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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.

[21 August 2022]

* Issued as received, in the language of submission only.



China's Social Enterprises Promote the Sustainable Development of Rural Community

In 2021, China has declared the total victory of the battle against extreme poverty, marking the initiation of the Rural Revitalization strategy. While China's achievements have been tremendous, challenges remain as China is exploring a way to balance economic development, environmental protection, and all people's access and rights to the country's success.

Social Enterprises as facilitator in rural development

China is a country with vast rural areas. Rural Revitalization will need the joint effort of the entire society. While the state takes the lead, private sector, especially social enterprises, can bring vitality and innovation to this undertaking.

Since its establishment, YouChange China Social Entrepreneur Foundation has embedded the notion of promoting social value among private sector into its core value and has been advocating for it. In 2017, YouChange Foundation launched the Falcon Accelerator, which practices YouChange's advocacy of social value and supports the development of China's social enterprises. The Falcon Accelerator provides training on entrepreneurship, courses related to trending social topics, resource channeling and a community for social entrepreneurs to exchange, cooperate and support each other.

During the 5-year operation, the Falcon Accelerator has gathered 71 outstanding Chinese social entrepreneurs in the community. Together, YouChange Foundation and these social entrepreneurs are committed to the sustainable development of Chinese society.

Denglong Yunhe Forest School: A contract linking community development with natural and cultural preservation

Mrs. Xuan Liu, who prefers the name Apple, is one of the Falcon entrepreneurs. Apple and her Denglong Yunhe Forest School have been committed to the community development and local preservation in Tibetan region for 15 years. Apple and her husband run a successful design company based in Shanghai. In 2015, the couple were invited by the government of Ganzi Autonomous Prefecture in Sichuan Province to conduct planning for tourism development in Xiaren Village. During the trip, Apple noticed the humble economic growth from tourism but was more stunned by the worsening environment, fading Tibetan culture and hollowing community as the consequence.

The big question is, how to empower local population to build a better community and pursue a better life while protecting their old way of living and local eco-system. The situation not only brought Apple to think but brought her life to Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR), China for the next 7 years. She rented a ragged old house on the mountain which villagers thought was too far away from civilization and was about to be torn down. It was in that house that Apple found Denglong Yunhe Forest School. Apple envisioned this school to be the place where villagers can learn how to protect local eco-system while pick up skills to make a decent living and kids study their traditional culture and form their cultural identity. In her mind, education would be the key to make changes.

Based on the school, Apple led the establishment of local cooperative which villagers are free to joint and enjoy shares, but with a catch. Villagers must sign a contract with the cooperative which stipulates a series of collectively decided village rules that villagers need to follow to enjoy the benefit. These rules cover issues such as waterbody preservation, land maintenance and waste sorting. In exchange, villagers who sign the deal receive training, employment, and shares.

Apple also reshaped local tourism based on the notion of environmental and cultural preservation. Apple hired local craftsmen to construct new sites using original Tibetan design elements and environmental-friendly materials and provide construction training to villagers; the cooperative also tries to involve as many villagers as possible so that more villagers can

enjoy the benefit and the operation can be left to local community in the future. New development of local community has given hope to more young people to stay or return.

With years of efforts, changes have gradually taken place. The school and cooperative have provided 1,220 employments for villagers; through catering, guiding, transporting and accommodation services, villagers have gained income increase of a total of RMB4,100,000. The school has also provided training of Tibetan food cooking, lavender planting, and handcrafting for 240 villagers. The approach of Xiaren Village's development has received affirmation and financial support of RMB1,000,000 from the prefecture government. In addition, the story of Denglong Yunhe Forest School has been covered by Xinhua News Agency and gained enormous attention.

Rethink future social ecology

The story of Apple shows us how a socially responsible company can contribute their expertise, knowledge, innovation, and vitality to the development of rural community. Several points can be drawn from Apple's practice:

First, the contradiction between economic development and natural and local cultural preservation pushes us to explore new approaches of community development and even a new social eco-system. Drawing wisdom from ancient Chinese philosophy, we must explore a social ecology in which the relationship between humans and nature, humans and society and humans and humans will be thoroughly changed compared to the world we currently live in.

Second, social innovation is of as much importance as technological advancement. In real world, all technologies and sciences have their limits due to the scarcity of resources, while innovation as institutional changes will extend new space for social development, allowing us to achieve what was thought impossible.

Third, the sustainable development of rural community requires the participation of multiple stakeholders, including governments, private sector, social organizations, and individuals. The development of social enterprises is conducive in channeling more resources to the resolution of social issues; and by combining business thinking, philanthropic philosophy, and traditional wisdom, we can promote a new sustainable social ecology in which all people's rights to development will be guaranteed.
