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THE RIGHT TO DEVELOPMENT

Written statement* submitted by the Transnational Radical Party (TRP), a non-governmental organization in general consultative status

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

[13 February 2006]

* This written statement is issued, unedited, in the language(s) received from the submitting non-governmental organization(s).

The exploitation of mineral resources in the “Tibet Autonomous Region” (TAR) has become an increasingly important aspect of China's Tibet policy since Chinese entrepreneurs first began prospecting in Tibet - in regions that were outside the administrative control of the Tibetan government in Lhasa - during the first part of the 20th century. Today, the Chinese authorities are making unprecedented efforts to open up the Tibetan plateau to large-scale exploitation in order to meet domestic demand for raw materials, and are increasingly seeking foreign investment and international co-operation to facilitate this particular aspect of their economic policy.

PRC's Western Development Programme is now being seen as another threat to both the fragile environment of the Tibetan Plateau and to the very survival of the religious, cultural and national identity of the Tibetans. In the case of Tibet, the situation is even worse. Decades of inequality and discrimination have them with no adequate technical or managerial know-how to manage large-scale development projects. This is the reason why China stresses the need to bring in non-Tibetan skilled human resources to Tibet.

Another key component of the Western Development Programme that has caused concern is the exploitation of Tibet's water resources. China's plan to divert Tibet's waters to north-eastern China will directly threaten the integrity of Asia's river systems and the survival of millions of Asians. In November 2003, reacting to reports of Beijing's plans to divert waters of rivers originating from Tibet, including the Brahmaputra (Tibetan: Tsangpo), the Indian Ministry of Water Resources asked its Foreign Ministry “to seek details” and to ascertain the “factual position”.

In 2003, environmental experts in China said they were pressured into backing plans for a new hydroelectric dam in Tibet that they believe will cause grave harm to the environment, Radio Free Asia (RFA) reported. Chinese officials “scheduled only a one-day meeting for us” on the proposed 2 billion yuan (\$300 million U.S.) hydroelectric dam on Kangding [in Tibetan, Dartsedo] Mugetso Lake in Sichuan Province, according to Tang Xueshan, a professor at China's Forestry University in Beijing and an adviser to the Ministry of Construction's Landscape and Scenery Section.

In a report “China Human Development Report, 1997 and 1999” published by United Nations Development Programme, it states that UNDP has consistently found that the “TAR” and other Tibetan areas are ranked lower than most other areas of China in the Human Development Index, which uses indicators such as education, income and health.” The same organization also reported that “Tibet is the poorest and least developed region of China with a human development index of only 0.39 placing it within the bottom 12 of a list of the world's 49 officially recognized least developed countries, between Rwanda and Maldives.”

In June 2002, a seminar on international cooperation in the “Tibet Autonomous Region” part of Tibet was held in Beijing where it was announced that “TAR” received 90 million US dollars in foreign grants during the past 20 years. However, the UNDP said that region continued to lag behind the other provinces and regions of present-day PRC. Kerstin Leitner (the UNDP representative in China) to the seminar: “A major guarantee for the success of any development process is the active participation and capacity building of the local population... without their active engagement and cooperation, any development programme will not take root in the Tibetan community and thus will only have a very

limited impact.”

In 2003 the Dalai lama stated: “The development projects that the Chinese government has launched in Tibet- purportedly to benefit the Tibetan people – are however, having negative effects on the Tibetan people’s distinct cultural, religious and linguistic identity. More Chinese settlers are coming to Tibet resulting in the economic marginalization of the Tibetan people and the sinicization of their culture. Tibetans need to see an improvement in quality of their life, the restoration of Tibet’s pristine environment and the freedom to decide an appropriate model of development.”

Tibet Information Network based in London said that the most recent official statistics, published by the Chinese authorities in the “Tibet Statistical Yearbook (TSY) of 2004”, revealed dramatic changes in the ethnic structure within the public sector of the TAR. In public statements, the PRC government argue that Tibetans make up the majority of state-sector workers, and even the majority of government cadres, and that expansions in government administration and increased wages contribute to an emerging ‘middle class’ of Tibetans. However, whereas this has generally been true up to the beginning of the Western Development Drive in 2000, there has recently been a rapid reversal of the situation. Since 2000, the numbers of Tibetan state sector employees, (i.e. staff and workers in state-owned units) as well as the share of Tibetans in state sector employment, have been declining sharply. In particular, the share of Tibetans in cadre employment was lower than 50 percent in 2003 (49.7 percent), down from 71.6 percent in 2000. Despite the massive amount of funding from Beijing that has gone into both government administration and construction over these years, current policies effectively discriminate Tibetans from state employment.

In “State Growth and Social Exclusion in Tibet: Challenges of Recent Economic Growth”, Andrew Martin Fischer argues ‘as in the past, military concerns probably guide much of the development policies in the TAR, indirectly soaking up much of the subsidies as well.’ Today a ‘boomerang economy’ is being established in Tibet, where public funding goes to large-scale development projects that are contracted to companies on China’s East Coast, effectively sending money out of Tibet as quick as it arrived. If China’s development policy were to bring about real benefits to the Tibetans, they should be oriented towards human resource development and creation of conditions for Tibetans’ self-reliance. Ecological and demographic conditions in Tibet make small-scale projects far more viable. As well as demanding low investments, small-scale projects will provide livelihood opportunities to a large number of Tibetans, which ultimately will go a long way in empowering the Tibetan people.

On these issues the TRP Recommends to the Members of the Commission to:

- Urge China to engage Tibetan people in all development projects and ensure that their needs are taken into account in the management of natural resources.
- Encourage sustainable small local projects that directly fulfil the basic needs of farmers and nomads in the Western Regions.
- Stop population transfer policy into Tibet under the Western China Development Programme.
- Stop sinicization of the Tibetan people through economic, social and cultural policies.
- Urge to respect the sentiments and values of the Tibetan people while implementing any projects in Tibet.

The TRP wishes to address the right to development of the Iranian province of Khuzestan and would like to bring to the attention of the Members of the Commission a series of declarations issued at the end of his mission to the Islamic Republic of Iran, by the Special Rapporteur on Adequate Housing, Miloon Kothari, of the UN Commission on Human Rights, his words are particularly telling. In fact, speaking to IRIN in Tehran on 9 Aug 2005 about his preliminary findings Mr. Kothari was quoted as saying "when you visit Ahwaz in terms of the very adverse conditions in the neighborhoods, there are thousands of people living with open sewers, no sanitation, no regular access to water, electricity and no gas connections [...] In addition to this there are a couple of other problems that come up. Again in Khuzestan, you notice that we drove outside the city about 20 km and we visited the areas where large development projects are coming up - sugar cane plantations and other projects along the river - and the estimate we received is that between 200,000 - 250,000 Arab people are being displaced from their villages because of these projects. And the question that comes up in my mind is why is it that these projects are placed directly on the lands that have been homes for these people for generations? [...] The third issue in Khuzestan, which is very disturbing, is that there is an attempt being made by the government to build new towns and bring in new people from other provinces. For example, there is the new town of Shirins hah where most of the people being brought into that town are people from Yazd province [in central Iran] therefore non-Arabs. So the question then is that these people who are being brought there, perhaps for work and lots of incentives, why is it that those jobs are not going to the locals? [...] Another point in Khuzestan is that from these deprived neighborhoods you can actually see the towers of the oil refineries and the flares and all of that money, which is a lot, and it is going out of the province [...] In Khuzestan, where large development projects, like petrochemical plants, are being built leading to the displacement of entire villages - with thousands of people not consulted on the projects, informed of the impending displacement, nor offered adequate resettlement and compensation. There is a strange system in the country where if the government wants to confiscate land, you can't challenge it" "We looked in detail in some areas on the issue of compensation and, for example, in Khuzestan the compensation being offered to the Arab villagers who were being displaced is sometimes one fortieth of the market value - and there's nothing they can do about it. It's a fait accompli. That's how it is. And all of these phenomena are continuing. It's something that is happening almost every day."

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