the most direct and effective ways to eradicate poverty and empower disadvantaged groups. Quality education should be accessible for all so that even the most unfortunate shall have the opportunity to pursue a decent life. Furthermore, an accomplished education should encourage creativity, initiative, analytical thinking, and the

spirit of science, which is not only important for individuals, but vital to the nation's economic and social development.

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