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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.

[20 February 2008]

* This written statement is issued, unedited, in the language(s) received from the
submitting non-governmental organization(s).

People's Republic of China

China announced its plan to invest 100 billion Yuan 180 development projects in the rural areas of the Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR) until 2010. Infrastructure and capital have been invested in the Tibetan region, but they are channelled into the development of industrialized areas in eastern China. New roads and highways either branch off to railway routes, airports or to the sites of the mining industries. The new airports and railways facilitate the easy access for tourists and migrants to Tibet. Many dams were constructed and diverted the flow of rivers and their hydro-energetic potential to eastern China. The hydropower projects are designed largely to provide power and other benefits to the Chinese population in the region. Oil and gas are piped away from Tibet to fuel Beijing, Shanghai and other coastal cities. Regrettably benefits invested from Tibet are rarely reinvested in human and social development, for instance in local health and education. Thus, Tibet still remains one of the poorest regions in China economically as well as educationally.

Forced Resettlement and Poverty

Since 2000 the Chinese government has been implementing resettlement, land confiscation, and fencing policies in pastoral areas inhabited primarily by Tibetans, drastically curtailing their livelihood. The policies have been particularly radical since 2003 in the Golok and Yushu prefectures of Qinghai province, but have also been implemented in Gansu, Sichuan, and Yunnan provinces and TAR.

In the last few years the Tibetan herders based in the pastoral regions have been facing eviction from their traditional places into the new towns and urban areas. In the new settlements the movement of the herders and their livestock is restricted to the fenced-in grassland provided to them. The government strictly limited the number of cattle the herders are allowed to keep when shifted to the new towns. Normally the size of the herds is reduced to only a half or third. At the same time the area provided is too small even for these smaller herds to graze there throughout the year. Hence numerous cattle have to be slaughtered to abide by the orders.

The resettlement programme has subjected herders to compulsory or forced relocation, compulsory livestock reduction, bans on grazing, compulsory change of land use, and evictions to make way for public works schemes. Claims of non-payment are endemic and there are also allegations of corruption and discrimination in the compensation process. The number of Tibetans affected by forced resettlement is unknown but it easily runs into the tens if not hundreds of thousands.

The Chinese Constitution and the PRC's laws guarantee the right to consultation and compensation to those who are moved off their land or whose property is confiscated. In the case of Tibetan nomads, the Chinese authorities failed to adequately consult with the affected herders. They also did not provide them with adequate compensation or procedures for complaints, thereby failing to fulfil their obligations under the Chinese Constitution.

The Chinese government cited environmental protection and development as the key reasons behind the resettlement of the nomadic population. However, the emphasis has been heavily placed on the latter. So far the government has mainly encouraged the expansion of heavy industries on nomadic lands. Similarly, the mining activities have greatly increased since the launch of the Western Development Programme, while nomads have been evicted on the pretext of environmental protection.

The development of Tibetan nomads and their livelihoods by involving them in the market economy is another highly questionable endeavour, because most of them are illiterate and command no special skills. Prior to forcing them into new towns and urban settlements or introducing them to the market economy, the nomads were not given any vocational training or workshop to enable them to find alternative livelihoods. Likewise their inability to speak Chinese is posing a serious problem when seeking long-term employment.

Hence, the resettlement programme impoverishes the Tibetan nomads who were otherwise living at subsistence level. According to official Chinese figures, by the end 2007 around 60,000 Tibetans were moved to new towns in Qinghai, with the number likely to rise to 100,000 by 2010. Despite the fact that similar resettlement projects in Inner Mongolia and Xinjiang resulted in considerable impoverishment in the 1990s, the project is vigorously implemented in the Tibetan regions.

Education and Assimilation

The illiteracy rate in Tibet continues to be very high (54.86 percent) and was the highest among all the 31 provinces of China. The education policy implemented in Tibet is strongly influenced by China's integration policy. For instance, bilingual education is available only until primary school. In the middle and higher schools the language is exclusively Mandarin. Such a policy is clearly heading towards linguistic assimilation.

Instead of building or upgrading schools and universities in Tibet the best Tibetan students are sent to Chinese cities for educational purposes at a tender age. This places the children at secondary school age in a completely Chinese and Mandarin-speaking environment, away from their families and traditional surroundings.

The Qinghai–Tibet Railway: Threat to Survival of the Tibetan Culture

The Qinghai-Tibet railway is officially designated a key “Great Western Development” project, which has transported 1.5 million passengers into Tibet during its first year of operation. The unprecedented movement of Chinese migrants to Lhasa, has put pressure on the local Tibetans and their day-to-day livelihoods. Inadequate information provided by the Chinese government about passengers travelling on the Qinghai-Tibet railway hampers the objective assessment of the railway’s alleged role in accelerating the influx of non-Tibetan residents into the region.

In the middle of September 2006, the railway’s third month of operation, Jin Shixun, the director of the TAR Committee of Development and Reform, provided information about the occupational categories of passengers—60 percent were business persons, students, transient workers, traders, and individuals visiting relatives; 40 percent were tourists. Jin’s remark was based on 270,000 passengers over a period of approximately 75 days, or about

3,600 passengers per day. If a similar proportion prevailed throughout the remainder of the first year of operation, then approximately 900,000 of the 1.5 million passengers could have been non-tourists, and hundreds of thousands of them could have been non-Tibetan business persons, workers, and traders who intended to remain for a period in the TAR.

A Tibetan resident of Lhasa told a radio call-in show in July 2007 that “Tibetans in Lhasa have been overwhelmed by the frightful explosion of the Chinese population in the city.” The caller said that “wherever you go, you get the impression of overcrowding.” Tibetans “[witness] Chinese tourists becoming permanent residents,” she said, and reported that “Chinese migrants were moving fast into formerly Tibetan neighbourhoods and businesses.” Another Tibetan caller from Lhasa said “there is deep scepticism about the aim and whose purpose [the railway] is serving,” and asserted that “the Tibetans are certainly not the direct beneficiaries.”

Existing examples of the establishment of rail links to remote regions in China indicate that significant changes to the proportions of ethnic groups occur over time. Rail links were built into what is now the Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region (IMAR) before the PRC was established; a railway reached Urumqi, the capital of the Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region (XUAR), in 1962; the railway arrived in Kashgar, in the western XUAR, in 1999. Based on official 2000 census data, the ratio of Han to Mongol in the IMAR is 4.6 Han to 1 Mongol. In the XUAR the ratio of Han to Uighur is 0.9 Han to 1 Uighur. The ratio of Han to Tibetans in the TAR stood at 0.07 Han to 1 Tibetan in 2000, according to census data. Tibetans are concerned that the Qinghai-Tibet railway will facilitate changes in Tibetan areas of China similar to those in the IMAR and XUAR. Directly or indirectly, the new railway is swiftly escalating the pace of internal colonization and threatening the survival of Tibetan culture and identity.

Society for Threatened Peoples calls on the Human Rights Council to urge the PRC to:

- invest more on human development especially on improving education and health of the Tibetan and Uighur people,
- impose a moratorium on all resettlement projects,
- uphold the rights to freedom of expression, assembly, and association,
- consult affected people before implementing any projects,
- abide by international legal instruments including ICESCR.

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