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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 Society for Threatened Peoples, 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.

[22 August 2022]

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



Human Rights Situation in Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR), China and Adjacent Tibetan Areas

Society for Threatened Peoples continues to remain deeply disturbed by the repressive situation of Tibetans in Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR), China and adjacent areas where Tibetans live in China. The Chinese government continues to systematically undermine and destroy the distinct cultural and national identity of the Tibetan people. Despite having undergone repression for more than 70 years, the Tibetan people have kept alive their non-violent struggle with indomitable courage and determination. The non-violent call for protection of Tibetan culture and identity set a global model of peaceful resistance for conflict and unjust perpetrated by an authoritarian regime.

The Tibetan plateau, which is the source of freshwater for millions of people in Asia, is threatened by the multiple impacts from climate change, China's detrimental developmental policies, forced relocation of Tibetan nomads and farmers, declaration of so-called natural reserves and national parks, and state engineered settlement of Chinese settlers in Tibetan regions. There is no man-made border for nature, hence, the call for attention to the ever-growing change in Climate in the rooftop of the Asia-Tibetan plateau requires more urgent attention than ever.

Environmental Issues and Development in Tibetan regions for Whom?

Series of small and large-scale dams are being built on Tibetan rivers to power Chinese cities and exacerbate large-scale resource extraction across Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR), China. The 14th Five-Year Plan, the mega blueprint containing billions of dollars' worth of projects, including the controversial hydropower projects on the lower reaches of the Yarlung Tsangpo (Brahmaputra) close to the borders of Arunachal Pradesh in India. The motive behind the dam frenzy is also to support the mass migration of Han Chinese into certain parts of Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR), China, such as Kongpo in the South of Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR), China. The resource-rich region of Nyingtri in Kongpo is considered ideal for the mass immigration of Han Chinese as it enjoys a temperate climate with immense forest cover. Hence, the Chinese government has made a huge investment in the rapid construction of highways, railways, airports and mega dams to facilitate securitization and eventual mass migration of Chinese into the Tibetan region. April 3, 2022 Xinhua report says China plans to invest about 22 billion dollars in infrastructure development in Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR), China - to the detriment of the Tibetan people.

The Tibetan plateau, which is the source of Asia's six largest and most important rivers, provides fresh water and sustains life for some of the world's most populated nations like India, China, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal, Myanmar, Thailand, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Cambodia, and Viet Nam. According to the International Centre for Integrated Mountain Development (ICIMOD report 2019), more than 1.9 billion people directly depend on rivers originating from the Tibetan Plateau.

The building of dams on Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR), China's trans-boundary rivers has affected many downstream countries and triggered international criticism, resulting in the formation of the Mekong River Commission. There is no formal agreement between China and downstream countries over sharing of hydrological data as well as the use of shared river systems. According to a UN report in 2014, by 2025 water scarcity is predicted to affect 1.8 billion people, particularly in Asia. Many scholars and experts have warned about possible future "water wars" between China and India, and the same dynamics could play out in Southeast Asia. Therefore, it is time to recognize Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR), China's strategic importance to regional water security and environmental protection.

According to the Chinese Academy of Sciences (CAS) report titled "Scientific Assessment of Tibetan Plateau Environmental Change", the Tibetan plateau is already warming two times faster than the global average. CAS scientists predict that temperatures on the Tibetan plateau will increase by up to 4.6 degrees Celsius by the end of the century. The effects of these

changes are becoming more evident in the form of melting glaciers, intensified weather events, increasing desertification, and degraded grasslands.

China's Education Policy and Extermination of Tibetan Language

China's education policy aims at complete sinicization of Tibetans. From 1985- 2021, China enrolled over 143,000 Tibetan children, mostly junior high school students, and sent them to the so-called residential Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR), China classes and schools in different Chinese provinces and cities in the name of providing them better education. Separated from their families and traditional culture, the Tibetan children are forced to study with Chinese students in the classes and undergo political indoctrination and learn Chinese culture from Chinese teachers who have no knowledge of Tibetan language. They are also sent to Chinese homes to live as foster children.

A new assimilationist policy being currently implemented is the so called "Children's Language Homophony Plan for Putonghua (Mandarin) Education for Preschool Children" ordered by China's Ministry of Education in 2020. It is being enforced across minorities and rural areas during the current 14th Five-Year Plan (2021-2025). It enforces pre-school children in minorities and rural areas to learn Putonghua, thereby depriving Tibetans of practicing and promoting the Tibetan language.

Restriction on the Tibetan language in schools have compelled Tibetans to resort to private classes conducted by organizations and monasteries to learn the Tibetan language. However, the Chinese government has been cracking down on these schools. For instance, in July 2021, Sengdruk Taktse School in Darlag County was forcibly closed for imparting comprehensive Tibetan cultural education in the Tibetan language with over 500 graduates. In September 2021, the Chinese authorities detained 121 Tibetans in Dza Wonpo in Sershul County. In October 2021, Gaden Rabten Namgyaling School at Drakgo County was demolished under the alleged charges of infringing upon local land-use laws. The school provides a blend of both traditional and modern education, including classes in Tibetan language and grammar, Mandarin and English. Likewise, the medium of language for the recruitment exam for government jobs in Tibetan areas was changed from Tibetan to Chinese.

Society for Threatened People calls on the Human Rights Council to demand accountability from China for its persecution of the Tibetan people, and heed the following recommendations:

- Ensure Tibetan parents and children are able to freely practice their culture, religion and language and Tibetan children have access to education in their mother tongue in all level of their schooling and high studies;
- Ensure Tibetan Buddhist are able to freely practise their religion, including the right to choose their own religious leaders without Chinese government interference;
- Call upon China to engage in a meaningful consultation with the local Tibetan communities before formulating or implementing any environmental policies;
- Call upon China to protect freedom of opinion and expression, including artistic expression, and Prohibit criminalization of rights defenders on the basis of religion and ethnicity;
- Follow up with the UN experts June 2020 call for decisive measures to protect fundamental freedom in China by convening a special session to evaluate the range of violations perpetrated by China.