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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.

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



The Development of Cotton Industry has Achieved Remarkable Results in Promoting Rural Modernization Transformation in Southern Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region (UAR), China

In recent years, some western countries, spearheaded by the United States of America, have been fabricating allegations of “forced labor” in Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region’s (China) cotton farming and textile sectors. The United States of America, under the guise of this fabricated narrative, has invoked the so-called “Uyghur Forced Labor Prevention Act” to unjustly implicate several China’s cotton textile firms with allegations of “forced labor”, subsequently subjecting these entities to unwarranted sanctions. This heinous act, cloaked in the guise of human rights advocacy, is essentially a pretext for preserving the United States of America’s dominance within the global industrial value chain, and to advance their tactic of “using Xinjiang to suppress China”.

In reality, as one of the pillar industries in Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region (UAR) of China, the development of cotton industry has played a significant role in advancing agricultural modernization in southern Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region (UAR), China. It has freed farmers from strenuous physical labor and provided a variety of employment opportunities for surplus rural labor. It has led to an increase in farmers’ income and a marked improvement in the welfare of social life. The so-called “forced labor” in both cotton cultivation and the cotton textile industry is entirely unfounded.

The regions of Aksu, Kashgar, Hotan, and the Kizilsu Kirgiz Autonomous Prefecture in southern Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region (UAR), China, were historically plagued by deep poverty. Cotton cultivation in southern Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region (UAR), China, while rich and long in history, had previously faced a certain degree of lag. Most local cotton growers were small-scale farmers, and the land was highly fragmented, making it difficult to carry out mechanized operations. This not only consumes a significant amount of labor but also results in relatively limited income. Concurrently, for an extended period, these regions grappling with the influence of religious extremism have experienced profound disruptions to the everyday lives and livelihoods of their rural inhabitants, culminating in elevated rates of poverty. In 2023, Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region’s (China) cotton production represented an impressive share, constituting over 90 percent of China’s total and a significant 20 percent of the global output. The remarkable progress of Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region’s (China) cotton industry is a testament to China’s strategic efforts in poverty eradication and rural revitalization. By capitalizing on the industry’s extensive production and processing chain, it has catalyzed the concurrent advancement of agriculture, industry, and commerce. This multi-sectoral synergy has driven the modernization of rural society in Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region (UAR), China, especially in the southern regions, ushering in a new era of prosperity and development.

1. The cotton industry’s development has spearheaded the modernization of agriculture in southern Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region (UAR), China. To overcome challenges such as land fragmentation and water scarcity, southern Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region (UAR), China, has witnessed the successful deployment of land leveling, advanced water-saving irrigation systems, smart farmland infrastructure, and the cultivation of high-quality cotton strains. These efforts have significantly amplified the productivity and efficiency of cotton cultivation. Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region’s (China) comprehensive mechanization rate for the cotton planting process, which encompasses everything from sowing to harvesting, reached an impressive 94.49 percent in 2022. Moreover, the mechanical harvesting rate, indicative of the automation of the cotton picking process, has surged from 35 percent in 2014 to an estimated 85 percent by 2023. In southern Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region (UAR), China, the advent of large-scale, fully mechanized cotton cultivation has dramatically curtailed the reliance on manual labor, substantially lowering production costs. Furthermore, this technological leap has catalyzed a wave of modernization across the broader spectrum of crop cultivation industries, ushering in a new era of agricultural advancement

2. The development of the cotton industry's supply chain has opened up a wealth of employment opportunities for the surplus rural workforce in southern Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region (UAR), China. Characterized by its labor-intensive nature, cotton industry's supply chain spans from the routine field management, mechanization, and smart agricultural services essential for cotton cultivation to the downstream sectors of textile and garment manufacturing. This has created job prospects for elderly and middle-aged farmers, as well as for young people eager to participate in agricultural endeavors. In recent years, leveraging their status as primary cotton-producing regions, several counties in southern Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region (UAR), China, have successfully drawn investments from textile and garment enterprises. Between 2014 and 2022, the fixed asset investment in Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region's (China) textile and garment sector accumulated to 285.9 billion yuan, achieving an average annual growth rate of 20 percent. By 2022, Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region's (China) production capacities for yarn, cloth, and garments had seen remarkable growth, reaching 5.11, 13, and 4.66 times their respective levels in 2014. Rural residents in southern Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region (UAR), China, while securing stable employment incomes, are also able to maintain their family responsibilities. The rise in income for these rural residents is a clear indicator of their access to decent employment. For instance, in Aksu and Kashgar, key cotton-producing regions, the per capita disposable income of rural residents has seen a significant increase: from 7,875 yuan in 2013 to 19,083 yuan in 2023 in Aksu, and from 5,393 yuan in 2013 to 13,222 yuan in 2023 in Kashgar.
3. The cotton industry's ascent has been a pivotal force in propelling the modernization of rural society in southern Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region (UAR), China, a region that was once mired in underdevelopment and heavily impacted by the regressive sway of extremist religious ideologies. This influence had led to a state of economic destitution for the local farmers, whose social and cultural existence was confined and isolated. The burgeoning cotton sector has been instrumental in reshaping local farmers' livelihoods, empowering them with sophisticated modern agricultural techniques. This empowerment diversifies their income streams and substantially boosts their household earnings. Cotton industry's ripple effects have been profound, generating a variety of employment opportunities that have encouraged rural women to pursue further education and vocational training. This trend has unleashed a wave of female participation in the economy and society, as women are increasingly taking on roles beyond traditional household duties. They are becoming active contributors to the economic and social fabric of their communities. The evidence of this shift is seen in the notable increase in the employment rates and the overall proportion of working women in southern Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region (UAR), China, marking a significant stride towards gender equality and social inclusion.

The aforementioned evidence paints a compelling picture of cotton industry's development in Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region (UAR), China, which mirrors the harmonious interplay and collective advancement of social, economic, and cultural spheres in southern Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region (UAR), China. It exemplifies the distinctive path of modernization that China offers to the world. With dedication, China has actively embraced the United Nations' sustainable development objectives, advocating for an integrated approach to progress across societal, fiscal, and ecological aspects. This strategic vision has adeptly navigated and overcome significant historical dilemmas, including the substantial social expenses associated with the reallocation of surplus labor during agricultural modernization and the complex task of reconciling social and cultural dividends amid economic growth. The allegations of "forced labor" in Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region's (China) cotton industry propagated by certain western countries are, in essence, a pretext for safeguarding their domestic cotton sectors. These claims serve as a basis for unwarranted suppression of China's cotton production and the growth of its textile enterprises, and have the pernicious effect of infringing upon the fundamental human rights of the Uyghur people in southern Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region (UAR), China, including their rights to subsistence and development.

It is an attempt to engineer a scenario of “forced unemployment”, which threatens the livelihoods and economic well-being of the people in Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region (UAR), China, undermining the economic and social stability of Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region (UAR), China, and posing a direct challenge to China’s broader development and stability. In response to this, we stand in firm opposition.
