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The Permanent Mission of the People's Republic of China to the United Nations Office at Geneva and other International Organizations in Switzerland presents its compliments to the Office of the High Commissioner for Human rights and with reference to the latter's communication [AL CHN 6/2022], has the honour to transmit herewith the reply of the Chinese Government.

The Permanent Mission of the People's Republic of China to the United Nations Office at Geneva and Other International Organizations in Switzerland avails itself of this opportunity to renew to the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights the assurances of its highest consideration.



Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights
GENEVA

[Translated from Chinese]

Receipt is hereby acknowledged of the communication addressed by the United Nations Human Rights Council (ref. AL CHN 6/2022). The Chinese Government wishes to make the following reply:

A. Tibetan-language schools

In accordance with the relevant provisions of the Constitution, the Law on Regional Ethnic Autonomy of the People's Republic of China and other domestic laws and regulations on the protection of the language and cultural rights of ethnic minorities, and guided by the relevant provisions of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the Convention on the Rights of the Child and other related international conventions signed by China concerning the protection of languages and cultures of ethnic minorities, the Chinese Government has always attached great importance to protecting the primacy of the national common spoken and written language and the diversity of the spoken and written languages of minority ethnic groups. For many years, schools of all types and levels in the Tibet Autonomous Region and other prefectures and counties with high numbers of Tibetan inhabitants have offered Tibetan language courses, Tibetan-language curricula are included in examinations, and grades in those classes are included in overall course credits. Nowhere in the content of the 2020 national conference on the written and spoken language were the “forced enrolment of Tibetan children” and “restriction of Tibetan language instruction in monastic institutions” addressed, as alleged in the communication, and these allegations are purely nonsense.

That the Constitution of China clearly stipulates that “all ethnic groups have the freedom to use and develop their own spoken and written languages” while at the same time providing for the popularization of the national common spoken and written language is by no means contradictory. The national common spoken and written language is a symbol of national sovereignty, and learning and using the national common spoken and written language is the right and duty of every citizen. This is true not only for China, but for other countries around the world. Taking related practices of the international community as a point of reference, while using minority languages as the medium of instruction, private or public schools should also provide students with the opportunity to learn the official language. For example, article 14 (3) of the Council of Europe Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities refers to implementing minority language education “without prejudice to the learning of the official language or the teaching in this language.”

In the Tibet Autonomous Region and other prefectures and counties with high numbers of Tibetan inhabitants, the promotion of the use of the national common spoken and written language and the development of bilingual education are conducive to student progress and employment prospects, and to promoting local economic and social development, while at the same time ensuring that the Tibetan language is carried forward and developed. The proposal to implement “bilingual education” is not aimed at a specific ethnic group, nor will it weaken the status of ethnic minority languages, but is conducive to strengthening exchanges among ethnic groups, fosters the development of ethnic minority students, and conforms to national laws and the interests of the general public.

B. Tibetan-language pre-school institutions

The national common spoken and written language is a symbol of a country's national sovereignty, and learning and using the national common spoken and written language is the right and duty of every citizen. Learning and use of national common spoken and written language is particularly important, especially in educational institutions, and this is also a common practice internationally. The popularization of the national common spoken and written language does not affect the use and development of the spoken and written languages of ethnic groups.

C. Closures of Tibetan-language primary schools

School education is an important means and channel for humankind to pass on the achievements of civilization; Governments all over the world attach great importance to the supervision and management of schools. In order to ensure the equal enjoyment by citizens of the right to education, the Chinese Government requires that the education and market-supervision authorities shall be responsible for supervising schools of all levels and types and for administering school enrolment and instruction in accordance with the laws and regulations. All schools, regardless of whether they are public or private,

and regardless of where they are located, are subject to punishment by the relevant authorities in accordance with the law for violating the laws and regulations.

D. Sengdruk Taktse Middle School

In the event of violations of the laws and regulations by social institutions, including schools, the relevant State authorities have the right to impose, in accordance with laws and regulations, such punitive measures as permanent closure and suspension of business for rectification as determined by the specific actions concerned and their effect on society.

E. Compulsory education curriculum in Tibet Autonomous Region

The Chinese Government has always maintained that the right to education is a fundamental human right and should be enjoyed equally by all citizens. The Tibet Autonomous Region has implemented a 15-year programme of free education from kindergarten to upper secondary school. The majority of farmers' and herdsmen's children enjoy the "three guarantees" policy, comprising guaranteed food, housing and tuition; this policy and free education are aimed at reducing the burden on parents of students and ensuring equal access to education for every minor of school age.

F. 'Double Reduction' policy

This reflects the non-discriminatory character of regulatory standards under the "double reduction" education policy in China, which does not vary according to the specific content offered by extracurricular tutoring institutions. The international community recognizes that education is a science with inherent laws and requirements. The essential aim of the "double reduction" policy is the overall reduction of after-school training, which varies widely in quality, allowing the majority of students to return to the schools, the main platform for imparting knowledge and educating people, and receive a practical, standardized and scientifically-designed education.

G. Voluntary initiatives to teach Tibetan language and culture outside the State education system

The Government of China encourages the development of private education and has specifically promulgated the Non-State Education Promotion Law of the People's Republic of China and the Regulations on the Implementation of the Non-State Education Promotion Law for that purpose. At present, there are 186,700 non-State schools in the country, covering all levels and types from pre-school to higher education, from non-degree programmes to academic programmes, and from general to vocational education. While non-State schools can independently determine their own standards and methods for enrolling students, and can admit students at the same time as State schools, opening a non-State school requires an administrative licence, and the size of the school being opened must be approved by the examination and approval authority. The education and market supervision authorities have the right to supervise and administer non-State schools and to punish violations of laws and regulations.

H. Disincentivized Tibetan language learning

The Civil Servant Law of the People's Republic of China stipulates that "when recruiting civil servants in ethnic autonomous areas, appropriate preferential treatment shall be given to applicants of ethnic minorities." The civil service examination is a test and measure of applicants' comprehensive competence of applicants, and there is no need to make provisions regarding the mastery of a given language. The specific employment requirements of the job market are market behaviours, determined by the recruiting entities, and the Government does not intervene. Schools of every level and type in the Tibet Autonomous Region and other prefectures and counties with high numbers of Tibetan inhabitants have enough Tibetan language teachers; Qinghai Normal University and other normal universities, as well as Minzu University, Tibet University and other non-teaching colleges and universities offer Tibetan language majors, and a certain number of Tibetan language graduates join the teaching faculty every year.

Additionally, as early as 1987, the Tibet Autonomous Region promulgated regulations on studying the use and development of the Tibetan language that required cadres throughout the region to continuously undertake Tibetan language learning, effectively improving the level of the Tibetan language and better serving the general public at the grassroots level.

I. Residential schools

The Tibet Autonomous Region, like the rest of the country, has continuously improved and improved the system of basic public services, including childcare and education. At present, a modern education system covering preschool education, basic education, vocational education, higher education, continuing education and special education has been established, with 15 years of publicly funded education and a net primary school enrolment rate of nearly 100%.

Located in the southwestern part of the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau, Tibet covers an area of 1,228,400 square kilometres, accounting for about one-eighth of the total area of China and equivalent to three times that of Japan and five times that of England, with a resident population of 3,648,100 people. The Tibet Autonomous Region takes into account the number and distribution of children of school age, transport conditions and other factors, and implements the principles of relative proximity and exemption from examination at the compulsory education stage.

Owing to the vast area of Tibet and its dispersed population, it is very inconvenient for students to attend school, and the burden of sending children to and picking them up from school is heavy for parents; the willingness of farmers and herdsmen to send their children to residential schools is therefore very strong. In accordance with the wishes of the general public, the Tibet Autonomous Region has implemented a residential system in some schools in agricultural and pastoral districts to better provide safe and convenient conditions for students and meet the needs of parents and students.

Residential schools are built in strict compliance with the relevant construction standards of the State and the Autonomous Region. The schools are fully equipped with all types of facilities and equipment required for learning, with the Government bearing the full cost of education funding. Students in residential schools enjoy the preferential “three guarantees” policy, comprising guaranteed food, housing and tuition; moreover, the schools have never restricted students’ contacts with their parents. Residential students are usually in school from Mondays to Fridays, returning home on weekends as well as being released for holidays and winter and summer vacations, and can also go home on leave at any time if necessary. Students can telephone their parents at any time, and school teachers’ calls to parents are always announced. The three-way communication between students, schools and parents is completely unimpeded.

The choice of whether or not to board is entirely voluntary on the part of the students themselves and their parents, based on the circumstances of the individual family and its educational needs, and there have been absolutely no instances of “threats” or “fines” as alleged. The study life of the residential students, as well as holidays and winter and summer recesses, is fully in line with the reality of the Tibet Autonomous Region.

J. Tibetan Buddhism and Tibetan monastic system

The China Institute for Advanced Tibetan-language Buddhist Studies was initiated and set up by Choekyi Gyaltzen, the Tenth Panchen Erdeni, and there are also Tibetan-language Buddhist-studies institutes and branches located in the Tibet Autonomous Region and the provinces of Sichuan, Qinghai, Gansu and Yunnan. The first dean of the China Institute for Advanced Tibetan-language Buddhist Studies was the Tenth Panchen Erdeni; the current dean is a Jamyang Zhepa (incarnate custodian of the teachings of the Gelug school of Tibetan Buddhism), and all the former deans have been Tibetan Buddhists. The Tibetan-language Buddhist-studies institutes and branches in the Tibet Autonomous Region and the four provinces are also all headed by Tibetan Buddhists and run by the Buddhist associations in those areas.

Like other religions in the world, passing down traditional methods of scriptural study, absorbing the advanced experience of modern teaching, and realizing standardization and modernization are the inherent requirements for Tibetan Buddhism’s own development, and this was also the reason that the Tibetan-language Buddhist-studies institutes were set up. The establishment of the China Institute for Advanced Tibetan-language Buddhist Studies and its associated Tibetan-language institutions in the Tibet Autonomous Region and the provinces concerned has added vitality to the development and transmission of all sects of Tibetan Buddhism, and provided a better channel for Tibetan Buddhist monks and nuns to study scriptures as well as to pursue higher goals. The China Institute for Advanced Tibetan-language Buddhist Studies has trained 273 recipients of the advanced academic rank of “Tuoranba”, the Tibet Buddhist Studies Institute and its ten branches have more than 3,000 Buddhist monks and nuns. Tibetan Buddhist monks and nuns studying at the Tibetan-language Buddhist studies institutes mainly

use the Tibetan language, so the allegation that monks and nuns are required to use *putonghua* is entirely groundless.

School education is an important means and channel for humankind to pass on the achievements of civilization; Governments all over the world attach great importance to the supervision and management of schools. In order to ensure the equal enjoyment by citizens of the right to education, the Chinese Government requires that the education and market-supervision authorities shall be responsible for supervising schools of all levels and types and for administering school enrolment and instruction in accordance with the laws and regulations. All schools, regardless of whether they are public or private, and regardless of where they are located, are subject to punishment by the relevant authorities in accordance with the law for violating the laws and regulations.

K. Protecting the Tibetan language

The Chinese Government attaches great importance to the study, use and development of the Tibetan language and effectively guarantees the freedom of Tibetan compatriots to use and develop their own spoken and written language. The Chinese Constitution clearly stipulates that “all ethnic groups have the freedom to use and develop their own spoken and written languages”, and more detailed and specific provisions have been formulated in this regard in the Law on Regional Ethnic Autonomy and related local regulations.

All the laws, regulations, resolutions and official documents of the Tibet Autonomous Region, as well as newspapers, radio and television, use both the Tibetan and national common spoken and written languages, and Tibetan language courses are offered at all levels and types of schools. The Tibetan language and the national common spoken and written language are commonly used in schools for bilingual teaching, and the Tibetan language is widely used. Moreover, significant progress has been made in standardizing technical terms in information technology and other specialized applications in the Tibetan language, and computer coding for Tibetan has been adopted as a national and international standard, making it the first spoken and written minority language with international standards in China. More than 5 million volumes of Tibetan-language books are printed and distributed in Tibet alone every year.

The Chinese Government has set up specialized agencies like the State Language Commission, which adopt a series of policy measures to scientifically protect the spoken and written languages of all ethnic groups and to promote the development and utilization of spoken and written language resources. These include organizing and implementing a project for protecting Chinese language resources, and initiating an award for “Chinese Language Resources Protection”. The Chinese Language Resources Protection Project, launched in 2015, utilizes modern technical means to carry out, in accordance with uniform working and technical norms, the investigation, preservation, display and development and utilization of minority languages, and has successfully completed the initial five-year construction phase. That survey covered 123 languages and their principal dialects in all provinces, autonomous regions and municipalities, including a total of 410 minority language survey sites. The experience and results have been highly appreciated by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), and the second construction phase was initiated in 2021. In 2018, the Government of China and UNESCO jointly organized the first world conference on the protection of language resources in Changsha, Hunan, and adopted the Yuelu Proclamation on the Protection and Promotion of Linguistic Diversity of the World. The Proclamation is the first UNESCO document of permanent significance on the theme of “protecting linguistic diversity,” and provides the experience, model and route map for the protection of language resources in China. It is a consolidated display of Chinese wisdom, Chinese programmes and Chinese experience in the field of language work.

L. Protecting Tibetan culture

In accordance with the Constitution and laws, the Chinese Government guarantees the cultural rights of all ethnic groups, including Tibetans, and actively takes measures to promote the protection, transmission and innovation of the cultures of ethnic minorities:

1. By enacting laws and regulations. The Chinese Constitution stipulates that “The State shall, in light of the characteristics and needs of all ethnic minorities, assist all ethnic minority areas in accelerating their economic and cultural development. ... All ethnic groups shall have the freedom to use and develop their own spoken and written languages and to preserve or reform their own traditions and

customs.” The Law on Regional Ethnic Autonomy further specifies the protection of the cultural rights of ethnic minorities, as for example in its provisions that “The organs of self-government of national [ethnic] autonomous areas shall independently develop literature, art, the press, publishing, radio broadcasting, the film industry, television and other cultural undertakings in forms and with characteristics unique to the nationalities [ethnic groups] ... [and] shall make arrangements for the units or departments concerned and support them in their efforts to collect, sort out, translate and publish historical and cultural books of minority nationalities [ethnic groups] and protect the scenic spots and historical sites in their areas, their precious cultural relics and their other important historical and cultural legacies, so as to transmit and develop their outstanding traditional culture.” Laws and regulations such as the Intangible Cultural Heritage Law of the People’s Republic of China also provide for supporting the protection and transmission of the cultures of ethnic minorities.

2. By establishing specialized administrative and service entities. The Chinese Government has established a large number of specialized organizations for the protection and transmission of ethnic minority cultures. In particular, a number of ethnic minority cultural heritage protection bodies, such as the China National Ethnic Song and Dance Ensemble, the National Office for the Collation and Study of Ethnic Minority Antiquarian Books, the Chinese Ethnic Languages Translation Bureau, the Chinese National Museum of Ethnology, the Ethnic Publishing House, and the *China Ethnic News* News Agency have been established at the national level across the country. A large number of specialized institutions for the protection of the cultures of ethnic minorities have also been established in various localities.

3. By actively salvaging and protecting the cultural heritage of ethnic minorities. The Chinese Government has invested a great deal of manpower and material resources to strengthen the salvaging and protection of the precious cultural relics, monuments and intangible cultural heritage of all ethnic groups.

Example 1: In 1961 the Chinese Government included the historic Tibetan Potala Palace complex in the first group of key national cultural-relics protection units, and in 1989 and 2002 allocated a large amount of funds and tons of gold and silver to carry out two large-scale restoration projects. By the end of 2018, the digital archiving and protection of more than 40,000 Buddhist images, 26,000 temple relics and 2,000 thangkas had been completed. Beginning 2019, an additional 300 million yuan RMB is being allocated over 10 years for the protection and utilization of tens of thousands of antiquarian books in official collections.

Example 2: More than one third of the 43 Chinese projects included in the UNESCO Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity are related to ethnic minority cultures. Among the national-level intangible cultural heritage protection projects and representative inheritors in China, projects related to ethnic minorities and ethnic minority inheritors such as Tibetan Regong arts (an important art school in Tibetan Buddhism), the Tibetan “Epic of King Gesar”, Tibetan opera, and Tibetan Lum medicinal bathing account for about one third, a much higher proportion than that of the ethnic minority population to the population of China as a whole.

4. By strengthening the construction of public cultural services systems. The Chinese Government has invested significant funding to help ethnic areas improve their public cultural services systems and provide good conditions for the transmission and development of the cultures of ethnic minorities.

Example 3: By 2020, Tibet had set up public cultural services systems at the regional, municipal/prefectural, county/district, township/town and village/residential-committee levels. The libraries, public art centres, museums, integrated cultural activities centres and cultural activities rooms in this five-level system have become important places for the people to engage in spontaneous cultural activities. The construction of public digital culture has achieved remarkable results, digital service capacity has been continuously improved; the provision of excellent cultural products to the countryside under the “Beautiful Tibet, Lovely Hometown” project is being implemented with the digitization of 4,169 hours of ethnic minority language translation resources. The rapid development of radio and television as well as press and publishing enterprises has produced 18,594 hours of translated ethnic minority radio programmes and 6,881 hours of translated ethnic minority television programmes.

5. Promoting innovation and development of ethnic minority cultures. The central Government and local governments at all levels actively support the creation of outstanding cultural works by ethnic minorities, regularly carry out all sorts cultural activities, provide a platform for the

exchange and promotion of outstanding cultural works, and launch a large number of outstanding works reflecting the cultures of minority ethnic groups of all kinds.

Example 4: The State periodically organizes such major national cultural activities as national ethnic minority theatrical festivals, national traditional athletic games of ethnic minorities, and the selection for the “Junma” Literature Award for ethnic minorities. In 2019, more than 7,000 athletes from all minority ethnic groups nationwide participated in the Eleventh National Traditional Athletic Games of Ethnic Minorities, at which more than 200 traditional sports events were on display. At the Sixth National Ethnic Minority Theatrical Festival held in 2021, a total of 42 outstanding ethnic repertory ensembles took part in the performances. Eight among them, the song and dance galas and dramas submitted by Tibet, the song and dance gala “The Clear River Flows East” and the traditional Tibetan opera “Yi Zhuo Ram” submitted by Qinghai, the dance drama “Road of Heaven” and the Pingju opera “Tibetan Rainbow” submitted by Beijing, the opera “The Dust Settles” submitted by Chongqing, and the Amdo Nanmut Tibetan opera “Tang Dong Jiebu” submitted by Gansu, all involved Tibetan language and culture. The Eighth National Ethnic Minority Folk Arts Festival, held in 2022, showcased performances of a number of outstanding works of folk art and music associated with Tibet, including the song “Happiness and Laughter in the Relocated Village” accompanied by the Tibetan *dramyin* lute, and the “New Songs for Herdsmen”, created with the participation of ethnic Tibetans from Qinghai Province.
