

# Gender Equality and Women's Development in China

## White Paper

**Information Office of the State Council  
of the People's Republic of China  
August 2005, Beijing**

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## Foreword

China is a developing country with the largest population in the world. Of its total population of 1.3 billion, women account for about half. Therefore, the promotion of gender equality and the overall development of women is not only of great significance for China's development, it also has a special influence on the efforts for the advancement of mankind.

It has always been a basic state policy of China to promote equality between men and women. Since New China was founded in 1949, especially since the adoption of the reform and opening-up policy in the late 1970s, and along with the continuous growth of China's economy and the overall progress of its society, women are being given more guarantees of enjoyment of equal rights and opportunities with men and the development of women is being given unprecedented opportunities.

In recent years, the Chinese government has made fairness and justice, with gender equality included, an important part of efforts to build a harmonious socialist society, and has utilized economic, legal, administrative, public opinion and other measures to ensure that women enjoy equal rights with men in terms of politics, economy, culture, and social and family life, and continuously pushes forward women's development in an all-round way.

The *Beijing Declaration* and the *Platform for Action* adopted at the Fourth UN World Conference on Women held in Beijing in 1995 have produced great influence in promoting the progress of gender equality and women's development around the world. To commemorate the 10th anniversary of the conference, this white paper has been prepared to introduce to the rest of the world China's progress in promoting gender equality and women's development over the past decade.

## I. State Mechanism to Promote Gender Equality and Development of Women

To promote gender equality and the development of women, China is making unremitting efforts to improve its legal system to protect the rights and interests of women, formulate and implement programs regarding women's development, further improve relevant working organs, increase financial input and strengthen social awareness.

The state has continuously intensified its efforts in the formulation, revision and enforcement of relevant laws and regulations to protect the legitimate rights and interests of women in earnest. As the supreme organ of state power and the top legislative organ of China, the National People's Congress and its Standing Committee have taken the protection of women's rights and interests and the promotion of gender equality as a key assignment, paid great attention to the formulation of laws concerning women, seriously dealt with bills related to the protection of women's legitimate rights and interests, and actively urged and supervised the enforcement and implementation of relevant laws. The Chinese government and its departments concerned have enforced laws and formulated and implemented relevant administrative rules and regulations to guarantee women's rights and interests, and promote gender equality. China now has built a complete legal system concerning the protection of women's rights and interests, and promotion of gender equality, based on the Constitution of the People's Republic of China, and with the Law of the People's Republic of China on the Protection of Rights and Interests of Women as the main body and various separate laws and regulations, local regulations and administrative rules adopted by various government departments as supplementary provisions. The state judicial organs have augmented their law enforcement steps, and punished the perpetrators of various kinds of criminal infringements of women's rights and interests in accordance with the law.

The state has enacted and implemented outlines for the development of women, and included women's development in the overall plans of economic and social development. The *Outline for the Development of Chinese Women* is a national program of action to carry out the *Platform for Action* adopted in 1995 in Beijing and push forward gender equality and women's development in a comprehensive way. Since the goals set in the *Outline for the Development of Chinese Women (1995-2000)* have been basically realized, and to meet the demands of China's coordinated economic and social development and the requirements of the *UN Millennium Development Goals*, China promulgated in 2001 its *Outline for the Development of Chinese Women (2001-2010)*. The new document outlines 34 major goals and 100 policies and measures in six fields: women and the economy; women's participation in decision-making and administration; women and education; women and health; women and the law; and women and the environment. The departments concerned under the State Council and local governments at all levels have all worked out their own programs for the implementation of the outline and plans for women's development in their respective areas.

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The National Working Committee on Children and Women (NWCCW) under the State Council, the coordination and consultation organ of the Chinese government in charge of women and children's work, plays an important role in coordinating and promoting relevant government departments to do women and children's work well, as well as in formulating and organizing the implementation of the outlines for the development of women and children, providing necessary human, financial and material resources to the work on women and children and to the development of women and children's cause, and guiding, encouraging and supervising the work of its subordinates in all provinces, autonomous regions and municipalities directly under the central government. The current NWCCW is headed by a vice-premier of the State Council, and is composed of 33 member units (ministries, commissions under the State Council and non-governmental organizations - ed.) each having one of its vice-ministerial-level officials as a member of the NWCCW. To date, working organs on children and women have been set up by the people's governments of all provinces, autonomous regions and municipalities directly under the central government, prefectures (prefecture-level cities and leagues) and counties (county-level cities, districts and banners) across China's mainland, which are under the direction of officials of governments at the corresponding level. An effective working system has been built within these working committees to coordinate the functional departments and urge them to perform their duties. Their expenditures are covered in the financial budgets of the governments at the corresponding level.

The Chinese government attaches importance to the role of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) related to the development of women. The All-China Women's Federation, All-China Federation of Trade Unions, Central Committee of the Communist Youth League, China Disabled Persons' Federation and China Association of Science and Technology have all effectively pressed ahead with their gender equality work in line with their respective guidelines. The All-China Women's Federation (ACWF) is the largest NGO in China dedicated to promoting gender equality and women's development. It has an organizational system that covers women's federations and group members at various levels, and enjoys wide representation and mass involvement. The ACWF and local women's federations play a significant role in uniting and motivating women to participate in the country's economic construction and social development, encouraging them to take an active part in the democratic management and supervision of state and social affairs, and representing and safeguarding the rights and interests of women as a whole. In recent years, government departments have cooperated with women's federations and other NGOs to organize all kinds of activities to effectively utilize social resources for the promotion of gender equality and women's development.

The central and local treasuries have both increased their inputs for the implementation of the outline for the development of women year by year, and optimized the allocation of resources to facilitate women's development. Since 2000, quite an amount of funds have been appropriated from the central and local treasuries to help achieve the key and difficult objectives that are difficult to fulfill in the outlines, with priority being given to the western and poverty-stricken areas. In 1990, the state input into women and children's

health care and epidemic prevention and treatment stood at 305 million yuan and 1.203 billion yuan, respectively, which rose to 1.046 billion yuan and 3.388 billion yuan in 1999, and further to 1.579 billion yuan and 9.054 billion yuan in 2003. The state also pays great attention to the collection and study of statistics about the situation as regards women, and has set up a special organ to monitor and assess the implementation of the outline, and formulated a statistical monitoring indicator system and assessment program. In addition, networks for statistics monitoring and working systems have been established in various provinces, autonomous regions and municipalities directly under the central government. With the continuous improvement of the statistics-gathering and analysis systems by the departments concerned and gender statistics indicators added, a complete national gender statistics system has taken shape and is being constantly improved. Over the past decade, materials on gender statistics have been compiled and published by the state departments of statistics.

The Chinese government sets great store by cooperation with the United Nations and other international organizations, and has actively strengthened its exchanges and cooperation with other governments and women's organizations around the world. China is serious about implementing international conventions. In May 2000, it submitted to the United Nations *The Report on the Implementation Result of the People's Republic of China of the "Beijing Declaration" and the "Platform for Action" Adopted by the Fourth World Conference on Women in 1995*; in February 2004, it submitted *The Fifth and Sixth Regular Reports on the Implementation of the UN "Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women"*; and in March 2005, it submitted *The Report on the Implementation of the People's Republic of China of the "Beijing Platform for Action" (1995) and the Document of Results of the 23rd UN General Assembly Special Session (2000)*.

## II. Women and the Economy

The state has made the guarantee of equal employment opportunities between women and men and the sharing of economic resources and results of social development the top priority for the advancement of gender equality and the development of women, and has worked out and adopted a series of policies and measures to ensure that women can equally participate in the economic development, enjoy equal access to economic resources and effective services, enhance their self-development ability and improve their social and economic status.

Encouraging women to start business and become re-employed. Employment is the basis of people's livelihood and the basic economic resource that women rely on for subsistence. Over the past few years, the Chinese government has formulated and carried out supportive policies to encourage women to start businesses on their own initiative, and give them preferential treatment when granting employment training subsidies and small-sum guaranteed loans and conducting tax reduction and exemption. In the meantime, governments at all levels have adopted many favorable policies toward women, such as creating public-welfare jobs, opening employment service centers, sponsoring special recruitment activities and vocational training courses, monitoring sex discrimination against women in employment and help women, especially laid-off women, to find new jobs. With the support of the government, women's federations at various levels, trade unions and other NGOs have conducted their work regarding the employment and re-employment of women in a creative way. During the period from 1998 to 2003, women's federations nationwide endeavored to get small-sum credit loans to directly aid a total of 2.5 million women to get re-employed. Over the past decade, the number and ratio of women employed have remained fairly high. By the end of 2004, the number of both urban and rural women workers reached 337 million nationwide, accounting for 44.8 percent of the total employed; and the number of women workers in urban work units stood at 42.27 million, accounting for 38.1 percent of the national total.

Improving the employment structure of women. Over the past few years, the tertiary industry has become the main channel for providing jobs to women, and an increasing number of women are entering the computer, communications, finance and insurance and other high- and new-tech industries, thus becoming an important force in these fields. At present, women owners of small and medium-sized enterprises account for about 20 percent of the national total number of entrepreneurs, and 60 percent of them have emerged in the past decade. State organs, enterprises and public institutions have long pursued the principle of equality between men and women in terms of recruitment, training of professionals and technicians, as well as promotion in ranks and granting of professional titles to encourage women to display their abilities and come to the fore. By the end of 2004, women accounted for 43.6 percent of the total number of professionals and technicians in state-owned enterprises and institutions nationwide, up 6.3 percentage points over the 37.3 percent of 1995, among whom, the number of senior and

intermediate-level women professionals and technicians rose from 20.1 percent and 33.4 percent to 30.5 percent and 42.0 percent, respectively.

Enhancing social security for urban women. In recent years, the Chinese government has stepped up the construction of a social security system, with pension insurance, unemployment insurance, medical insurance, employment injury insurance and maternity insurance as the main contents. It has also carried out significant reforms of the urban social relief system, and gradually established and improved three funds: minimum urban living guarantee fund, basic living guarantee for laid-off workers fund and unemployment guarantee fund. The Trial Measures for Maternity Insurance of Enterprise Employees the state promulgated in 1994 put maternity insurance, which used to be borne by employers, under overall social planning. By the end of 2004, the practice of overall social planning had been introduced in 28 provinces, autonomous regions and municipalities directly under the central government, with 43.84 million employees, or 60 percent of the total number of urban employees covered. In October 1999, the Regulations on the Minimum Standard of Living for Urban Residents went into effect. By the end of 2004, 22.05 million urban residents, including women, were receiving minimum subsistence allowances. All those who needed such help were by and large covered.

Giving full play to women's role in the rural economy. China is basically an agricultural country, and women account for more than 60 percent of the rural labor force and are a major force in farming activities. The Law of the People's Republic of China on Rural Land Contracting, which came into effect in 2003, states that women and men enjoy equal rights in contracting land in rural areas, and no organization or individual shall deprive women of the right to contract and operate land or infringe upon their right to do so. In recent years, the Chinese government has adopted active policies and measures to solve the problems concerning agriculture, rural areas and farmers, increased its input into agriculture, pushed forward tax reform in rural areas, and implemented the strategy of invigorating agriculture by applying science and technology. Government departments and women's federations at all levels have jointly organized activities to encourage rural women to acquire knowledge and learn science and technology, and compete in their development and contributions, so as to bring their role in invigorating and developing the rural economy into full play.

Safeguarding the legitimate rights and interests of rural women working in cities. Over the past few years, the Chinese government has gradually reduced or eliminated the restrictive regulations on the employment of rural people in cities, and made great efforts to solve the problems of salaries in arrears, vocational safety, equal pay for equal work and social security for them so as to relieve rural migrant workers of anxieties regarding residence registration in cities and the schooling of their children, and actively protects the legitimate rights and interests of rural women working in cities. At the same time, the state also encourages and supports the building of training schools and legal aid centers, and the publication of typical cases of infringement as a means to raise awareness of their

rights among migrant women workers and enhance their ability to safeguard their rights in accordance with the law.

To actively promote gender equality in employment and raise women's ability to find employment or start businesses, the Chinese government has begun to cooperate with the United Nations Development Program, International Labor Organization and other international organizations, with satisfactory results. At present, it is accelerating, proceeding from the national conditions of China, the process for the approval of the UN's *Discrimination (Employment and Occupation) Convention* in China.

### III. Women and Poverty Elimination

To alleviate and eliminate poverty is a goal that the Chinese government is determined to realize. With the implementation of large-scale and effective special poverty-reduction development programs, the government has succeeded in reducing the poverty-stricken rural population, the majority of whom are women, by 53.9 million - from 80 million in 1994 to 26.1 million in 2004.

Formulating preferential policies for the elimination of poverty among women. The *Outline for the Development of Chinese Women* puts forth the main goals of reducing the extent of poverty among and the number of poor women, and calls for more support for poverty-stricken women in the country's western development strategy, so that women will be the main receivers of poverty-reduction resources and the direct beneficiaries of the achievements of the poverty-reduction efforts. The state poverty-reduction program has made it clear that the government strives to further motivate women in the poverty-stricken areas to engage in household sideline production and the "courtyard economy," launch labor-intensive and other poverty-reduction projects that are particularly suitable for women, and organize women to learn practical skills and enhance their ability to shake off poverty and become well-off. At the Global Conference on Speeding Up Poverty Reduction, held in Shanghai in 2004, the Chinese government made a statement on its policy concerning the alleviation and elimination of poverty, which stressed the principle that, all factors being equal, preference will be given to poor women, and encouraged poor women to take part in poverty-reduction programs, and promised that the ratio of women participants would be no less than 40 percent of the total.

Adopting effective measures to gradually eliminate poverty among women in rural areas. Since 2001, the Chinese government has made sex indicator a component of the poverty monitoring work in rural areas, and stressed that attention should be paid to gender equality in the poverty-reduction work. In recent years, the government has increased its financial input into poverty-reduction work. In 2004 alone, 12.2 billion yuan was allocated by the central treasury for poverty reduction projects, and local governments also increased their inputs into this field. At the same time, and on the basis of the specific conditions in different areas, they have endeavored to help rural women get rid of poverty by way of provision of small-sum credit loans, labor export and pairing-off assistance. During the period from 2001 to 2004, a total of 13.52 billion yuan in small-sum credit loans for rural households was granted from the state poverty-reduction discount loans, and more than half of the money went to women. Since 2001, the Chinese government has taken poverty-reduction projects in the form of participation of the poor as the main way to "enhance the whole village," and such projects now cover 148,000 poverty-stricken villages nationwide.

Supporting and encouraging NGOs to help women get rid of poverty and become well-off. In recent years, thanks to the support and initiative of the Chinese government,

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women's federations at all levels have launched, in view of local conditions, the "Poverty-Reduction Action for Women" with provision of small-sum credit loans, poverty elimination group by group, labor export, pairing-off assistance and mutual help between the eastern and western parts of the country as the main contents. The China Population Welfare Foundation has launched "Happiness Project" with an aim to help poor mothers. It raises funds to help poor mothers participate in economic and social development, and enhance their health and cultural level. The project of "Love of the Earth, Water Cellars for Mothers," initiated by the China Women's Development Foundation, has raised funds for building more than 90,000 rain-water collecting cellars and 1,100 small central water supply projects in the water-short northwest part of China, benefiting nearly one million poverty-stricken people. In addition, women's federations and other NGOs have tried every means to get international funds and material aid to support the poverty-reduction projects and help women in poverty-stricken areas improve their lot.

#### IV. Women's Participation in Decision Making and Management

Women's ability to be involved in the management of state and social affairs has been constantly strengthened, and their ability in handling political affairs has gradually enhanced. China's Constitution clearly stipulates the basic principle that men and women have equal political rights. The Law on the Protection of Rights and Interests of Women has made further stipulations to ensure that women can participate in decision making and management. *The Outline for the Development of Chinese Women* clearly defines the specific goals to be reached for women to participate in government work. All these have laid the legal and policy foundation for increasing women's participation in government work.

The people's congress system is a fundamental political system in China, and the state pays great attention to the important role played by women in the people's congresses at all levels. The Election Law of the National People's Congress and Local People's Congresses at All Levels of the People's Republic of China, promulgated in 1995, stipulates that deputies to the National People's Congress (NPC) and local people's congresses at all levels should include appropriate numbers of women, and the proportion of women deputies should be increased step by step. In the past decade, women have displayed great enthusiasm for participating in electing deputies to the people's congresses at all levels and exercising their democratic rights. Some 73.4 percent of women turned out to elect deputies to local people's congresses. Of all the deputies to the various National People's Congresses, more than 20 percent have been women. The proportion of women among the deputies to the Tenth National People's Congress is 20.2 percent; and women members account for 13.2 percent of all members of the Standing Committee of the NPC, an increase of 0.5 percentage point over the previous national congress. Moreover, three of the vice-chairpersons of the NPC's Standing Committee are women.

The system of multi-party cooperation and political consultation under the leadership of the Communist Party of China (CPC) is a basic political system in China. The CPC is the ruling party, while all other political parties are participants in state affairs. They are allies working closely with the CPC. Women account for a certain number of CPC members. In 2004, female membership in the CPC was 12.956 million, accounting for 18.6 percent of all CPC members, an increase of 3 percentage points over 1995. Women deputies accounted for 18 percent of all deputies to the 16th CPC National Congress, an increase of 1.2 percentage points over the previous congress. Of the members of the 16th Central Committee of the CPC, 7.6 percent are women (as either members or alternate members), an increase of 0.3 of one percentage point over the previous congress. Female membership is relatively high in the eight democratic parties, exceeding 30 percent in seven of them. The Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC) is an important organ of the multi-party cooperation and political consultation system under the leadership of the CPC. At present, four of the vice-chairpersons of the National

Committee of the CPPCC are women. Women members and women Standing Committee members of the first conference of the Tenth National Congress of the CPPCC accounted for 16.7 and 11.7 percent, respectively, up 1.2 percentage points and 1.7 percentage points over the first conference of the previous congress.

The state has clearly defined the objective for training and selecting women cadres, and has strengthened the work of training and selecting women cadres. As a result, women are now widely participating in the state and social administrative work, and a large number of outstanding women serve as leading cadres at various levels. By the end of 2004, women cadres at county (division) or prefecture (department) level accounted for 16.9 percent and 12.6 percent of all cadres at the corresponding level in all Party committees, people's congresses, governments, CPPCC organizations, courts, procuratorates, democratic parties and mass organizations across the country, 4.3 percentage points and 4.5 percentage points higher than in 1995, respectively; 368 incumbent or vice mayors (commissioners and prefects) were women; and women cadres at or above the provincial (ministry) level accounted for 9.9 percent of the total at that level, an increase of 2.8 percentage points over 1995. At present, China has one woman vice-premier and one woman state councilor on the State Council, and 25 women incumbent or vice ministers or ministerial-level directors or heads in the Supreme People's Court, the Supreme People's Procuratorate, and the ministries and commissions under the State Council. The proportion of women civil servants recruited in 2003 nationwide was 27.8 percent of the total; and that in the organs of the CPC Central Committee and central government was 37.7 percent. In addition, China also attaches great importance to the training of women cadres of ethnic groups, and to strengthening their ability to participate in state affairs.

The level of participation in state affairs by women at the grassroots level has also risen continuously. Women in both rural and urban areas enthusiastically take part in the elections of neighborhood committees and village committees. In 2004, the number of women neighborhood committee members reached 237,000, and that of women village committee members reached 443,000, accounting for 55.8 percent and 15.1 percent of the total members of neighborhood committees and village committees, respectively. A large number of women have come to the fore as chairpersons of neighborhood and village committees.

The role of women's federations in participating in and supervising government work has been strengthened. The channels for women's democratic participation have been constantly widened. As the representatives of all China's women, women's federations at all levels are involved in formulating and revising laws and regulations regarding women's rights and interests. They are also involved in supervising the enforcement of such laws and regulations. Relevant government departments earnestly solicit the comments of women's federations and make a point of reflecting their opinions in related policies and plans.

## V. Women and Education

In China, women enjoy the same rights and opportunities as men to receive education. Such rights and opportunities are clearly defined in China's Education Law, Compulsory Education Law and Vocational Education Law. The state takes concrete measures and actions to ensure that girls receive nine-year compulsory education and that women have more opportunities to receive secondary and higher education. The state is determined to eliminate illiteracy among young and middle-aged women, promote lifelong education for women and extend their average years of education.

The Chinese government makes great efforts to eliminate gender disparities at the stage of compulsory education, and improve the education environment for girls. In 2004, the enrollment of boys and girls was 98.97 percent and 98.93 percent, respectively. The difference in access to education between boys and girls was reduced from 0.7 percentage point in 1995 to 0.04 percentage point. The government has unceasingly increased its input into compulsory education in the countryside, so as to improve the compulsory education environment there and ensure that all girls, like boys, have the chance to receive compulsory education. In 2004, the educational appropriation from the state treasury for compulsory education in rural areas reached 139.362 billion yuan, two times the amount in 1995. In recent years, the state has raised money from many channels for grants to students in primary and middle schools. Under one policy known as "Two Exemptions and One Allowance," the government provides subsidies so that students from families with financial difficulties in rural areas, particularly in central and west China, are exempt from paying textbook fees and other fees, and students attending boarding schools get allowances. Governments at all levels have formulated special policies and taken measures concerning the education of girls in poor areas and areas inhabited by ethnic minorities, work hard to raise the level of compulsory education for girls in rural China. In addition, the state has adopted special policies to ensure that migrant children (including girls) from rural areas receive compulsory education. For many years, governments at all levels have worked hard to help NGOs in organizing donation activities to pool money to improve the education of girls. The Hope Project and the Spring Buds Program initiated by the China Youth Development Foundation and the China Children's Foundation have provided financial assistance to large numbers of girl dropouts to help them return to school.

The state exerts great efforts to ensure that women have the opportunity to receive secondary and higher education. As a result, the proportion of women in all types of schools at all levels has increased considerably. In 2004, the proportion of girl students in junior and senior middle schools reached 47.4 percent and 45.8 percent, respectively; the proportion of girl students in secondary vocational schools reached 51.5 percent; the number of girl students in institutions of higher learning nationwide reached 6,090,000, accounting for 45.7 percent of all students in such schools and an increase of 10.3 percentage points over 1995. The proportion of female postgraduate and doctoral students

was 44.2 percent and 31.4 percent, 13.6 percentage points and 15.9 percentage points higher respectively over the figures for 1995. In recent years, the Chinese government has introduced the state loan system and established state scholarships for students at institutions of higher learning, providing loans at discounted interest, scholarship and stipends to poor students (including girls) to help them complete their studies. Meanwhile, the government encourages enterprises, private institutions and individuals to donate to education and to help female students with financial difficulties receive education. The state attaches importance to the fostering and training of women teachers, and gives full play to their role in promoting women's education. In 2004, the proportions of women teachers in junior and senior middle schools were 45.9 percent and 41.7 percent, respectively; and the proportions of full-time women teachers in secondary vocational schools and institutions of higher learning was 46.5 percent and 42.5 percent, respectively.

For many years, the Chinese government has paid great attention to eliminating illiteracy among women, curbing emergence of new women illiterates, and preventing women from becoming illiterates again. Its policy priority in this respect is to promote illiteracy-elimination education for women in poor areas and areas inhabited by ethnic minorities. Relevant government departments and the All-China Women's Federation have jointly launched the Illiteracy-elimination Program among Women. In 2004, the illiteracy rate among women 15 years of age and above in urban areas was 8.2 percent, a decrease of 5.7 percentage points from that of 1995; the illiteracy rate among women 15 years of age and above in rural areas was 16.9 percent, a decrease of 10.5 percentage points from that of 1995. The illiteracy rate among young and middle-aged women across the country was 4.2 percent, a drop of 5.2 percentage points from that of 1995, and the rate of decrease is higher than the rate of decrease of illiteracy among the general population.

The state has made energetic endeavors to develop vocational education, adult education and technical education, the level of lifelong education of women has been raised and the gap between the genders narrowed. According to the fifth national census, conducted in 2000, the average number of years of education of Chinese women was seven - one and a half years more than in 1990 - and the gap between the genders had been narrowed by half a year in that decade. In 2004 alone, the number of women studying at correspondence and night schools and other higher learning institutions for adults stood at 2.09 million, 50 percent of the total number of students of such educational institutions.

In recent years the state has intensified efforts to train women in vocational skills. By adopting various training methods, the state aims to help women in urban areas enhance their competitive abilities, to help women in rural areas get better harvests and become well-off, and to help migrant workers (including women) become better qualified for the labor market.

## VI. Women and Health

The Chinese government considers women's health an area of priority in promoting gender equality and the development of women. Over the past decade, the state has promulgated and implemented such statutes as the Law of the People's Republic of China on Health Protection of Mothers and Infants and Law of the People's Republic of China on Population and Family Planning. It has also set the goals for women's health in the *Outline for the Development of Chinese Women*. The state has continuously increased its monetary input to improve the health of women and infants. It has gradually improved the women's healthcare service network. By the end of 2004, there were 2,997 healthcare institutes for women and children throughout China, with 243,000 beds for women.

Paying great attention to satisfying women's demands for healthcare service at all periods of their life, and extending women's life expectancy. For years, the healthcare departments at all levels have considered the examination and treatment of gynecological diseases routine work. Every year, over one third of married women under the age of 65 across China go through examinations for gynecological diseases. In 2004, some 37.3 percent of them had this examination. The government also pays attention to the health of teenagers and elderly women. It has launched educational campaigns in schools and neighborhood communities on knowledge about sex and the prevention of AIDS, so as to raise female teenagers' awareness of the importance of a healthy sex life and strengthen their self-protection ability. Scientific healthcare methods are disseminated through many channels, and more and more special outpatient services are available for elderly women, providing consultancy on healthcare and related services. As a result, the quality of life of elderly women has improved markedly. The average life expectancy for women was 74 years in 2003.

Lowering the mortality rate of women in pregnancy and childbirth to ensure the safety of the mother. In the 2000-2001 period, the state invested 200 million yuan in a project intended to "lower the mortality rate of women in pregnancy and childbirth and eliminate tetanus among the newborn," which covered 378 state-level poor counties. From 2002 to 2005, the central treasury and relevant local areas allocated an additional 400 million yuan for the continuation of this project, extending it to 1,000 counties and benefiting more than 300 million people. Over the past few years, hundreds of thousands of poor women have delivered children safely thanks to the support of this project. In addition, the Chinese government has made efforts to improve child delivery conditions in clinics in townships (towns). By taking measures such as opening emergency green channels for women in childbirth and giving financial support to poor women in childbirth, it has increased the number of women in the countryside who go to hospital to give birth, thereby increasing the safety of the mothers. In the past decade, the mortality rate of women in childbirth has declined steadily - from 61.9 per 100,000 in 1995 to 48.3 per 100,000 in 2004.

Actively promoting high-quality family planning services in line with the people-first principle to guarantee women's right to family planning. In 1995, out of consideration for women's reproductive health, the Chinese government launched the project of providing high-quality family planning services in line with the people-first principle. Centered on the demands of women of childbearing age, it informs women of their choices in terms of contraceptive methods, and encourages men to get involved in reproductive health activities. In addition, it gives adolescent girls consultancy on reproductive health. Over the past decade, this project has been promoted in more than 800 counties (cities, districts) all over China, satisfying the demand of women for family planning services and safeguarding their rights in this respect.

Making every effort to provide healthcare services to migrant women. As the population of migrants moving between rural and urban areas keeps increasing, the state, by following the principle of equal treatment, appropriate guidance, better management and quality services, has made great efforts to provide migrant women with the same family planning preferential policies and technical services as enjoyed by women with permanent residence. The *Outline for the Development of Chinese Women* emphasizes that the healthcare of pregnant women and women in childbirth among the migrant population should be included in the healthcare services for such women in the places they migrate to. The relevant government departments at all levels are exploring a special mode of healthcare service for migrant women in the neighborhood communities. Using a variety of channels, they provide education and consultancy on healthy sex and reproduction. They organize migrant women to have medical checkups, distribute contraceptive devices to them free of charge and give free services to poor migrant women in childbirth. These measures have improved the health of migrant women substantially.

Strengthening the prevention and treatment of HIV/AIDS, showing special concern for women in this regard. In recent years, the state has paid great attention to the prevention and treatment of AIDS, set up the State Council Work Committee on the Prevention and Treatment of AIDS, and earmarked extra funds for this purpose. As a result, practical effects have been achieved in the prevention and treatment of AIDS. Faced with the trend of more and more women being infected with HIV/AIDS, the state considers the prevention of the spread of AIDS from mother to baby an important part of the healthcare work for women and children. In order to find an intervention mode and experience suited to China's conditions, a team made up of specialists has been created to do pilot work regarding the prevention of AIDS, stemming the spread of AIDS from mother to baby free of charge, showing special concern for pregnant women tested HIV positive and their babies. Relevant government departments have launched campaigns to educate the public about the prevention and treatment of AIDS, and provide relevant services, promote the use of condoms, and get more men involved in AIDS prevention so as to reduce the number of women infected. On World AIDS Day in 2004, activities were launched throughout China under the theme "Show Concern for Women, Say No to AIDS."

Encouraging NGOs to launch various activities to promote women's healthcare and widely carry out international cooperation. One of the many programs launched by the All-China Women's Federation is known as "Health Express for Mother," in which face-to-face publicity and educational activities under the theme "Stay away from AIDS to Benefit the Whole Family" were organized in 51 areas for the prevention and treatment of AIDS in a comprehensive way. The Family Planning Association of China has launched programs in which children and young people teach each other knowledge about the prevention of venereal diseases and AIDS in universities and middle schools, and among migrant teenagers. In the countryside, the association combines efforts to help women increase their income with healthcare for women and children, as well as family planning, effectively improving women's health conditions. In recent years, the Chinese government has conducted international cooperation with many international organizations, including the United Nations Fund for Population Activities, United Nations Children Fund, United Nations Development Fund for Women, World Bank, World Health Organization, and Joint United Nations Program on HIV/AIDS, in the fields of hygiene for women and children, reproductive health, family planning, and the prevention and treatment of AIDS. This cooperation has produced good results. More than one third of the capital for programs to assist China under the management and coordination of the Ministry of Commerce is used to support healthcare services for women and children.

## VII. Women, Marriage and the Family

In the early 1950s, the Marriage Law of the People's Republic of China, the first law promulgated since the founding of New China in 1949, clearly stipulated women's equal status in marriage and the family. The revised Marriage Law, promulgated in 2001, reiterated the basic principle of equality between men and women, stressed the equal status of husband and wife and their equal rights and responsibilities in marriage and the family, and, in consideration of actual situation, added articles forbidding domestic violence and bigamy with the clear aim of protecting women's rights. Today, women have a lot more say in decision-making concerning their own marriage and play a bigger role in family decisions, and their personal and property rights are better protected.

Adhering to the basic national policy of family planning and advocating late marriage and late childbirth. Over the last decade, the rate of early marriage among women has dropped, the average age for first marriage has gone up, and the general childbirth rate was kept at a fairly low level - 1.8 per couple in 2004. In the course of promoting family planning, the state stresses gender consciousness in society while respecting women's rights concerning childbirth, integrating family planning with the promotion of gender equality. The Law on Population and Family Planning, implemented since 2002, further stipulates that husband and wife must both be responsible for family planning, thus providing favorable conditions for gender equality in family life.

Greatly developing social welfare undertakings, giving priority to community public services that directly concern family life with the aim of socializing housework, and enabling women to have more free time. In tandem with the rapid development of housework services, the rate of expenditure on such services is increasing. The prevalence of household appliances and the development of nurseries and kindergartens, as well as the increased percentage of housework shared by men have all lightened women's housework burden and further narrowed the gap in housework time between men and women.

Protecting girls' and baby girls' legal rights to subsistence and development and cutting down the disparity in number between baby boys and girls. The Law on Population and Family Planning forbids fetus gender identification by means of ultrasonic and other technical methods for non-medical purposes, and forbids termination of pregnancy out of consideration for a fetus' gender for non-medical purposes. In recent years, government departments concerned have initiated the drive to "Bringing a New Ethos of Marriage and Childbirth to Myriads of Households," to further stress equality between men and women and promote social esteem for both male and female babies. In 2003, the "Care-for-Girl Action" started, which put forward the ideas that "gender discrimination should be eradicated from the prenatal stage and gender equality should be stressed in early childhood." Through wide and intensive publicity, the action is aimed at establishing, step by step, an interest-oriented mechanism favorable for girls and their family

development, changing the traditional preference for boys to girls, safeguarding girls' legitimate rights and interests, and striving to enhance their status in the family.

Paying due attention to protecting elderly women's legitimate rights and interests, and raising their status in marriage and the family. To provide legal and institutional guarantees for the protection of the rights and interests of elderly people of whom women form the majority, the state has formulated a series of laws and policies over the last decade, with the Law of the People's Republic of China on the Protection of Rights and Interests of the Aged as the core. The Chinese government is especially concerned about the special problems of elderly women, and provides guarantees for their basic subsistence and protection of their legitimate rights and interests. The state also encourages the development of undertakings and industries aimed at serving elderly people, and gradually achieving the goal of offering socialized services for the aged. It also pays attention to ensuring the physical and mental health of elderly women, and enriching their spiritual and cultural life.

Striving to create a household environment featuring respect for women and gender equality. In September 2001, the state promulgated the Implementation Outline for the Project for Enhancing the Moral Standards of Chinese Citizens, which sets forth the ideas of achieving equality between men and women in family life, respecting and protecting women's legitimate rights and interests, and opposing discrimination against and persecution of women. The outline also advocates making one's own decision in love and marriage, and promoting the new civilized ethos of "respect for the elderly and care for the young, equality between men and women, industrious and thrifty household management, and harmonious family life and neighborly unity." With great support from the government, a sound environment for gender equality in household affairs is taking shape.

Actively promoting international exchanges and cooperation in the aspect of families. The Chinese government has all along actively participated in UN resolutions, consultations and other activities concerning family issues. China joined the World Family Organization in 2001 and attended the United Nations Doha International Conference on the Family in 2004. China supports the Doha Declaration in its encouragement of equal partnership between husband and wife within a committed marital relationship, and condemns domestic violence. In the same year, China hosted the World Family Summit, and advocated that gender equality should begin in the family, to foster a harmonious partnership among family members.

## VIII. Women and the Environment

The Chinese government has continuously tried to optimize women's living and development environment, to bring their role into full play in protecting and improving the environment, and to enable women to live and develop in a sound environment.

Formulating a strategic goal for women to participate in sustainable development. In accordance with China's Agenda 21 and the requirement for reaching the goal of the *Outline for the Development of Chinese Women*, governments at all levels have actively encouraged women's participation in scientific research, evaluation, planning, designing, supervision and management of the environment. At present, quite a number of women are serving in departments related to environmental protection at various levels, some even taking leading positions, with about 30 percent of environmental monitoring and law-enforcement officials in the country being female. The state encourages women to take an active part in non-governmentally organized environmental protection activities. With the support of the government, the All-China Women's Federation has waged social mobilization and publicity campaigns, such as the March 8 Green Project, which involves over 100 million women volunteers a year in tree planting, shelterbelt construction and small drainage area control. In 1999, the All-China Women's Federation won the Global 500 Award of the United Nations Environment Program. In addition, some environmental protection NGOs initiated and participated in by women have urged enterprises to assume more social responsibilities, promoted green production and lifestyle, and played an active role in training and mobilizing the public to participate in environmental protection.

Protecting and improving the natural and living conditions for women's subsistence and development. In the past decade, with marked improvement in living conditions for both urban and rural residents, the average housing space and greenbelt area per person have increased by a large margin. The building and opening of many cultural, sport and recreational facilities has resulted in more public space for women and created favorable conditions for them to improve their quality of life. In recent years, the government has made great efforts to upgrade public toilets and water sewage treatment, and raise the rate of use of tap water and sanitary toilets in rural areas. From 2001 to 2004, the central government earmarked 9.7 billion yuan to solve the problem of drinking water for rural residents, providing safe drinking water for an average of 6.9 million rural women a year. In 2004, as many as 53.1 percent of rural households in China had access to sanitary toilets. The sanitary disposal rate of night soil in rural areas rose quickly from 28.5 percent in 1998 to 57.5 percent in 2004. The upgrading of public toilets and sewage facilities has eased the heavy burden of many rural women to carry water, and reduced health hazards for them and their family members, thus effectively improving their living and development conditions.

Actively creating a social environment conducive to gender equality and women's development, and gradually eliminating social prejudice, discrimination and suppression of women. The state has strengthened its publicity work concerning the basic national policy of gender equality. Officials in charge of government departments concerned and leaders of provinces (autonomous regions and municipalities directly under the central government) have published articles in the central and local mass media to expound the importance of gender equality for social development, and confirm women's role and contributions to the economy and all social sectors. A large number of programs and reports promoting gender equality and women's rights and interests, and showing women's talents, have been published, shown and broadcast in newspapers and on TV and radio programs. Besides, the government supports women's organizations to cooperate with the mass media in running programs to demonstrate women's functions in and contributions to social and economic development, and encourages them to use and attain access to information resources. With the wide application of the Internet in China, many women organizations have created their own websites, which have become an important means to publicize the idea of gender equality and promote women's development.

## IX. Legal Guarantees of Women's Rights and Interests

The state's legal system for protecting women's legitimate rights and interests has been improved constantly. In the last decade, China has enacted and revised, in succession, the Marriage Law, the Population and Family Planning Law, the Law on Rural Land Contracting, and the Law on Protection of Rights and Interests of Women, and promulgated and implemented over 100 rules and regulations concerning the protection of women's rights and interests, such as the Regulations on Implementing the Law on Mother and Infant Healthcare.

Gradually setting up a socialized work mechanism for protecting women's rights and interests. The state has established a national coordination group for the protection of women's and children's rights and interests, composed of members from 19 government departments. Some courts have established specialized tribunals to accept and adjudicate civil cases involving the protection of women's rights and interests, and people's jurors from women's federations and other relevant organs are invited by the courts to participate directly in the hearing of such cases. The state has made positive efforts to cultivate gender awareness among law enforcement and judicial officials, bringing into full play judicial officials' role in safeguarding women's rights. The state also sets store by increasing the number of female judicial officials and their ratio in the total number. In 2004, female judges and procurators accounted for 22.7 percent and 21.7 percent of the total numbers, up 5.9 percentage points and 5 percentage points, respectively, as compared with 1995.

Holding legal aid and publicity activities concerning the legal system for safeguarding women's legitimate rights and interests. To ensure that women's legitimate rights and interests are properly protected, the relevant department of the Chinese government issued a special notice, stressing that no legal aid institutions, law firms, notarization institutions or grassroots legal service institutions may decline to handle or postpone without proper reason an accusation, appeal or prosecution that involves infringement on women's rights and interests. Moreover, legal service fees should be reduced or exempted for women in straitened circumstances. The Regulations on Legal Aid, put into effect in China in 2003, expressly stipulates that it is the government's responsibility to provide legal aid, and citizens in straitened circumstances can obtain legal aid free of charge, which therefore provides material aid to impoverished women against infringement of their rights. By the end of 2004, 3,023 governmental legal aid institutions had been established in China. In addition, the Chinese government also supports NGOs' efforts to set up hotlines to protect women's rights and legal consultation centers to provide legal aid and similar services for women. China is now engaged in its fourth five-year publicity campaign. Highlighted in the publicity activities are the Law on Protection of Rights and Interests of Women, the Labor Law, the Marriage Law, the Population and Family Planning Law, and the Law on Rural Land Contracting, all of which are closely related to women's rights and interests.

Combating domestic violence against women and taking practical measures to solve the problem. The Criminal Law, the Criminal Procedure Law, the General Rules of the Civil Law, the Marriage Law, and the Law on Protection of Rights and Interests of Women all forbid violence against women by anyone and in any form. Legislation and judicial practice both stress that those who have committed domestic violence against women shall be penalized in civil and criminal terms according to the seriousness of the violence, and active legal aids should be provided to the victims. In recent years, local statutes outlawing domestic violence have been enacted in some areas, and by the end of 2004 some 22 provinces (autonomous regions, municipalities directly under the central government) had formulated such rules, policies and measures. Besides, the Chinese government has cooperated actively with NGOs to launch intervening projects, as well as vigorous publicity, education and training activities; set up alarm centers, injury assessment centers and women's aid stations; open anti-domestic-violence hotlines; and provide multiple services for female victims, including consultation, shelter, medical care and psychological help.

Stringently cracking down on crimes of abducting and trafficking in women. The charges for abduction, trafficking in and buying women were revised and added to the Criminal Law in 1997, and the penalties for such crimes were made more severe. The Supreme People's Court has laid down judicial interpretations on the related legal clauses to facilitate their execution. In recent years, public security organs throughout the country have taken a series of special actions to crack down on the abducting of and trafficking in women and children, set up transfer, training and rehabilitating centers for rescued women and children. All these actions have achieved remarkable results. Meanwhile, the public security and judicial organs have made the crackdown on the crimes of abducting and trafficking in women and children an important field of international cooperation, and have signed agreements on bilateral police service cooperation and treaties on judicial assistance in criminal cases with related countries in joint undertakings to prevent and crack down on crimes of abducting and trafficking in women and children.

Protecting the legal rights of female criminals and criminal suspects. The state strictly observes the system of separate jails and management for male and female criminals, with female criminals directly managed by policewomen. Women doctors are assigned to female criminals, and the latter are allowed to spend festivals with their minor children. Education in law, culture and vocations suitable for female criminals' physiology and psychology, and a rich variety of cultural and sport activities are conducted to help their rehabilitation.

## Conclusion

It is obvious to all that great progress has been achieved in the promotion of gender equality and women's development in China over the past decade.

At the same time, the Chinese government is highly aware that, restricted by the country's limited level of economic and social development, especially in the process of economic restructuring and in establishing and improving a socialist market economic system, China is confronted with new situations and problems in its efforts to promote gender equality and women's development. Chinese women have become increasingly more diversified in their social status, and thus their needs for subsistence, development and protection of their rights and interests also vary. There is an obvious imbalance in the development of women in different regions, social status and groups; the outmoded conventions and custom of inequality between men and women handed down from China's history and culture have not yet been completely eradicated, and women's rights and interests are still being infringed upon to varying degrees in some areas. There is a long way to go and arduous tasks to tackle to achieve gender equality and promote women's development in China to a satisfactory level.

In the new historical stage of building a comparatively well-off society in an all-round way, the Chinese government aims, from the strategic height of building a harmonious socialist society in the light of China's national conditions, to promote the scientific concept of people-oriented, overall, coordinated and sustainable development, further implement the basic national policy of equality between men and women, safeguard women's rights and interests according to law, put into effect the requirements for the goals of the *Outline for the Development of Chinese Women*, and strive to ensure that women enjoy the same rights as men in politics, economy, culture, society and family life. The Chinese government will continue its efforts to encourage all social sectors to help promote gender equality and women's development, strengthen its exchanges and cooperation with the United Nations and other international organizations concerned and the governments of various countries, and make active contributions to promoting worldwide equality, development and peace.