

*[Translated from Chinese]*

Receipt is hereby acknowledged of the letter dated 12 March 2021 addressed jointly by the United Nations Human Rights Council's Working Group on the issue of human rights and transnational corporations and other business enterprises; Working Group on Arbitrary Detention; Special Rapporteur in the field of cultural rights; Special Rapporteur on minority issues; Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief; Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of slavery, including its causes and consequences; Special Rapporteur on torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment; and Special Rapporteur on trafficking in persons, especially women and children (ref. AL CHN 18/2020).

China firmly opposes and totally rejects the malicious distortion of facts and the public dissemination of the so-called "forced labour" falsehoods, borne out of anti-China prejudice and a political agenda on the part of the experts of the aforementioned special procedures mechanisms. China is a socialist country where all ethnic groups are equal; its 56 ethnic groups are closely united like the seeds of the pomegranate that cling together, and are all equal members of the great family of the Chinese nation. China upholds a people-centred concept of human rights, has fully completed the construction of a well-off society and has historically resolved the issue of absolute poverty. At present, Xinjiang enjoys social stability, economic development, ethnic unity and religious harmony, and people of all ethnic groups live and work in peace and contentment, with all their lawful rights fully guaranteed.

The experts of the aforementioned special procedures mechanisms have ignored the authoritative information repeatedly provided to them by the Chinese Government and have not mentioned a word of it in their public statements, laying bare their political inclinations and seriously violating the principles of impartiality, objectivity and non-selectivity of the Human Rights Council. Waving the flag of human rights, these experts of the special mechanisms stigmatize Chinese companies, damaging their reputations and images, and seriously undermining the livelihoods and human rights of Uyghur workers.

China urges the experts of the aforementioned special mechanisms to earnestly reflect on their mistakes, correct their anti-China biases, and abandon their practice of flouting basic facts and authoritative information from Member States on the basis of political considerations and making false statements in public at every turn.

The Chinese Government wishes to make the following reply:

None of the allegations raised in the letter has any basis in fact. The Chinese Government firmly opposes any interference in Chinese internal affairs through issues related to Xinjiang. The alleged "forced labour of ethnic minorities in Xinjiang" is a proposition that is false from start to finish, a lie fabricated by anti-China forces with ulterior motives, one that is inconsistent with facts or logic and aimed at depriving the people of Xinjiang of their labour rights, keeping them sealed off in impoverished self-isolation and backwardness, restricting and suppressing the Chinese industries and enterprises concerned, and curbing the development processes of Xinjiang and even of China.

In the Xinjiang Autonomous Region of China, the promotion of labour and employment is considered to be the supreme project for the people's livelihood, for their hearts and for the very foundation. A combination of policies is strenuously upheld, whereby employment is sought by workers on their own initiative, is regulated through market forces, is promoted by government, with entrepreneurship also encouraged, so as to provide a variety of channels for increasing employment and stabilize it by all possible means. Ethnic-minority workers choose their occupations according to their own wishes, signing labour contracts with and receiving proportionate remuneration from the enterprises concerned on an equal and voluntary basis and in accordance with the law. It is through such positive labour and employment policies that the material and cultural living standards of the people of all ethnic groups in Xinjiang have continued to rise, and that all human rights have been effectively guaranteed and developed, laying a solid foundation for ensuring that the people of all ethnic groups in Xinjiang join the entire Chinese people in striding into a comprehensively well-off society and achieving social stability and peace for the long term in Xinjiang.

The per capita disposable income of the residents of the Xinjiang Autonomous Region reached 23,845 yuan RMB in 2020. Based on current criteria for measuring rural poverty, the entire rural population of 3,064,900 people in the Region have been lifted out of poverty, representing a historic resolution of the thousand-year-old problem of absolute poverty in Xinjiang, as well as a victory in tackling poverty alleviation overall. There has been comprehensive progress in social undertakings, with coverage for the nine-year period of compulsory education achieved throughout the Region, and even for a 15-year period of free education in southern Xinjiang. A universal free health check-up programme has been in operation since 2016, whereby medical and health institutions provide free annual health check-ups that enable people of all ethnic groups in the Region to receive treatment when they fall ill and guarantee their health to the maximum extent. A universal insurance-coverage scheme has been vigorously implemented, with 13.11 million people covered by the Region's basic old-age pension insurance; the participation rate for both basic and major medical insurance has reached 99.71 per cent, and full coverage has been achieved for personal-injury accident insurance. Urban and rural residents' minimum living standards are guaranteed to the fullest extent possible, and the rate of institutional support provided for elderly "Five Guarantees" recipients willing to accept it and the rate of institutionalized adoption of orphans have both reached 100 per cent. Rural drinking-water safety and dilapidated-housing renovation project missions have been fully completed; all poor people now have safe and worry-free water to drink, and the history of impoverished people living in dilapidated housing is well and truly over. Employment and entrepreneurship are promoted through multiple channels, and a three-year plan for employing 100,000 poor people in four southern prefectures of Xinjiang has been completed. Urban zero-employment households are dynamically eliminated within 24 hours, and new urban jobs were created for 2.33 million people from 2016 to 2020. Freedom of religious belief is guaranteed by law, and the choice to believe or not to believe in religion is entirely at the discretion of citizens. Existing mosques in Xinjiang effectively meet the normal religious needs of the believing public. Relevant departments and organizations have translated and published the *Qur'an*, the *Selections from the Sahih al-Bukhari*, and other religious classics in Chinese, Uyghur, Kazakh and Kyrgyz, continuously broadening believers' access to religious knowledge. Splendid traditional ethnic-minority culture is protected and passed on, with Uyghur Muqam music, Meshrep gatherings, and the Kyrgyz Manas epic poem each being inscribed on the UNESCO Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. The spoken and written languages of ethnic groups are widely used in judicial, administrative, educational, journalistic, publishing, radio, television, Internet and public-affairs contexts.

The allegation that "the Chinese Government has carried out the compulsory transfer of thousands of Uyghurs and other ethnic minorities to work in Xinjiang and the mainland" is completely erroneous. The Chinese Government fully respects the wishes of workers. In China, the decision whether or not to work and what work to engage in is entirely voluntary and self-determined for all workers. Employment is the most effective way to solve the problem of poverty, and the employment of a single person can often lift an entire family out of poverty. Policies favouring local employment, such as implementing "satellite factories" and "poverty alleviation workshops", are aimed at the surplus rural labour force and are designed to attract jobs according to local conditions by supporting rural labour cooperatives to spur employment, promoting enterprise and industrial parks to stabilize it, and developing the tourism industry to promote it. Under local-government assistance, many people living in poverty, have moved from the countryside to the cities, from the fields to the workshops, from being farmers to being industrial workers, not only learning skills but also gaining real income, and their families have been able to shake off poverty and become prosperous because of this. For example, [REDACTED], a poor householder [REDACTED], took the initiative to sign up to work for an enterprise [REDACTED] and has now achieved an annual working income [REDACTED]. [REDACTED] many [REDACTED] have been able to escape poverty. [REDACTED].

The allegation that "more than 80,000 Uyghur and other minority workers were transferred out of Xinjiang between 2017 and 2019 under the 'industrial Xinjiang Aid' policy aimed at finding low-skilled employment opportunities for "re-educated" Uyghurs and other minorities previously interned in centers", is completely erroneous. In actuality, in October 2019, all the trainees who participated in the "three learns

and one deradicalize” programme have completed their training and, with the help of the Government, have mostly achieved stable employment, improved their quality of life and are leading normal lives.

The allegation that the Xinjiang education and training centres “operate in a prison-like or internment manner” is completely false. In actuality, the training centres are schools that help trainees break free from the shackles of extremist ideology and get a grasp on the common national language and script, legal knowledge and employment skills. The provisions of the Constitution and laws guaranteeing the non-infringement of the basic rights of the trainees are strictly applied in the process of carrying out this teaching and training work in Xinjiang. The trainees’ personal freedom is fully guaranteed, and boarding management model is implemented so that trainees can go home or request leave if they need it. The trainees’ rights to use their own languages and scripts are fully guaranteed, and minority languages and scripts are used alongside the common national language and script in all rules and regulations, course schedules and meal menus. The customs and habits of trainees of different ethnicities are fully respected and guaranteed, and a wide range of nutritious halal diets are provided free of charge. The freedom of religious belief of the trainees is fully respected and protected, and they can decide on their own whether or not to participate in lawful religious activities when they return home. Infirmaries have been set up and provide free medical services to trainees 24 hours a day, so that minor illnesses can be treated in the infirmary and serious emergencies can be quickly sent to hospitals. In August 2019, the Information Office of the State Council of the People’s Republic of China released a white paper on vocational skills education and training in Xinjiang, which systematically set out the substantive background, legal basis, education and training content, administrative measures, human rights guarantees and remarkable results of the education and training work carried out in Xinjiang. On 24 August 2020, the international Chinese-language channel of China Central Radio and Television broadcast “*Lies vs. Truth—Record of Education and Training Centers in Xinjiang*”, a television documentary with stories and scenes of real people, vividly depicting the lives of the education and training centres students. At a number of press conferences on Xinjiang-related issues organized by the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region, many students who had completed the training centre programme used their own personal experiences to publicly prove to the media that no human rights violations take place in the Xinjiang education and training centres.

Allegations that ethnic minority workers inside and outside Xinjiang are subjected to “forced labour”, are “victims of exploitative working and substandard living conditions”, are “subjected to surveillance” and so forth, are completely imaginary. There is no such thing as “forced labour” or “surveillance” of ethnic minority workers anywhere in China. Helping people of all ethnic groups to achieve stable employment, and helping people of all ethnic groups to go out voluntarily for work and employment are completely different concepts from “forced labour”. The International Labour Organization Forced Labour Convention, 1930 (No. 29) defines “forced labour” as “all work or service which is exacted from any person under the menace of any penalty and for which the said person has not offered himself voluntarily.” The Constitution of the People’s Republic of China, the Labour Law of the People’s Republic of China, the Labour Contract Law of the People’s Republic of China, the Social Insurance Law of the People’s Republic of China and other laws and regulations are strictly observed in Xinjiang, and measures for the implementation of the regulations on labour security supervision as well as regulations guaranteeing labour rights and interests of employees and collective wage negotiation in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region have been formulated, laying down a solid foundation for the full protection of the basic rights of workers of all ethnic groups under the rule of law. In Xinjiang, workers of all ethnic groups enjoy equal rights to employment, remuneration, rest and leave, occupational safety and freedom of religious belief in accordance with the law, and are not discriminated against on the basis of ethnicity, region, gender or religious belief. Workers of all ethnic groups sign labour contracts with enterprises on an equal and voluntary basis and in accordance with the law, establish labour relations protected by law, enjoy social insurance benefits covering pensions, medical care, unemployment, work injuries and maternity insurance, and receive labour remuneration not lower than the local minimum wage. Their working hours conform to the requirements of national law, they are entitled to national statutory holidays, and enjoy paid annual leave if they have worked continuously for more than one year. If they have labour disputes with enterprises, they can defend their lawful rights and interests in accordance with the law. The Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region Federation of Trade Unions has also set up a volunteer group of lawyers to safeguard the rights and interests of workers, and has established legal-services stations to provide free legal advice and assistance to workers of all ethnic

groups to help them safeguard their lawful rights and interests. The white paper on employment and labour guarantees in Xinjiang issued by the Information Office of the State Council of the People's Republic of China in September 2020, the report of the Xinjiang Development Research Centre on a survey of ethnic-minority labour and employment in Xinjiang, and the report on social responsibility in the Xinjiang cotton textile industry issued by the Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region Textile Industry Association in January 2021 all provide a detailed introduction to the fact that ethnic minority people in Xinjiang are working voluntarily and with dignity. Labour and employment guarantees and their practice in Xinjiang conform to the Chinese Constitution and laws, and are in accord with the strong desire of the people of all ethnic groups in Xinjiang to lead a better life.

The allegation that a number of enterprises, such as AcBel Polytech Co. Ltd, are potentially involved in “the human rights violations detailed [in the letter]” is a fabrication. In actuality, the aforementioned enterprises are all legally registered and operate in accordance with the laws and regulations. They faithfully fulfil their social responsibilities, abide by the code of business conduct and provide good working, living, training and growth environments for the local ethnic minority people. These enterprises guarantee the equal and non-discriminatory employment of ethnic minority employees in accordance with the law, guarantee their rights to labour remuneration, rest and vacation, labour safety and health protections and social insurance benefits, and respect their religious beliefs and cultural customs. The ethnic minority employees working in these enterprises are very satisfied. In the 2019 Social and Labour Convergence Programme (SLCP) audit conducted by international brands in collaboration with international non-governmental organizations, Aksu Huafu Colour Textile Co., received an accuracy assessment index of 96.9 per cent, reflecting that company's high level of compliance with the standards and requirements of downstream supply chain partners in terms of social and labour conditions. Changan Automobile's staff recruitment and employment management are in compliance with Chinese laws and regulations, and there is no “low-skilled, labour-intensive, sub-standard living conditions that may constitute forced labour, arbitrary detention or labour exploitation” or “living in fenced-in factories and subjected to digital surveillance, the government controlling their lives and using intimidation against their families, coercion and restriction of personal freedom”, as stated in the letter. CRRC and its downstream supply chain have always strictly abided by the relevant Chinese laws and regulations, complied with Chinese labour contract law, and have never engaged in illegal employment.

The allegation that Xinjiang “represses and violates the rights of Uyghurs to enjoy and retain their religious, ethnic and linguistic identities” is a complete fabrication. The facts are, first, that the right of all ethnic groups to use and develop their own languages and scripts in Xinjiang is guaranteed in accordance with the law. The languages and scripts of all ethnic minorities are widely used in public educational, judicial, administrative and social affairs. For example, primary and secondary schools offer classes in the Uyghur, Kazakh, Kyrgyz, Mongolian and Sibe languages, fully guaranteeing the right of minority students to learn their own languages and scripts and effectively promoting the transmission and development of minority languages and cultures. For example, multilingual and multiliterate services can be found everywhere in post and telecommunications offices, medical and health care facilities, commercial shops, on traffic signs and other public areas of society. Authorities at all levels can use both the common national language and script and the language and script of the ethnic group exercising regional autonomy in carrying out their official duties. For example, the *Xinjiang Daily* newspaper is available in Chinese, Uyghur, Kazakh and Mongolian; Xinjiang People's Radio has 12 radio programmes in Chinese, Uyghur, Kazakh, Mongolian and Kyrgyz; and Xinjiang Television has 12 television programmes in Chinese, Uyghur, Kazakh and Kyrgyz. All of these provide great convenience for the people of all ethnic groups in their production, work and study. Secondly, the customs and traditions of all ethnic groups are fully respected in Xinjiang. The Constitution of the People's Republic of China and the Law of the People's Republic of China on Regional Ethnic Autonomy stipulate that “All ethnic groups have the freedom to maintain or reform their own customs and traditions.” The provisions of the Constitution and laws in this regard are strictly observed, and the customs and traditions of all ethnic groups in the domains of food, festivals, marriage and funeral rites are fully guaranteed. A series of specific measures have been taken in Xinjiang to ensure the food supply for the special needs of ethnic groups with halal eating habits, especially those of the Islamic faith,. There are halal restaurants on every major thoroughfare in large and medium-sized cities and in small towns with Muslim populations; work units with ethnic minority employees set up halal refectories or halal cooking facilities,

and the meat supplied to the Muslim population is slaughtered, stored and sold in accordance with their customs and practices. The Government has taken specific measures to guarantee the distinctive burial practices of certain ethnic minorities, by allocating special land and establishing special cemeteries for them. There are no restrictions on such ethnic customs as wedding and funeral ceremonies, circumcision rites and the resort to religious scriptures in selecting children's names. Thirdly, great importance is attached in Xinjiang to the protection and development of the outstanding traditional culture of all ethnic groups. Regulations protecting intangible cultural heritage as well as the twelve types of Uyghur Muqam music have been formulated in Xinjiang, and the heritage and development of the cultural and artistic treasures of various ethnic groups are strongly promoted. At present, Uyghur Muqam music and the Kyrgyz Manas epic poem have been inscribed on the UNESCO Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity, while other intangible cultural heritages have been inscribed on 83 national-level lists and 315 regional-level lists. The *Qutadghu Bilik*, which had been on the verge of being lost, has also been translated and published in Xinjiang.; a variety of folk oral literary works, including the Mongolian poem *Epic of Jangar*, have been compiled and published, and three national-level demonstration facilities for the production and preservation of Uyghur musical instruments, carpets and the weaving of Etles silk have been set up.

Respecting the labour rights of citizens, safeguarding the lawful rights and interests of workers and bringing about decent work are concepts and goals which the Chinese Government has always upheld. China is a founding member and permanent member of the International Labour Organization and has ratified 26 international labour conventions, including four of the fundamental conventions, namely the Convention concerning Equal Remuneration for Men and Women Workers for Work of Equal Value, the Convention concerning Minimum Age for Admission to Employment, the Convention concerning the Prohibition and Immediate Action for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour, and the Convention concerning Discrimination in Respect of Employment and Occupation. It is also a signatory of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, and the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime. Through legislation and the formulation and implementation of policies, China effectively guarantees the rights of workers, strictly prohibits the use of child labour, opposes forced labour, opposes discrimination in employment and opposes sexual harassment in the workplace; it carries out intensive special operations to punish and combat illegal employment practices, preventing and punishing illegal and criminal acts in the labour field. China actively responds to the initiatives of the International Labour Organization, conscientiously implementing the China Decent Work Country Programme (2016-2020) and integrating the concept of decent work into national policies and development plans.

With regard to guaranteeing workers' rights and interests and to relief mechanisms, the Chinese Government has comprehensively implemented a labour contract system and clarified the rights and obligations of employers and workers. It has integrated a tripartite mechanism for consultation on labour relations among representatives of the government, trade unions and enterprise organizations, studied and resolved major issues in the area of labour relations, and actively built harmonious labour relations. It emphasizes giving full play to the role of trade unions in guaranteeing the lawful rights and interests of workers, is effectively strengthening labour security supervision and labour dispute mediation and arbitration, and dealing with labour disputes in a timely and appropriate manner. Outstanding issues of violations of labour security laws and regulations are prioritized, and major illegal cases are subject to special scrutiny, so as to effectively guarantee the lawful rights and interests of workers in such areas as employment introductions, labour contracts, working hours, rest and leave, wage payment, social insurance and special labour protection.