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Full Text: Development and Progress of Tibet

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BEIJING, Oct. 22 (Xinhua) -- The Information Office of the State Council, China's cabinet, on Tuesday published a white paper on the development and progress of Tibet.

Following is the full text:

Development and Progress of Tibet

Information Office of the State Council of the People's Republic of China



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Foreword

Tibet is located in the southern part of the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau and stands at the southwestern border of China. It is an autonomous region of the People's Republic of China.

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Tibet has been an integral part of China since ancient times. Prior to the 1950s, Tibet was a society of feudal serfdom under theocratic rule, a society characterized by a combination of political and religious powers. Government officials, aristocrats and monasteries collectively maintained tight control over Tibet's resources and wealth, and the Tibetan people lived in dire misery without any freedom. At that time, Tibet was as dark and backward as medieval Europe.

The founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949 marked Tibet's entry into modern civilization. After a series of important historical stages, from its peaceful liberation and democratic reform to the establishment of the autonomous region and the reform and opening-up drive, Tibet has steered itself into a fast lane of development together with the rest of China. Half a century later, Tibet is a world totally different from its old self before the 1950s. The Tibetan people have gained freedom, equality and dignity, and are fully enjoying the fruits of modern civilization. They are working hard in unison toward the building of a united, democratic, affluent, culturally and ethically advanced and harmonious socialist society in the Tibet Autonomous Region.

The development and progress in Tibet is in accord with the rules for the development of human society, and reflects the mutual aspirations of the people of all ethnic groups in Tibet. It is the natural result of the overall development and progress of China as a whole. The development and progress of Tibet mirrors the victory of human society's enterprising spirit and creativity in the quest for justice and happiness, and has proved the inevitability of history.

I. The Development and Progress in Tibet Is the Inevitable Result of History

The development and progress in modern Tibet results from the innate logic of its social and historical environment, and has its roots in China's progress in a larger context. Its development is in line with the advance of world's modern civilization. Prior to 1959, Tibet was a typical society of feudal serfdom under a theocracy, characterized by a combination of political and religious powers. The development and progress in Tibet began right from the ruins of feudal serfdom.

Tibetan society prior to 1959

There is plenty of literature describing the situation of Tibetan society before 1959. From the following excerpts one can have a glimpse at the darkness and backwardness of old Tibet.

In his 1905 book *The Unveiling of Lhasa*, former British journalist in India Edmund Candler, who worked for the *Daily Mail*, recorded the details of the old Tibetan society:

Old Tibet "is governed on the feudal system. The monks are the overlords, the peasantry their serfs." "...at present, the people are medieval, not only in their system of government and their religion, their inquisition, their witchcraft, their incarnations, their ordeals by fire and boiling oil, but in every aspect of their daily life." "... he toils a lifetime to win by his own labour and in scanty measure the necessaries ..." Lhasa was "squalid and filthy beyond description, undrained and unpaved. Not a single house looked clean or cared for. The streets after rain are nothing but pools of stagnant water frequented by pigs and dogs searching for refuse."

In *Portrait of A Dalai Lama: The Life and Times of the Great Thirteenth*, a 1940s work by Charles Bell, the British Tibetologist made observations of the harsh punishments in Tibet: "At the same time the Tibetan criminal code is drastic. In addition to fines and imprisonment, floggings are frequent, not only of people after they have been convicted of an offence, but also of accused persons, and indeed witnesses, during the course of the trial. For serious offences, use is made of the pillory as well as of the cangue, which latter is a heavy square wooden board round the neck. Iron fetters are fastened on the legs of murderers and inveterate burglars. For every serious or repeated offences, such as murder, violent robbery, repeated thefts, or serious forgery, the hand may be cut off at the wrist, the nose sliced off, or even the eyes gouged out, the last more likely for some heinous political crime. In former days those convicted of murder were put into a leather sack, which was sewn up and thrown into a river."

The Canadian Tibetologist A. Tom Grunfeld published *The Making of Modern Tibet* in 1987. In it he wrote:

"Tibetans were ruled by an unusual form of feudal theocracy.... The heads of the feudal estates maintained a monopoly of power over all local matters. Serfs were 'tied' to their masters.... So powerless were they that they required permission to enter a monastery and even to marry. If two serfs of different lords married, the male offspring reverted to the father's lord, while the female offspring went to the mother's. Permission to leave the estate - even for the briefest period - for such matters as family visits, pilgrimages or for some sideline trading required the consent of the lord. Historically there was very little class mobility in Tibet, and for the most part serfs were forced to accept the position they found themselves in upon birth. There is no evidence to support the images of a utopian Shangri-la."

Two Chinese officials, Shen Zonglian and Liu Shengqi, who worked at the Chinese government's Mongolian and Tibetan Affairs Commission's Tibet office before 1949, wrote in their 1953 book *Tibet and Tibetans*:

"The men who have been running the Lhasa government are drawn from the top class of fewer than a hundred still flourishing noble families and an ecclesiastical hierarchy of equal size. To them the Tibetan masses are the 'hewers of wood and drawers of water.' Cut off completely from world trends and from all the dormant social forces in Tibet, and basking in the waning sunshine of a theocratic-feudalistic autocracy, this privileged class can exist only on the ignorance and political lethargy of the Tibetans. Their privileged status is bound to collapse in this fast-changing world, and the process is only going to be accelerated."

For centuries Tibetan society was mired in stagnation due to its backward serfdom and the isolated geographic location of Tibet. By the middle of the 20th century, when humanity was leaping toward modern civilization, Tibet still lagged far behind the rest of the world.

Milestones of Tibet's development and progress

The founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949 opened up new prospects for the nation's development and progress on an unprecedented level. In 1951, the Central People's Government and the local Tibetan government signed the Agreement on Measures for the Peaceful Liberation of Tibet, signifying the beginning of Tibet's development and progress together with the people of the whole nation.

The year 1959 marked a turning point in Tibet's history. In that year the reactionary upper ruling strata of Tibet failed in an armed rebellion to perpetuate feudal serfdom, and the

Central Government publicly announced the dismissal of the Tibetan local government. Meanwhile the people of all ethnic groups in Tibet launched a sweeping democratic reform to overthrow Tibet's feudal serfdom system under theocracy that had been in place for hundreds of years, ushering in a social reform that was considered the most extensive, profound and progressive in Tibetan history. The democratic reform liberated about a million serfs and slaves, and brought the basic human rights of equity and freedom to the Tibetan people for the first time in history. It laid the necessary economic, political and social foundation for the region's future development and progress.

In 1965, the Tibet Autonomous Region was founded, and the systems of the people's congress and regional ethnic autonomy were established. These events marked the leap forward for Tibetan society from a feudal serfdom under theocracy to socialism, with the people becoming their own masters. With the establishment of the new political system and the dissemination of ideas on democratic politics, the former serfs and slaves as well as the feudal aristocrats all became modern citizens who enjoy equal rights and exercise their political rights to equally participate in the management of state affairs and the affairs of their local ethnic groups autonomously. In this way, the Tibetan people were greatly motivated to use their enthusiasm and creativity to build a better future.

At the end of 1978, Tibet initiated the reform and opening-up drive toward modernization along with the rest of the country, ushering in a new stage of economic and social development. The Central Government set lofty goals for Tibet, striving to quicken its development and advancing it to the front row of the "four modernizations." In light of the local conditions, the government decided on guiding principles for the work in Tibet in the new era and issued favorable policies for Tibet's development. These moves vigorously contributed to the development and progress in Tibet.

In the 21st century, Tibet has entered the fast lane of development. At the Fifth Symposium on Work in Tibet held in January 2010, the Central Authorities set the goals for Tibet's development in the next stage. The objectives for 2015 are to maintain the pace of leapfrog economic development, significantly narrow the gap between the per capita net income of farmers and herdsmen in Tibet and the national average, significantly increase Tibet's ability to provide public services, further improve the ecosystem, greatly develop Tibet's infrastructure, achieve unity and harmony among all ethnic groups, maintain social stability, and make a more solid foundation for building a moderately prosperous society in all respects. The objectives set for 2020 are to raise the per capita net income of farmers and herdsmen in Tibet so that it will be close to the national average, comprehensively raise the living standards of the people, improve its basic public services to approach the national average level, comprehensively improve infrastructure conditions, achieve significant results in creating an ecological security screen, greatly increase Tibet's capabilities for self-development, make Tibetan society more harmonious and stable, and ensure that a moderately prosperous society in all respects is established. With these goals achieved, better prospects for development will emerge in Tibet.

Development and progress in Tibet is the victory of human justice

- The development and progress of Tibet is in accordance with the rules for the development of human society. From traditional agriculture and animal husbandry to a modern market economy, from the integration of political and religious powers to their separation, from autocracy to democracy, superstition to science, and isolation to openness - these are the generic laws for the development of human society. Over the past 60 years of its development, Tibet has unfailingly followed these rules and the general trend. Today, despite the existing gaps in the level of development between Tibet and other provinces,

autonomous regions and municipalities in China, Tibet has narrowed the distance and basically realized synchronized growth with the rest of the country. Observed from the macro perspective of human history, Tibet has leapt from a feudal serfdom society into one with a modern civilization within a matter of only a few decades, creating an outstanding example of regional modernization.

- The development and progress of Tibet is inevitably connected with the overall development and progress of China. The fate of Tibet has always been closely linked to the fate of China. Since the advent of modern times, Chinese society has been challenged by the daunting task of comprehensive transition to modernization. Tibet, as an inalienable part of China, also follows the general logic of social reform in the country. During the process of peaceful liberation of Tibet, Mao Zedong, leader of the Communist Party of China, set the course for transforming old Tibet into a "people's democratic Tibet." The profound and unprecedented changes in Tibet over the past 60 years have been consequently realized through the establishment and progress of the political, economic, social and cultural systems of the nation as a whole.

- The development and progress of Tibet serves the fundamental interests of the people of all ethnic groups in Tibet. The development and progress of Tibet is the cause of the Tibetan people. In the past six decades, the development and progress of Tibet has always centered around the people's fundamental interests. In Tibet the self-improvement of individuals is consistent with the progress of society, with which more social wealth is created and thus meets the ever-growing material and cultural needs of the people. Essentially, the development and progress of Tibet reflects man's development and the realization of the people's principal position. It is a great practice for respecting and guaranteeing human rights. The development of Tibet has been a process in which people are gaining more and

more freedom on the road to liberation, as well as the transformation from "deity first" to "people first." It marks the victory of the Tibetan people over the shackles of theocracy, and honors their pursuit of dignity and personal value. It is the Tibetan people who have benefited most from Tibet's development and progress.

II. Economic Growth and Improvement of the People's Livelihood

Developing the economy is an important way to ensure the basic rights of all ethnic groups in Tibet, especially their rights to subsistence and development. The establishment of a modern economy in Tibet and its development has laid a solid material foundation for the progress of various undertakings in the region.

Economic growth constantly enhancing people's living standards

Following the peaceful liberation of Tibet, the Central Government has always given top priority to helping Tibet develop its economy, enhance its people's living standards, and change its impoverished and backward situation. It has issued a series of favorable policies, and made great achievements in promoting Tibet's economy. Currently a relatively complete socialist market system has been established in the region, and historical leapfrog development has been realized in terms of economic aggregate. Tibet's economy is growing steadily and quickly. The Gross Regional Product (GRP) of Tibet rocketed from 129 million yuan in 1951 to 70.1 billion yuan in 2012, representing an annual growth of 8.5 percent on average. The per capita GRP reached 22,900 yuan. Since 1994 Tibet has realized double-digit growth for 19 consecutive years, with an annual growth rate of 12.7 percent on average.

Substantial improvements have been made in the people's lives and their living standards. The per capita net income of farmers and herdsmen in Tibet had maintained double-digit

growth for 10 consecutive years, reaching 5,719 yuan in 2012. The per capita disposable income of urban dwellers was 18,028 yuan. The building of a new socialist countryside, initiated in 2006, has greatly benefited local farmers and herdsmen, especially through its low-income housing projects. By the end of 2012, a total of 408,300 low-income houses were built, providing housing to 88.7 percent of local households of farmers and herdsmen. All farmers and herdsmen will have moved into safe modern houses by the end of 2013. In 2012, the per capita floor space of farmers and herdsmen was 28.77 sq m, and that of urban dwellers 36.14 sq m. In rural areas, infrastructure has been improved to provide the necessary facilities for the local population, including water, power, transportation, telecommunication, natural gas, radio and television, and postal services. Some 90 percent and 99.7 percent of Tibetan townships now have access to postal service and road network, respectively, and 94.2 percent of administrative villages could be reached by road. A total of 1.93 million farmers and herdsmen now have access to safe drinking water, and 150,000 rural households are using clean biogas. In addition, over 95 percent of rural households use iodized salt.

As life improves, the people are beginning to have more choices in consumption. Refrigerators, color televisions, telephones, computers, washing machines, motorcycles, mobile phones and other consumer goods have entered ordinary households. In 2012, for every 100 urban households in Tibet there were 27 cars, 16 motorcycles, 86 refrigerators, 129 color TVs, 63 computers and 88 washing machines. According to the "CCTV Economic Life Survey" jointly hosted by the National Bureau of Statistics, China Post Group, and China Central Television (CCTV), Lhasa topped the "happiness index" for five consecutive years.

Adhering to green and sustainable development

The economy of old Tibet was supported by farming, animal husbandry and handicrafts, very close to a backward natural economy. With the strenuous efforts of the local people, Tibet has established a modern economic system with local characteristics. Putting the people's interests first and seeking green and sustainable development, Tibet has adopted rigorous measures to rein in energy-extensive, high-pollution and high-emission industries. Integrating socioeconomic progress and environmental protection, Tibet strives to safeguard the long-term interests of its people.

Farming and animal husbandry are Tibet's traditional industries and also the supporting pillars of its economy. For decades such policies have been followed that allow the farmland and grassland to recuperate on a regular basis. And by delegating managerial authority to lower levels, cancelling the old agricultural tax, increasing capital and technical investment, and promoting comprehensive productivity, Tibet has realized balanced and sustainable development in farming and animal husbandry. The annual grain production in recent years stands above 900,000 tons. Tibet is vigorously developing agricultural products with local characteristics, and the added value of its primary industry increased from 128 million yuan in 1959 to 8.038 billion yuan in 2012, growing by 4.7 percent annually.

There was no modern industry in old Tibet, but after more than 60 years of development, modern industry has been established in Tibet from scratch, and it has grown considerably in size. Today Tibet has a modern industrial system comprising over 20 industries, including energy, light industry, textiles, machinery, mining, building materials, chemical industry, food processing, folk handicrafts and traditional Tibetan medicine. The total industrial output value skyrocketed from 1.4 million yuan in 1956 to 10.591 billion yuan in 2012. The major industries with local characteristics have been expanding in scale, and tertiary industry is also growing rapidly. In 2012, Tibet welcomed domestic and overseas

tourists on 10.584 million occasions, including foreign visitors on 194,900 occasions. In the same year, the tourism industry in Tibet generated 12.65 billion yuan in revenue. The proportionate layout of Tibet's industrial structure in terms of primary, secondary and tertiary industries was 11.5 : 34.6 : 53.9.

Modernization and urbanization constantly improving people's lives

In the old days Tibet had no roads in the modern sense, but today a comprehensive transportation system including road, aviation, railway, and pipeline transportation is being developed and improved. In 2012 Tibet had 8,896 km of roads with sub-high-grade surface or better, and the total length of road opened to traffic reached 65,200 km. Every county and township now has access to road transportation. Sixty-two counties are accessible by tarmac roads. In 2006 the Qinghai-Tibet Railway began operation, introducing railway transportation into Tibet for the first time in history. The construction of the railway line connecting Lhasa and Shigatse will be completed in 2014. In 2011 Tibet's first expressway opened to traffic, linking Lhasa and Gongga Airport. By the end of 2012 Tibet had five airports, and nine airlines had operations there. Now 34 domestic air routes link Tibet with other parts of China, with Gongga Airport (Lhasa) as the main terminal supplemented by Bamda Airport (Qamdo), Mainling Airport (Nyingchi), Gunsa Airport (Ngari), Heping Airport (Shigatse). Before the peaceful liberation of Tibet only one small power station, with a capacity of 125 kw, provided electricity to the small number of privileged aristocrats. Today's Tibet has a rapidly growing power industry. With hydraulic power as the main energy source, Tibet is also developing geothermal power, wind power, solar power and other new energies that complement each other. In 2012 the total installed generating capacity reached 1.23 million kw, and the coverage of power supply was 100 percent. In Lhasa, the city heating project started trial operation, providing heating to 40 percent of the

city's households by the end of 2012. In old Tibet people used to carry goods by themselves or use pack animals, and mail was delivered by courier stations. This is now history.

Currently a network of optical cable, satellite and long-distance telephone lines has been established in the region, and all places above county level are now covered by 3G signals. Every township has broadband connection and every village has telephone services. In 2012 the number of households using landline telephone reached 2.76 million, and there were 91 telephones for every 100 persons. The number of households with Internet connections users was 1.47 million, with a coverage rate of 33.3 percent.

Urbanization has brought the fruits of modern civilization to people living in Tibet. Prior to the peaceful liberation of Tibet, only a handful of places were inhabited by any concentration of people, and only Lhasa, Qamdo and Shigatse could be called towns. The area of the town proper of Lhasa then was less than three square kilometers. In recent years Tibet has been promoting intensive, intelligent, green and low-carbon urbanization, which is a new-type urban system that centers on Lhasa City and radiates to prefectures, counties, border towns and towns with cultural attractions, in an attempt to attract more industries and residents. By 2012 Tibet had two cities and 140 towns, with an urbanization rate of 22.75 percent.

The reform and opening-up drive has quickened Tibet's development.

Over the past 30 years or more, through reform and opening up, Tibet has been proactively promoting commerce, foreign trade and tourism. It has increased exchanges with other parts of China as well as communication and cooperation with foreign countries. In 1993 Tibet began to develop the socialist market economy with the rest of the country, developing into a new system within the same framework. Reforms have been carried out in the pricing

and circulation of goods and materials, grains, and consumer goods, all of which have entered the market system. Currently Tibet is incorporated into the national market system. Commodities from all over the nation and across the world keep flowing into Tibet, enriching the urban and rural markets as well as the lives of the people. At the same time, well-known and quality products with local characteristics and folk handcrafts are transported to other parts of the country in large quantities.

Economically, Tibet is now more and more closely linked to the world. In 2012 the total volume of its foreign trade reached 3.424 billion U.S. dollars, more than 850 times that of 1953, which stood at 4 million U.S. dollars, with an annual growth rate of 12.1 percent. By the end of 2012 actualized foreign investment in Tibet was 470 million U.S. dollars. Taking advantage of its geographical position, Tibet is strengthening friendly cooperation with India, Nepal and other neighboring countries. To promote border trade, it is building a "commodity passageway" to South Asia via the land route, and has built trading centers in such port cities as Gyirong, Zhangmu, Yatung, Pulan and Riwu.

III. Political Progress--the People Are the Masters of Their Own Fate

Democratic reform and regional ethnic autonomy lifted Tibet out of the old state of feudal serfdom under theocracy and put in place the systems of people's congress and regional ethnic autonomy, under which people of all ethnic groups in Tibet have become the true masters of the country, society and their own fate. With the development and improvement of socialist democracy around the country, Tibet has seen its democratic system growing sounder, forms of democracy becoming more diversified, and channels for orderly political participation being expanded.

Establishing the system of people's congresses

The system of people's congress is a fundamental political system of China that ensures the people's right to be the masters of the country. Under this system the Chinese people exercise state power through the National People's Congress (NPC) and local people's congresses at different levels. In September 1965 the First Session of the First People's Congress of the Tibet Autonomous Region was held in Lhasa, marking the formal establishment of this system in Tibet. Tibet's administrative, judicial and procuratorial organs are all created by the regional people's congress to which they are responsible and by which they are supervised. Major regional affairs are decided by the regional people's congress. Tibet's administrative organs carry out the laws, regulations, rules, resolutions and decisions adopted by the regional people's congress. Through deputies to the people's congress at different levels, people in Tibet exercise their right to manage state and regional affairs. All Chinese citizens living in Tibet who are 18 years old or above, regardless of gender, occupation, family background, ethnicity, religious belief, educational background, financial conditions or length of residence in this region, enjoy the right to vote and the right to be elected. People of all ethnic groups in Tibet directly elect deputies to the people's congresses at the county (district) and township (town) levels, and these deputies then elect deputies to the regional people's congress and to the NPC. The Moinba and Lhoba ethnic groups, despite their small populations, both have their representatives at the NPC and local people's congresses at all levels in Tibet. During elections at the regional, prefecture (city), county (district) and village (town) levels, the voter turnout rate has grown steadily over the years. In the 2012 elections at these four levels the voter turnout rate exceeded 94 percent.

Deputies of Tibetan and other ethnic minorities make up the overwhelming majority in the local people's congresses at all levels. In 2012, among the 34,244 deputies elected directly and indirectly at these four levels, 31,901 were from the Tibetan, Moinba, Lhoba, Naxi, Hui,

Zhuang and other ethnic minorities, accounting for more than 93 percent. Among the present NPC deputies, 20 are from the Tibet Autonomous Region, of whom 12 are from the Tibetan ethnic group, one each from the Moinba and Lhoba ethnic groups. Among the 44 members of the standing committee of the tenth regional people's congress, 25 are from the Tibetan and other ethnic minorities; among the 14 chairpersons and vice-chairpersons of the standing committee, eight are from the Tibetan and other ethnic minorities. Women have also seen their social status raised markedly. Female deputies make up 25.4 percent of the total to the Tibet regional people's congress, while women make up 34.49 percent of all civil servants in governments at all levels.

Establishing the political consultation system

The system of multi-party cooperation and political consultation is a basic political system of China, and socialist consultative democracy is an important form of people's democracy in China. On December 20, 1959 the First Session of the First Tibet Autonomous Regional Committee of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC) was held in Lhasa, marking the creation of this Committee. It also marked the establishment in Tibet of the system of multi-party cooperation and political consultation under the leadership of the Communist Party of China (CPC), a system that ensures that all the people in Tibet, from all strata and all circles, can fully voice their opinions and play their roles in political life. The CPC Committee and People's Government of the Tibet Autonomous Region have incorporated political consultation into their decision-making procedure, conducting extensive consultation to solicit the local people's opinions on major issues in social and economic development and concrete problems concerning the people's interests. The CPPCC Tibet committee members come from all circles and all ethnic groups, and are elected on an extensive basis to represent their respective circles or ethnic groups. Uniting

all people's societies and people from all ethnic groups and all circles, they diligently perform their duties in political consultation, democratic supervision, and participation in the deliberation and administration of state affairs, and make suggestions based on in-depth investigations or research; as an important driving force for Tibet, they are making great contributions to economic development and social progress in the autonomous region. At present, Tibet has 29 members on the CPPCC National Committee, including 26 from the Tibetan and other ethnic minorities. From 2008 to 2012 the Tenth Tibet Autonomous Regional Committee of the CPPCC received 1,507 proposals and has replied to them all.

Implementing the system of regional ethnic autonomy

To carry out regional ethnic autonomy in areas where ethnic minorities live in compact communities is a basic political system of China, and also a basic policy to handle problems concerning ethnic minorities in China. All ethnic groups in Tibet enjoy all the political rights prescribed in the Constitution of the People's Republic of China and other laws. In addition, they enjoy political rights specially drawn up for ethnic autonomous regions. According to the Constitution and the Law on Regional Ethnic Autonomy, the Tibet Autonomous Region enjoys extensive rights of autonomy, including legislative power, flexible enforcement of relevant state laws, right to use the spoken and written languages of the ethnic minorities, right of personnel management, right of fiscal management, and right to independently develop culture and education.

Since the Tibet Autonomous Region was set up in 1965, the regional people's congress and its standing committee have made over 290 local laws and regulations, or resolutions and decisions of a legislative nature, and formulated measures for the flexible implementation of some state laws in Tibet in order to suit local conditions. For example, Tibet made

alternative regulations in 1981 and 2004, in which the legally marriageable ages for men and women were both reduced by two years from what was prescribed in the Marriage Law of the People's Republic of China, and polyandrous and polygynous relations that had existed before the regulations took effect would be allowed to continue if no one involved proposes dissolution of the marriage. Another example is that in addition to the national holidays, Tibet has other public holidays, mostly traditional Tibetan festivals such as the Tibetan New Year and Shoton Festival. In the contingent of local officials, 70.53 percent are from the Tibetan and other ethnic minorities, and among county and township leaders, 73.03 percent are from the Tibetan and other ethnic minorities. Since the Tibet Autonomous Region was set up, all the chairpersons of the standing committee of the regional people's congress and of the regional people's government have been elected from the Tibetan ethnic group. The system of regional ethnic autonomy ensures that political, economic, social and cultural rights of the people of all ethnic groups in Tibet are effectively protected.

Expanding community-level democracy in both urban and rural Tibet

In China community-level democracy is an effective way of ensuring that the people are masters of their own country, and an important way of expanding the political participation of China's citizens. After years of exploration, Tibet has put in place a system of community-level democracy covering both farming and pastoral areas with Chinese and Tibetan characteristics. In Tibet, the villagers' self-governance system and the system of regional ethnic autonomy have helped institutionalize and regulate community-level democracy, guaranteed the people's rights to participate in and discuss state and regional affairs, and aroused their enthusiasm for political participation. On July 5, 1959 a total of 443 peasants of Khesum Village in the Shannan region founded the first association of peasants in Tibet,

starting the building of community-level democracy in Tibet. In 1993 Tibet published the Measures for the Tibetan Autonomous Region's Implementation of the Law of Organizing the Villagers' Committees of the People's Republic of China (For Trial Implementation), ensuring that the election of villagers' committees around the region is conducted according to due procedures. Currently, over 95 percent of the villages in Tibet have established the system of villagers' representative meetings. A democratic management system mainly consisting of village regulations, code of conduct for villagers and self-governance rules, as well as a democratic supervision system that requires village affairs be made known to all villagers are being improved. All villages now make village affairs public and exercise democratic management; and over 90 percent of the villages in Tibet have set up billboards, ensuring the ordinary people's rights to be informed, to participate, to decide and to supervise. During the seventh general election of village (community) committees of Tibet, 1,686,800 people registered, and 1,495,000 voted, making a turnout rate of 88.7 percent; and 26,335 were elected to village or community committees. Community-level democracy has been improving. Tibet's 192 urban communities have all set up community residents' congresses and community committees, providing a solid organizational guarantee for the self-governance of local residents.

Establishing and cementing a new ethnic relationship

In the Tibet Autonomous Region there are over 40 ethnic groups, including those of the Tibetan, Han, Hui, Moinba, Lhoba, Naxi, Sherpa and Deng, with the Tibetan group making up the majority of the population. During the long history of Tibet, these peoples jointly developed the Tibetan Plateau and created the history of Tibet, making it an important part of the history of the Chinese nation. After the People's Republic of China was founded in 1949, the Central Government carried out an ethnic policy that stresses ethnic equality and

unity, regional ethnic autonomy and the common prosperity of all ethnic groups. For over 60 years since its peaceful liberation, Tibet has fully carried out the state ethnic policy, removing political, economic and social factors that would have resulted in ethnic inequality, while eliminating the class differences and personal bondage relations peculiar to Tibet; thus, it has established a new socialist ethnic relationship featuring equality, unity, mutual-aid and harmony.

Driven by the growing socialist market economy, population movements have become more and more frequent between Tibet and the rest of China, between the Tibetan group and other ethnic groups, and within Tibet; mutual exchanges, tolerance and fusion between ethnic groups has become the mainstream of the ethnic relationship. While people of all ethnic groups go to Tibet for business, work, exchanges, pilgrimages and tourism, numerous Tibetan people leave Tibet and the Tibetan-inhabited areas in Sichuan, Yunnan, Gansu and Qinghai provinces, and go to inland cities for business, work, study, exchanges and tourism. The China Tibetology Research Center conducted a research in 2011 to study the migration of Tibetan population in inland China. It found that there are different numbers of Tibetan people, floating or resident, in Beijing, Shanghai, Chengdu, Guangzhou, Xining, Lanzhou, Kunming and other big cities. For example, in the city proper of Chengdu there is a Tibetan population of over 30,000 with registered permanent residence, and 150,000 to 200,000 without registered permanent residence. In addition, areas where Tibetans live in compact communities have appeared in some of the counties and urban districts of Chengdu. The People's Government of the Tibet Autonomous Region has worked hard to educate local people about ethnic unity. It holds a theme campaign every September to increase awareness of ethnic unity. Every year there is a conference for the commendations of those who have been outstanding in promoting ethnic unity and

progress. Many other activities are also organized by the government to promote this theme.

IV. Cultural Preservation and Freedom of Religious Belief

As an important part of Chinese culture, Tibetan culture attracts people from all over the world with its unique charm. Over the years, the Central Government and the government of the Tibet Autonomous Region have worked together to preserve and promote the outstanding traditional Tibetan culture while developing advanced socialist culture, and to protect places of unique folk cultures. Their efforts have reaped fruits, and Tibetan culture is now well preserved and developed.

Preserving and developing the spoken and written Tibetan language

The study and use of the Tibetan language and script are protected by law in China. The Constitution, Law on Regional Ethnic Autonomy and Law on the Standard Spoken and Written Chinese Language have articles protecting the freedom of ethnic minorities to use and develop their own spoken and written languages. The Tibet Autonomous Region enacted the Several Provisions of the Tibet Autonomous Region on the Study, Use and Development of the Tibetan Language (For Trial Implementation), Detailed Rules for the Implementation of the Provisions, and the formal version, finally making this work solidly law-based.

Bilingual education, with Tibetan as the principal language, is widespread in Tibet. At present, primary schools in all farming and pastoral areas and some urban areas use both Tibetan and Chinese in teaching, but mostly Tibetan for the major courses. Middle schools also use both languages, and Tibetan classes in middle schools in inland areas also have

lessons in Tibetan. By the end of 2012 there were 282,914 primary school students and 177,981 middle school students receiving bilingual education, accounting for 96.88 percent and 90.63 percent of the total respectively in Tibet. Now there are 23,085 bilingual teachers, and 3,700 Tibetan language teachers at schools at different levels.

Tibetan is widely used in political life. Resolutions, laws and regulations adopted at people's congresses at all levels, and formal documents and declarations published by people's governments at different levels and their subsidiary departments in Tibet are written in both Tibetan and Chinese. In judicial proceedings, Tibetan is used to try cases involving litigants of the Tibetan group; and the Tibetan language is used in writing the legal documents. Automation has been realized in the translation and interpretation departments of the Party Committee, People's Congress, People's Government and CPPCC office of the Tibet Autonomous Region, and such offices at prefecture and county levels. The word count of translation in Tibet is more than 60 million each year. Both Tibetan and Chinese are used in official seals, credentials and certificates, forms, envelopes and letter paper, writing paper, identifiers, signs of work units, factories and mines, schools, stations, airports, shops, hotels, restaurants, theaters, scenic spots, sports venues, libraries, and street and traffic signs.

More and more intellectual and cultural products in Tibetan are appearing. There are 14 Tibetan-language magazines and ten Tibetan-language newspapers in Tibet. Tibet People's Radio has 42 programs and columns in Tibetan (including Khampa); its Tibetan-language news channel broadcasts 21 hours a day, and its Khampa channel broadcasts 18 hours a day. Tibet TV Station has a Tibetan-language channel broadcasting 24 hours a day. In 2012 some 780 titles of books in the Tibetan language were published in the Tibet Autonomous Region, with a total of 4.31 million copies.

In addition, the use of Tibetan is becoming more and more IT-based. Computer coding of Tibetan characters has met the national and international standards. Tibetan editing, laser phototypesetting and electronic publishing developed independently by China are extensively applied. Through the Internet, mobile phones and other means, Tibetans can read, listen to and watch domestic and international news and get all types of information, which has become part of their daily life.

While preserving and developing the Tibetan language, the State also popularizes standard Chinese around the country, including in regions inhabited by ethnic minorities. According to the Law on the Standard Spoken and Written Chinese Language, "the State popularizes modern standard Chinese and standardized Chinese characters" and "every Chinese citizen has the right to learn and use the standard spoken and written Chinese language" so as to "promote economic and cultural exchanges between ethnic groups and regions." In addition, "The use of the standard spoken and written Chinese language should help maintain state sovereignty and national dignity, safeguard state unification and national unity, and promote socialist material, cultural and ethical progress." In China, no individual or organization shall oppose the popularization, study and use of standard spoken and written Chinese language on the pretext of protecting and developing the language and script of their ethnic group.

Preserving and carrying forward outstanding cultural heritages

Cultural relics and historic sites have been effectively preserved in the Tibet Autonomous Region, which has issued the Notice of the Tibet Autonomous Region People's Government on Strengthening the Protection of Cultural Relics, and Regulations of the Tibet Autonomous Region on the Protection of Cultural Relics, and some other laws and

regulations to ensure that cultural relics are protected in accordance with the law and due procedures. Currently, Tibet has 4,277 cultural relics sites (including 55 state-level ones and 210 regional ones), and 2.32 million items of cultural relics are in their collection. The Potala Palace, the Norbulingka and Jokhang Temple are on the World Heritage List. Lhasa, Shigatse and Gyangtse are honored as State-level Historical and Cultural Cities. Tibet Museum is a state-level museum. Since 2000 the Central Government has invested 2.04 billion yuan in key projects for the preservation and maintenance of cultural relics in Tibet, among which more than 380 million yuan has been used in the three key projects of the Potala Palace, Norbulingka and Sakya Monastery.

The region's intangible cultural heritage has been effectively preserved, promoted and developed. The Regional People's Government and local prefectural (city) governments have set up special organizations to salvage, collate and study the Tibetan cultural heritage, making a general survey of the cultural and artistic heritage of the Tibetan group. These organizations have edited and published *Chronicles of Chinese Dramas: Tibet*; *Collection of Folk Dances: Tibet*; *Collection of National Instrumental Folk Music: Tibet*, and seven other collections, including over 10,000 pieces of folk music, songs and other art forms and over 30 million characters of literary data. Currently, Tibet has nearly 800 intangible cultural heritage projects, over 80 performance troupes of traditional dramas and 1,177 inheritors of such intangible cultural heritage. Tibetan opera and the Gesar epic have been included in UNESCO's Masterpiece of the Intangible Heritage of Humanity. Tibetan Thangka, Tibetan papermaking technique and 73 other cultural items have been included in China's Masterpiece of the Intangible Heritage, and 68 inheritors of such cultural items have been affirmed as representative inheritors of China's Intangible Heritage projects; 323 projects and 227 inheritors have been put on the Tibet Regional List of Intangible Heritage; and 158 books have been put on the State List of Valuable Ancient Books. The Ministry of Culture

and Tibet Autonomous Region have named five places as national homes of folk art, 19 as regional homes of folk art, and two as homes of special art.

Developing traditional Tibetan medicine

The People's Government of the Tibet Autonomous Region has made the development of traditional Tibetan medicine a key part of its health care strategy. It has drawn up the Decision on Strengthening Traditional Tibetan Medicine Work, Opinions of the People's Government of the Tibet Autonomous Region on Providing More Support to and Promoting the Development of Traditional Tibetan Medicine and some other related documents. These measures are conducive to the protection and development of traditional Tibetan medicine. Tibetan medical establishments at all levels in Tibet exploit their advantages to the full, and study special traditional Tibetan medical treatment techniques and drugs and put them into practice. They collate ancient books, records and documents on traditional Tibetan medicine, and have compiled and published the Annotations on the Four Canons of Medicine and other important documents in this field. Currently, Tibet has 19 Tibetan medical establishments, and over 50 county-level hospitals have departments of Tibetan medicine, making Tibetan medicine accessible to people throughout the region. Traditional Tibetan drugs are now produced in modern factories instead of small manual workshops, meaning they are produced in scale according to standardized procedures. The 20 Tibetan drug manufacturers registered in Tibet all have the GMP (Good Manufacturing Practice) certificate, and produce over 360 types of Tibetan medicine. Their products are sold in China and some foreign countries. The total value of their products reaches 100 million yuan or more. Traditional Tibetan medicine has gone beyond Tibet, and is now serving more and more people, both in China and around the world.

Respecting and protecting customs and folkways of ethnic minorities

The State respects and protects the right of all ethnic groups in Tibet to live and conduct social activities according to their own traditional customs and folkways; it respects and protects their freedom in attending normal religious service, performing sacrificial rituals, and taking part in major religious activities and folk festivals. While maintaining their traditional ways and styles of clothing, diet and housing, people of all ethnic groups in Tibet have absorbed new, modern customs in terms of clothing, food, housing, transportation, and wedding and funeral ceremonies. The Shoton Festival in Lhasa, Mt. Qomolangma Culture and Art Festival in Shigatse, Yarlung Art Festival in Shannan, the Great Canyon Culture and Tourism Festival in Nyingchi, Kham Art Festival in Qamdo, Horse Racing Festival in Nagqu, Shangshung Culture and Art Festival in Ngari, and some other festivals have been revived. National and international festivals such as the March 8th International Women's Day, May 1st Labor Day, June 1st Children's Day, and October 1st National Day are becoming more and more popular. New customs and habits have been formed encompassing both national characteristics and spirit of the time. While the people's material life keeps improving, every festival is a feast for the mind, giving them more and more recreational activities. Tibetan people like to spend the Incense Festival with relatives and friends; while Langma halls for song and dance performance and sweet tea houses are major places for Tibetan leisure and recreational activities.

Constantly enhancing public cultural services

In recent years Tibet has invested more and more in building its cultural infrastructure. Radio and television are accessible to every village and household, and there are libraries and cultural centers at county, township and village levels, popularized digital TV on the

basis of cable TV and digital libraries, electronic reading rooms for the public, and other cultural projects for the people, including libraries in the countryside and monasteries and the Spring Rain Project, in which cultural volunteers from other parts of China go to the frontier to serve the people there. Through these efforts, the local government tries to protect the people's cultural rights. By the end of 2012 Tibet had built eight people's art centers, 77 libraries, two museums, 73 county-level cultural centers, 239 township-level cultural stations, over 500 village cultural rooms. In addition, it had one regional center, 73 county-level sub-centers, 103 township-level stations, and over 3,000 village-level stations as part of the project for sharing cultural information and resources. As a result, a network of cultural facilities has taken shape, from the regional level at the top all the way to the villages at the bottom. In 2012 Tibet completed the task of providing radio and television access to 50,500 households of farmers and herdsmen, bringing the number of such households to over 85 percent of the total. Lhasa completed the digital conversion of cable TV in 131 communities, and built five core sub-platforms at the prefectural or city level. Digital film screening service is now available in all farming and pastoral areas, with films shown on over 130,000 occasions for free. In 2012 Tibet dubbed over 10,000 hours of TV programs and 75 films. It built 5,451 small libraries in the countryside and over 1,700 libraries in monasteries, making such facilities accessible in all administrative villages and all monasteries of Tibetan Buddhism. Tibet now has ten professional performing art troupes, over 20 county-level folk art troupes, over 160 amateur performing art and Tibetan opera troupes, and over 4,000 cultural and performing art professionals. Professional performing art troupes have worked harder in artistic creation, launching Princess Wencheng in Peking Opera and Tibetan Opera forms, Colorful Hada, Heavenly Tibet and Tibet Spring in song and dance performances, Liberation, Liberation and Tashigang in drama form, and a film titled Thangka. Moreover, Tibet has enhanced its cultural exchanges with other countries and regions. Over the past 60 years it has sent more than 360 groups or teams of nearly 4,000 people to over 50 countries and regions for visits and for

performances in over 110 overseas cities. It has also received over 200 experts and scholars from over 30 countries and regions for performances, lectures and exhibitions.

Respecting and protecting freedom of religious belief

According to the Constitution of the People's Republic of China, Chinese citizens enjoy freedom of religious belief as a basic right. In Tibet, Tibetan Buddhism, Bon, Islam, Catholicism and some other religions coexist, and there are different sects within Tibetan Buddhism. After the democratic reform, Tibet abolished feudal serfdom under theocracy and separated religion from government, removed what had been tarnished by feudal serfdom and restored the true nature of religion, realizing true freedom of religious belief and religious tolerance between different religious beliefs and sects. The Central Government and the government of the Tibet Autonomous Region fully respect citizens' freedom of religious belief, respect and protect all religions and sects, and protect normal religious activities and beliefs according to law. Currently, Tibet has 1,787 places for different religious activities, over 46,000 resident monks and nuns, and 358 Living Buddhas. The majority of the people in Tibet believe in Tibetan Buddhism. Traditional religious activities such as scripture learning and debate, degree promotion, initiation into monkhood or nunhood, abhisheka (empowerment ceremony) and self-cultivation are held on a regular basis, while ceremonial activities are also held at important religious festivals. Living Buddha reincarnation is a special succession system of Tibetan Buddhism and is respected by the State. So far, over 40 incarnated Living Buddhas have been confirmed through traditional religious rituals and historical conventions.

In present-day Tibet it is not difficult to see prayer flags, Mani stones inscribed with Buddhist scriptures, and believers taking part in religious activities. Ordinary believers

usually have a scripture hall or a Buddha shrine at home, and such religious activities as circumambulation while reciting scriptures, Buddha worship, and inviting lamas or nuns from monasteries to hold religious rites are normally conducted. The Tibet Autonomous Region and its seven prefectures or cities have each set up a Buddhist Society; the Tibet Branch of the Buddhist Association of China runs a Buddhist college, a sutra printing house, and a Tibetan-language journal - Buddhism in Tibet. Tibet has protected and repaired murals, carvings, statues, Thangka, sutras, religious ritual implements, shrines, and some other carriers of religious culture. It has also salvaged, collated and published a great number of religious books and records. It has promoted the development of conventional sutra printing houses at monasteries. There are now nearly 60 such sutra printing houses in Tibet, including one in the Moru Monastery and one in the Potala Palace; they print 63,000 sutra titles every year. In addition, there are 20 private shops selling these sutras. Regarding religious management, the State upholds the policy of separating religion from government; it strengthens the administration of religious activities according to law, prohibits religion from intervening in the country's administration, justice system and education, and allows no individual or organization to use religion for illegal activities.

V. Social Changes and Development of All Undertakings

Tibet has achieved all-round development. With the changes in the political and economic systems, Tibet has made the transition from a traditional society to a modern one. Its people's rights to education, employment, health and social security have been further protected, and all social undertakings are thriving.

Science and education have achieved rapid development.

Before its peaceful liberation in 1951, Tibet had no scientific research institutes or staff in the modern sense except in the areas of Tibetan medicine, astronomy and the calendar. Now, Tibet has 33 state-owned independent scientific research institutes, ten private scientific research institutes, and 184 agricultural and animal husbandry science and technology promotion organizations at the autonomous region, prefectural (municipal), and county (district) levels; 29 agricultural science and technology parks and key laboratories at the national and autonomous region levels; 27 state-level new and high-tech enterprises and 46 autonomous-region-level small and medium-sized sci-tech enterprises, and five state-level innovative enterprises and corporate technology centers. Currently, Tibet has 56,264 technical professionals, of whom 43,552 are from ethnic-minority groups, accounting for 77.41 percent; 2,870 senior technical professionals (including one member of the Chinese Academy of Engineering, 244 experts enjoying special government allowances, 16 young and middle-aged experts with outstanding contributions and three national outstanding technical professionals), 13,869 intermediate technical professionals and 36,216 junior technical professionals. All these people play an active role in scientific innovation and application in agriculture, animal husbandry, industry, Tibetan medicine, new energy, tourism, cultural creativity, ethnic handicrafts and other fields. In 2012 the contribution rate of science to economic growth reached 35 percent, to agricultural and animal husbandry growth 42 percent, and the popularization rate of science and technology 85 percent.

Before the peaceful liberation of Tibet, the educated were mostly aristocrats, while serfs and slaves, accounting for 95 percent of the total population of Tibet, had no right to education at all, and the illiteracy rate among young and middle-aged people was 95 percent. Now, Tibet has established a modern education system covering pre-school education, basic education, vocational education, higher education, adult education and special education.

Since 1985 China has covered all tuition, food and boarding expenses for students from farmers and herdsmen's families in the stage of compulsory education, raised the subsidy standard 12 times and benefited 510,400 people. In 2007 Tibet became the first place in China to enjoy free nine-year compulsory education, and in 2012 the first place in China to enjoy 15-year free education (three-year preschool, six-year primary school, three-year junior middle school and three-year senior middle school). By the end of 2012 Tibet had 292,016 primary school students, with an enrollment rate of 99.4 percent among school-age children; 130,266 junior middle school students, with an enrollment rate of 98.6 percent; 47,825 regular senior middle school students and 18,291 secondary vocational school students, the senior middle school enrollment rate reaching 70.2 percent. In addition, there were 33,452 undergraduate students and 1,079 postgraduate students, the higher education gross enrollment rate reaching 27.4 percent. In China 26 senior and junior middle schools in 20 provinces and municipalities directly under the Central Government have classes specially for Tibetan students; 60 key senior middle schools enroll students with registered permanent residence in Tibet; 48 state-level demonstration secondary vocational technical schools and 170 institutions of higher learning enroll students from the Tibetan classes. These schools and universities have accumulatively enrolled 42,040 junior middle school students, 47,492 senior middle school students (secondary vocational school students), and 16,100 undergraduate students. Currently, inland Tibetan classes have 42,460 students. The campaign to get rid of illiteracy has reached all population in Tibet, the illiteracy rate among young and middle-aged people has decreased to 0.8 percent, and the average length of education for people above the age of 15 has reached 8.1 years.

Citizens' right to employment is protected.

Since the democratic reform in Tibet in 1959, all trades in Tibet have thrived, areas of employment have expanded and the requirement for employees' knowledge and skills raised. The government vigorously encourages farmers and herdsmen to seek employment locally by promoting free vocational training, building labor service brands, and improving the mechanism for organized transfer employment and providing better employment environment for migrant workers. The government helps "zero-employment" families, the disabled and other groups with employment difficulties to find jobs by increasing public welfare positions, "enacting policies and providing jobs, skill training, employment services" and other employment assistance. In recent years the government has provided public welfare positions for 19,867 people with employment difficulties, thereby eliminating the number of "zero-employment" families. The government has actively built a two-way selection platform for urban and rural employers and workers. In 2012 new jobs in other fields were found for 450,000 farmers and herdsmen. At the same time 14,153 higher-education graduates were employed, with an employment rate of 98.36 percent. To protect the lawful rights and interests of the workers, the government has set a standard for minimum wages, promoted the adoption of labor contract and collective bargaining, enhanced labor supervision, mediation and arbitration, and improved the mechanism of preventing and handling labor-management dispute cases. In 2012 Tibet' s newly increased urban employment totaled 25,000, and the registered urban unemployment rate was below 2.6 percent.

The people's health has increasingly improved.

Before the peaceful liberation of Tibet, only Lhasa and Shigatse had government-run Tibetan medical institutions, private clinics and Tibetan doctors, which were small in both number and operating size. Now Tibet has a public medical and health service system

combining Tibetan medicine, Western medicine and traditional Chinese medicine that covers all urban and rural areas of the autonomous region with Lhasa as the center, thereby realizing the objective of "one clinic for one village." In 2012 Tibet had 6,660 medical and health institutions, 8,352 hospital beds and 21,558 health workers (including 9,336 health technicians). The medical institutions provided treatment on 10.12 million occasions and accommodated patients in hospitals on 145,500 occasions. Free medical services are now available to all the farmers and herdsmen in the autonomous region. The subsidy for these medical services was raised from 5.5 yuan annually per person in 1993 to 300 yuan in 2012. The autonomous regional government allocated a special fund of 23 million yuan to set up a major disease supplementary health insurance for farmers and herdsmen. Tibet was the first in China to provide free physical examinations for urban and rural residents, and the subsidy has been raised to 300 yuan annually per capita. In 2012 Tibet provided free medical treatment to 1,032 children with congenital heart defects (CHD). Tibet has set up 81 disease prevention and control institutions; promoted an immunization program throughout the autonomous region; improved the epidemic disease reporting and monitoring system; basically contained plague, tuberculosis (TB), leprosy, Kashin-Beck disease (KBD) and iodine deficiency disorders (IDD); reduced the incidence of measles,

diphtheria, pertussis, tetanus, poliomyelitis and other infectious diseases by a large "

VI. Environmental Protection and Ecological Improvement

Tibet serves as an important ecological safety barrier in China. Over the past few decades the central and regional governments have upheld scientific development, struck a balance between socio-economic development and environmental protection, and given priority to

ecological conservation and environmental protection in China's modernization drive.

Vigorous efforts are being made to promote local ecological progress and build a beautiful Tibet. Being one of the areas with the best environmental quality in the world, most parts of the region have maintained their original natural states.

Ecological environment of the Tibet Plateau influenced by climate change

Scientific research findings show that the earth has entered a warming period over the past century. Due to its unique altitude, the Tibet Plateau has been influenced more strongly than surrounding areas by global warming. From 1961 to 2007 the Tibet Plateau registered an average temperature increase of over 0.3 degrees C every ten years, doubling the global average. Global warming has accelerated the retreat of glaciers. Over the past 30 years, the area of glaciers has decreased by 131 sq km annually on the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau and the permafrost has experienced patches of degradation, manifested by reduction of the seasonal frozen depth and rising thaw depth.

In the wake of global warming, remarkable changes have taken place in the ecosystem of the Tibet Plateau. Since the 1980s the vegetation has witnessed early greening, late withering and an average increase of ten days in the growing season. The vegetation coverage has been slightly raised overall, and the NPP (net primary productivity) has grown by around 11 percent. The NPP's remarkable growth has led to an increasing carbon sink in the alpine ecosystem. From 1980 to 2002 Tibet's alpine ecosystem created an average annual net carbon sink of 23 million tons, accounting for 13 percent of the total increased carbon sinks of all the earth's vegetation in China, of which 17.6 million tons was produced by alpine grassland ecosystems every year. The vegetation ecosystem of the Tibet Plateau acts as one of China's important areas for carbon sinks. At present, Tibet's vegetation is improving as a

whole. However, there are differences between different regions. The ecosystem is degrading in the southern areas with reduced rainfall, while it is improving in the northern areas with increased rainfall. Following the implementation of large national ecological projects and eco-compensation policies, Tibet has effectively curbed ecological degradation in areas intensely influenced by human activities, and further enhanced its function as an ecological safety barrier.

Strengthening legislation and planning for ecological conservation and environmental protection

Over the past few decades Tibet has remained the focus within the country's general framework of environmental protection and ecological conservation. In the National Plan for Eco-environmental Improvement and the National Program for Eco-environmental Protection formulated by the State Council in 1998 and 2000, respectively, a separate plan has been drawn up to make the freeze-thawing zone on the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau one of the country's eight major areas for ecological improvement, complete with a number of explicit tasks and principles for work in this regard. According to the National Plan for Major Function-oriented Zones issued by the State Council in 2010, two of the 25 national key eco-function zones are located in Tibet, i.e., "forest zone on the edge of the plateau in southeast Tibet" and "desert zone on the Changtang Plateau in northwest Tibet." Covering areas of 97,750 sq km and 494,381 sq km, respectively, they account for nearly half of Tibet's total area. In 2009 the State Council approved the Plan for Ecology Safety Barrier Protection and Construction in Tibet (2008-2030), aiming to basically complete the building of an ecology safety barrier by 2030 and give full play to its function. The Tibet Autonomous Region has drawn up and implemented a series of plans covering eco-environmental protection and construction, including the Eco-environmental Improvement Plan, Plan for Conservation of

Water and Topsoil, Comprehensive Improvement Plan for the Environment in Farming and Pastoral Areas, Plan for Environmental Protection of Drinking Water Sources in Urban Areas, 12th Five-Year Plan for Comprehensive Prevention and Treatment of Heavy Metal Pollution, Plan for Pollution Control on the Upper Reaches of the "Five Rivers" (the Yarlung Zangbo, Lhasa, Nyangqu, Nyakchu and Nyang rivers), and Ecological Function Zoning. Meanwhile, Tibet is actively carrying out fundamental work in this field, including investigation of the status quo of the ecological environment, ecological function zoning, soil pollution investigation, ecological compensation research, basic survey of nature reserves, and investigation by remote sensing of eco-environmental changes during the period 2000-2010 and relevant evaluation, so as to provide a scientific basis for environmental protection and ecological conservation.

Tibet's work in the field of ecological improvement and environmental protection is progressing steadily and in a law-governed manner. A relatively comprehensive legal system ensuring environmental protection has taken shape. The people's congress and people's government of the Tibet Autonomous Region have promulgated relevant local laws, regulations and administrative decrees, including the Regulations for Environmental Protection in the Tibet Autonomous Region, Rules for the Implementation in the Tibet Autonomous Region of the Grassland Law of the People's Republic of China, Measures for the Implementation in the Tibet Autonomous Region of the Law of the People's Republic of China on the Protection of Wildlife, and Opinions of the People's Government of the Tibet Autonomous Region on the Implementation of the Decision of the State Council on Implementing the Scientific Outlook on Development and Strengthening Environmental Protection.

Remarkable progress in ecological improvement

Tibet has effectively protected its biodiversity and significant eco-function zones. A total of 47 nature reserves at various levels have been established in Tibet, including nine national-level ones, 14 at the autonomous region level and 24 at the prefecture or county level.

Nature reserves cover a total area of 413,700 sq km, accounting for 33.9 percent of the total land area of the region and leading all the other areas of China. All the region's 125 types of wild animals and 39 wild plants under state key protection are well preserved in the established nature reserves. For instance, red deer, generally considered by the international animal research community to have been extinct, was discovered again in Tibet in the 1990s, and their numbers are increasing. The number of Tibetan antelopes is growing year by year to reach 150,000 so far. There are about 7,000 black-necked cranes in the region. Tibet is home to 22 ecological conservation areas (one at national level), eight national forest parks, three national wetland parks, four geological parks (two at national level), and three national scenic areas. In the preface written by Jimmy Carter, former president of the United States, to the book *Across the Tibetan Plateau: Ecosystems, Wildlife, and Conservation*, he appraised the biological diversity protection work of Tibet, saying it was not easy to increase the population of an endangered species but the industrious Tibetan people did it.

Forest and grassland ecological protection in the autonomous region has been crowned with signal success. Tibet strictly controls the scale of tree-felling. A project for the protection of natural forest resources, with a total area of 31,000 sq km, has been implemented in the three counties of Jomda, Gonjo and Markam, putting an end to the felling of natural forest resources for commercial purposes in these areas. In addition, Tibet has carried out a project for the planting of non-commercial forests in key areas, and set up demonstration zones of desertification control in Chushur and Chanang counties, Shigatse Prefecture and Shiquanhe Town. In 28 counties along the upper reaches of the Jinsha, Lancang and

Nujiang rivers and the drainage area of the Yarlung Zangbo River, where the hazards of sandstorms and soil erosion are serious, a project to reforest cultivated land is being undertaken, in the course of which the afforested area has topped 83,700 ha, 338,700 ha of mountainous areas have been sealed off to facilitate afforestation, and every year an additional 19,200 ha of cultivated land is restored to forests. The forest coverage rate has now risen to 11.91 percent. Tibet rationally utilizes and protects grassland to ensure the sound development of the grassland ecology. Emphasis has been placed on fencing and building water-conservancy projects on natural grassland, and a pasture-responsibility system has been implemented. In line with the principle of limiting the number of grazing animals by the size of the pasture, rotation grazing periods and no-grazing areas have been designated. Energetic efforts have been made to promote man-made grassland, improve deteriorated pastureland and prohibit the grazing of animals in some areas so that the grassland can be restored. By the end of 2012 there was 85.11 million ha of natural grassland in total, of which 69.1 million ha was available for grazing. Tibet has initiated a compensation scheme for non-commercial forests and a rewarding mechanism for the protection of grassland.

Tibet has also intensified its efforts in the areas of water and soil conservation, and prevention of geological disasters. It has launched the construction of a water- and soil-conservation monitoring network. In recent years, projects have been carried out to prevent disasters caused by landslides in Zham Town, Nyalam County, landslides and mud-rock flows in the county seat of Chongye, landslides threatening the Grade II power station of the Bayi Power Plant in Nyingchi Prefecture, and mud-rock flows into the Liusha River in Lhasa.

Environmental protection and ecological improvement work is progressing smoothly in the rural areas of the autonomous region. Since 2010 work covering improvement of the people's living environment and the ecological environment has been carried out at 4,761 administrative villages in seven prefectures (prefecture-level cities) and 74 counties (county-level cities and districts) in Tibet. By the end of 2012, pilot programs in this regard had been launched in 2,500 villages. Besides, Tibet actively popularizes the use of clean energy to reduce the destruction of natural vegetation and effectively protect the ecological environment in farming and pastoral areas. It conducts energy projects to promote the use of methane gas and solar energy, and small-scale wind power generation in rural areas. Methane-generating pits have been built in 210,000 households, and 395,000 solar cookers have been put into use. Over 10,000 sets of panels for solar photovoltaic systems have been installed in dwelling houses, and a solar heating central system now covers a total area of 10,000 sq m. The total installed capacity of wind-PV complementary power generation has reached 220 kw.

Steady efforts have been made to ensure the safety of drinking water in urban areas. Tibet has finished an investigation on drinking water sources for urban residents, and built a database on drinking water sources. It has set up a special fund for the protection of drinking water sources, and carried out a project to protect the environment of water sources.

Ecological improvement work is progressing in an all-round way in Tibet. The regional government has set the goals of constructing an ecology safety barrier, preserving the eco-environment, and building a beautiful Tibet. Lhasa is working hard to turn itself into a national model city in environmental protection, while Nyingchi Prefecture is making efforts to improve its ecological environment. The prefectures of Shannan and Nagqu have

put forward plans for building an "ecological model area" and "eco-friendly grassland," respectively. Meanwhile, 97 towns and 221 administrative villages in Lhasa and the prefectures of Nagqu, Nyingchi and Shannan are engaged in building ecological towns and villages. By the end of 2012 there were 22 ecological villages at the autonomous region level.

Tibet is one of the cleanest areas in the world.

At present, the Tibet Plateau is the third-cleanest area in the world in terms of its environment, after the South and North poles. It has a clean and transparent atmospheric environment, and similar contents of pollutants to the North Pole. Tibet has few types and low concentrations of pollutants, compared to other places. Its atmospheric content of heavy metals is close to the background value of such elements in the global atmosphere. In addition, the atmospheric content of heavy metals in Lhasa is much lower than that in densely populated areas and industrialized regions. The average annual mass concentration of PM_{2.5} is 10micrograms/m³ in the non-metropolitan areas of Tibet, and 14.58 micrograms/m³ in Lhasa, much lower than 35micrograms/m³, the standard set by the country' s Ambient Air Quality Standard (AAQS), and less than one-tenth of those of the areas with intensive human activities. The major rivers and lakes in Tibet maintain fine water quality, meeting the national standard specified in the Surface Water Environment Quality Standard (GB3838-2002). The concentration of heavy metals is near the background level of global rivers and lakes ecosystem, indicating that they have not been polluted by human activities. The content of heavy metals in Tibet' s soil inherits the parent material, with no marked change during the 30 years from 1979 to 2009.

Concluding Remarks

Over the past 60-odd years, Tibet has finished a course of historical journey that would normally take several centuries or even a millennium for the human society to complete. It has written a spectacular chapter in the history of mankind. At present, Tibet presents a picture mixing traditional and modern elements, featuring economic and political progress, cultural prosperity, social harmony, sound ecosystem and a happy and healthy life for the local people. We may gain valuable enlightenment from Tibet' s extraordinary journey.

-Tibet's development can't be separated from the choosing of a right path. Over the past 60-odd years, by adhering to the path of socialism in the arms of the Chinese nation, the people of all ethnic groups in Tibet have become masters of their own country, society and fate, and Tibet has made the dramatic change from a place of poverty and backwardness to one of prosperity and civilization. Practice shows that only by adhering to the leadership of the CPC, the socialist system and the system of regional ethnic autonomy, can Tibetans become and remain the masters of their own affairs, and can the fundamental interests of the Tibetan people be safeguarded and developed. In the future, too, this path will remain essential to Tibet' s development.

-Tibet would not have this development and progress without the support of the Central Government and the assistance of the rest of the country. The superiority of China' s state system and the fine tradition of mutual help of the Chinese nation have given a strong impetus to the development of Tibet. The Central Government has always attached great importance to the development of Tibet, and the well-being of all ethnic groups in this autonomous region. It has mobilized the strength of the whole nation, made preferential policies, and provided enormous support in manpower, materials and funds to promote the development and progress of Tibet. From 1952 to 2012 the Central Government appropriated a total of 454.34 billion yuan to Tibet as financial subsidies, taking up 96

percent of the accumulated fiscal expenditures of the local government since it was founded. The Central Government has planned to complete 226 major projects in Tibet in the five years from 2011 to 2015 in sectors relating to the improvement of people's well-being, infrastructure construction, industries with local characteristics and ecological environment, with a total investment of 193.1 billion yuan, 71.5 percent of which will come from the Central Government. After the Fifth Tibet Work Forum held by the Central Authorities in 2010, the Central Government approved the amount of aid funds to be provided to Tibet by 17 provincial and municipal governments involved in the paired-up support program for Tibet, based on one-thousandth of the fiscal revenue of each. And a mechanism has been established to ensure stable increase of the funds.

-Tibet's development can't be separated from the concerted efforts of all ethnic groups in Tibet. In the final analysis, credit should be given to the creative power of the people in Tibet. At all stages in the history of Tibet, relying on their wisdom and the awareness that they are the masters of their own affairs, people of all ethnic groups have destroyed the old and established the new, and brought about fundamental changes in the region, giving impetus to historical development.

-Tibet's development can't be separated from opening up and foreign cooperation. Isolation used to be the prerequisite for the feudal serfdom under theocracy that lasted several hundred years in old Tibet, hindering the development of this region. Over the past sixty years or more, however, Tibet has implemented opening up, enhanced exchanges and communications with the rest of China and other countries, and absorbed the achievements of other civilizations to enrich and improve itself.

The development and changes in Tibet are obvious to everyone. Any fair-minded person would be filled with amazement, and anyone who cares about Tibet will be pleased to see all this. However, a handful of people just turn a blind eye to the facts, and attack and deny Tibet's development path and modernization drive that people of all ethnic groups strive for.

The 14th Dalai Lama and his clique in exile are conducting separatist activities for a long time to sabotage the development and stability of Tibet. After the failure of their armed rebellion in 1959, they fled abroad and began to harass China's borders for years. In recent years, they have put forward the so-called concepts of "Greater Tibet" and "a high degree of autonomy," which in fact go against China's actual conditions, and violate the Constitution and relevant laws. Their true aim is to overthrow the socialist system and the system of regional ethnic autonomy that is practiced in Tibet, and rock the systemic foundations that have ensured the development and progress of Tibet.

There are some others in the world who intentionally distort the past and present of Tibet due to their ideological bias or out of consideration for their self interests. They created a "Shangri-La" myth, wishing to keep Tibet in a backward primitive state forever. The development and progress of Tibet over the past 60 years or so has proved that the people in Tibet and the people of the rest of the world have equal right to enjoy the achievements of modern civilization, to improve the quality of life and to choose their own way of life.

At present, people of all ethnic groups in Tibet and in the rest of the country are making combined efforts in fighting for the great renewal of the Chinese nation. We have every reason to believe that, in the course of this, the Tibet Autonomous Region will have a better future.

