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**Promotion and protection of all human rights, civil,
political, economic, social and cultural rights,
including the right to development**

Written statement* submitted by China Society for Human Rights Studies (CSHRS), a non-governmental organization in special consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[29 May 2023]

* Issued as received, in the language of submission only.



The Protection and Modernization of the Spoken and Written Languages of Minority Ethnic Groups in China

Spoken and written languages are the means of social intercourse and vehicles of cultural heritage. China is a country with 56 ethnic groups. The ethnic minorities of China enjoy the freedom to learn and use their own spoken and written languages. China has been proactively protecting linguistics resources of the ethnic minorities.

I. Laws and Regulations on the Protection of Ethnic Minority Languages

China upholds equality among different ethnic groups and protects the freedom of minority ethnic groups to use their own spoken and written languages. Provisions on the protection of ethnic minority languages are stipulated in laws and regulations including the Constitution, the Law on Regional Ethnic Autonomy, the Compulsory Education Law and the Law on the Standard Spoken and Written Chinese Language. The Constitution provides that “all ethnic groups shall have the freedom to use and develop their own spoken and written languages.” The right of each ethnic group to use its own language in daily life, in the workplace, in social interactions or for any other purposes of communication, is respected and protected by laws. According to the Law on the Standard Spoken and Written Chinese Language, while popularizing the standard spoken and written Chinese language, the State shall ensure all the conditions are in place for the learning and use of ethnic minority languages. The protection, use and development of ethnic minority languages is gaining increasing attention across the society. It plays an important role in upholding ethnic unity, social stability and cultural prosperity.

While supporting the teaching of the standard spoken and written Chinese language in ethnic minority areas, the State strives to protect ethnic minority languages, extending full policy support to their use and development. For example, in related regulations, it is provided that the CPC shall facilitate the inheritance, protection, innovation and integration of different ethnic cultures; promote the standard spoken and written Chinese language across the country; and respect and support the learning and use of all ethnic minority languages.

In his speech at the central conference on ethnic affairs, President Xi Jinping called for promoting the use of the standard spoken and written Chinese language, protecting the spoken and written languages of all ethnic groups, and respecting and protecting the learning and use of those of the ethnic minorities.

II. Measures Supporting the Use of Ethnic Minority Languages

Chinese government stressed that efforts shall be made to strengthen the protection, inheritance and innovation of ethnic cultures, and facilitate the coordinated development of cultural programs and cultural industries, hence promoting the prosperity of Chinese culture. Ancient books of minority ethnic groups shall be well protected, rescued, compiled, published, and studied, as part of the efforts to preserve the traditional classics and folklore of the Chinese nation. Measures supporting the use of ethnic minority languages are as follows.

In Teaching and Other Educational Activities:

Many universities and colleges in the Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region (UAR), China offer courses on ethnic minority languages equipped with professional Uyghur language teachers and comprehensive Uyghur language textbooks. Learners and teachers have access to favorable conditions of language education as well as diverse learning activities and cultural activities outside the classroom that spur the protection and development of ethnic minority languages.

All ethnic minorities and language learners have the opportunity to learn and use ethnic minority languages. For example, schools and other educational institutions dominated by ethnic minority students place emphasis on ethnic minority languages in terms of course design and enrollment exams. Most mobile phones available in the Chinese market support speech and handwriting input in Uyghur, Mongolian, Kazak, Tibetan and other ethnic minority languages.

In Daily Life:

All kinds of radio and TV programs in ethnic minority languages including Uyghur language—from news, movies and dramas to performing art programs—are broadcasted to help the ethnic minority communities catch up on the latest laws and regulations, national policies, and topical issues, and satisfy their cultural and intellectual needs. Bilingual and multi-lingual billboards and signboards are found across Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region (UAR), China where standard Chinese characters and ethnic minority languages are displayed side-by-side. Ethnic minority languages are also applied to make infrastructure facilities and services more accessible. For example, all ATMs in Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region (UAR), China offer ethnic-minority-language options to facilitate the performance of transactions, such as funds transfer, withdrawal and depositing. Any difficulties encountered during the transactions outside of the counter's working hours may be resolved via consultation with hotline operators in ethnic minority languages. Meanwhile, ethnic minority people enjoy the freedom to obtain information and communicate in their own language via the internet.

III. Modernization of Ethnic Minority Languages

In order to better use and develop ethnic minority languages, China endeavors to strengthen the digitalization of ethnic linguistic resources by developing relevant machine translation and OCR software, e-books and audio books of ethnic literature and its translation, as well as paperback, electronic and online bilingual dictionaries in ethnic minority languages and standard Chinese. Greater importance is attached to the academic research of ethnic minority languages in terms of regulatory and legal support, application, translation theories, and evolution patterns. Such efforts can help improve resource sharing and make full use of their cultural and economic values, thus accelerating the modernization and digitalization of ethnic minority languages. The aforementioned initiatives to protect, inherit and develop spoken and written languages of minority ethnic groups embody the spirits and values of the Chinese nation. The national policy of respecting and safeguarding the use of ethnic minority languages while popularizing the standard spoken and written Chinese not only fosters empathy and mutual understanding between different ethnic groups, but also benefits ethnic unity and a thriving Chinese society.

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1. The Constitution of the People's Republic of China, December 4, 1982, <http://www.npc.gov.cn/npc/c505/201803/e87e5cd7c1ce46ef866f4ec8e2d709ea.shtml>.
 2. The Law of the People's Republic of China on the Standard Spoken and Written Chinese Language, October 31, 2000, https://gkml.samr.gov.cn/nsjg/bgt/202106/t20210609_330469.html.
 3. Regulations on the United Front Work of the CPC, January 2021, <https://www.chinacourt.org/article/detail/2021/01/id/5705479.shtml>.
 4. "Xi Jinping attends the central conference on ethnic affairs and delivers an important speech", August 28, 2021, http://www.gov.cn/xinwen/2021-08/28/content_5633940.htm.