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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.

[23 August 2023]

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



Building an Accessible Environment for All to Enjoy the Fruits of Development

The right to development is a fundamental human right. Yet certain groups, such as persons with disabilities and the elderly, face challenges in achieving development due to specific obstacles. These challenges are directly linked to not considering their unique needs when planning social environment. To help these people integrate in society, it is crucial to create environments that are easy to access. This is essential for them to fully enjoy their right to development and represents important progress for society. The Chinese government has consistently prioritized protecting the rights of persons with disabilities and has taken active steps to ensure their development rights. China has made significant progress in building accessible environments, and provides valuable lessons for other countries and regions.

Improving Legislation for Accessible Environments

In recent years, China has made concerted efforts to develop legislation promoting accessible environments. This movement aims to ensure that all citizens, including persons with disabilities and the elderly, can fully participate in social life by providing them with the legal protections they need. On June 1st, 2012, China enacted the Regulation on the Construction of Barrier-Free Environments, a pioneering legal framework. It laid out the standards and scope for constructing accessible environments, emphasizing the government's leadership role, and outlining the requirements for accessible facilities in public spaces such as urban roads, public transportation, and residential communities. This regulation provided legal assurance for China's initiatives in this area, fostering continuous growth. On June 28th, 2023, the Standing Committee of China's National People's Congress passed the Barrier-free Environment Creation Law of the People's Republic of China. Serving as a specialized legal framework, this law enhances modern efforts to create accessible environments. It ensures that persons with disabilities and the elderly can equally, conveniently, and fully participate and integrate into social life, promotes inclusivity in economic and social development for all members of society, and establishes a solid foundation based on the principles of the rule of law.

Judicial Efforts for Accessible Environments

As a party to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, China has taken on both a commitment within its legal framework to eliminate discrimination against persons with disabilities and a responsibility to create accessible environments, offer convenient facilities, and provide essential public services (including legal assistance and judicial support) for the group. These efforts have significantly contributed to the successful development of accessible environments. Article 41 of the Barrier-free Environment Creation Law of the People's Republic of China states that legal institutions, arbitration bodies, and legal aid organizations are required to offer accessible services in compliance with the law for persons with disabilities and the elderly involved in legal proceedings, arbitration activities, and legal aid. Chinese courts have also taken steps to enhance their own accessibility and procedural convenience, while prosecutorial bodies have actively pursued public interest litigation and administrative bodies overseeing the judiciary have continually improved barrier-free services in legal aid to keep pace with evolving legal standards. Through close collaboration between the China Disabled Persons' Federations (CDPF) and these legal institutions, barrier-free support services are provided throughout the entire judicial process, effectively upholding the rights of persons with disabilities.

Improved Accessible Facilities, Information Exchange and Social Services

Across China, a comprehensive initiative is currently underway to make the environment more accessible and accommodating for both the elderly and persons with disabilities. This includes efforts to equip public spaces, roads, and transportation tools with wheelchair ramps, handrails, and accessible restrooms, etc. Many public areas have added accessible signage and voice prompts, making it easier for persons with disabilities to travel independently. The Chinese government is also stepping in with subsidies and support for families caring for severely disabled members. For a closer look, let's consider Luxi County, where the local disabled persons' federation is systematically working on projects that transform homes into spaces that cater to individual needs. This effort involves building access ramps, creating accessible pathways, and modifying restrooms and bathrooms to be more accessible. They're also installing equipment like toilet seats, shower chairs, and handrails to help persons with disabilities better manage daily tasks.

Many places and institutions are enhancing their accessible services to provide greater convenience and user-friendliness. For instance, public libraries are offering braille books, and cinemas are showing accessible movies. Public spaces and organizations are now offering accessible information technology services, such as voice navigation and visual recognition, to make it simpler for persons with disabilities to access information and move around more conveniently. This push for improved accessibility is evident across various aspects of life. In Shanghai, efforts have been made to adapt medication instructions for the elderly, effectively addressing the challenge posed by small fonts in traditional instructions. School-age children with visual impairments now have access to modified textbooks and auxiliary facilities. The official government service website of Beijing has introduced an "accessibility mode," which incorporates features such as voice reading, adjustable speech speed, and a large font option, to ensure an accessible experience for all special user groups.

China's success in making public spaces accessible to all provides a valuable lesson. The country has established a solid legal framework that ensures policies not only lawful but also effectively implemented and accompanied by legal remedies. Tailored local plans are devised to meet the specific needs of different areas, and innovative solutions are disseminated nationwide. By harmonizing laws, the legal system, policies, and practical actions, China has created an environment that encourages active societal participation by the elderly and persons with disabilities, and help them to self-develop and to achieve their dreams. It has also ensured that those facing mobility challenges can lead dignified lives. This coordinated effort guarantees that the benefits of development are equitably distributed for the elderly and persons with disabilities, thereby fostering greater social engagement.
