



**Convention on the Elimination
of All Forms of Discrimination
against Women**

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Addendum

CHINA

INTRODUCTION

China's economic structural reform which began ten years ago has finally ended years of economic retardation behind closed doors, and ushered in a new historic period of development. Over the last ten years, the average annual growth rate of GNP was 11 per cent; that of labour productivity, 6.5 per cent; and that of per capita income of peasants and urban residents, 8.6 per cent and 6.3 per cent respectively. The spectacular growth would not have been possible without the dedication and wisdom of the women of China. They have overcome various constraints from the family, society and tradition to participate in the reform and the augmentation of national income and in so doing, they have fully proved their competence and potential, thereby winning the rights and status that they rightly deserve.

The new challenge facing Chinese women have also opened up more opportunities for them to push forward their long-term struggle against the old tradition of the superiority of the male over the female and for de facto equality of the sexes. In this sense, the ongoing reform has given a fresh impetus to the women's movement in China.

In the last five years under review, the Chinese Government has consistently adhered to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and has taken many corroborative measures to that end. A summary of these measures and the current situation of Chinese women is presented here within the framework of the Convention with specific references to the pertinent articles.

PART I

Article 2. (b) "... To adopt appropriate legislative and other measures ... prohibiting all discrimination against women"

Since 1985, The Standing Committee of the National People's Congress (NPC) has promulgated a series of laws aimed at strengthening socialist democracy and improving the socialist legal system. Governments at lower levels have passed parallel local laws and regulations. These laws and regulations guarantee citizens the right of equal participation in social development and reform and ensure women their equal rights with men without obstruction from social or traditional prejudices.

1. Excerpts from pertinent sections of new laws adopted since 1985:

Law of Succession of the People's Republic of China (adopted on 10 April 1985)

Article 9. Males and females are equal in their right to inheritance.

Article 10. The estate of the decedent shall be inherited in the following order:

First in order: spouse, children, parents.

Second in order: brothers and sisters, paternal grandparents, maternal grandparents ...

Article 12. Widowed daughters-in-law or sons-in-law who have made the predominant contributions in maintaining their parents-in-law shall, in relationship to their parents-in-law, be regarded as successors first in order.

Article 30. A surviving spouse who remarries is entitled to dispose of the property he or she has inherited, subject to no interference by any other person.

General Principles of the Civil Law of the People's Republic of China (adopted on 12 April 1986)

Article 103. Citizens shall enjoy the right of marriage by choice. Mercenary marriages, marriages upon arbitrary decision by any third party and any other acts of interference in the freedom of marriage shall be prohibited.

Article 104. Marriage, the family, old people, mothers and children are protected by law.

Article 105. Women shall enjoy equal civil rights with men.

Compulsory Education Law of the People's Republic of China (adopted on 12 April 1986)

Article 4. The State, the community, schools and families shall, in accordance with the law, safeguard the right to compulsory education of school-age children and adolescents.

Article 5. All children who have reached the age of six shall enrol in school and receive compulsory education for the prescribed number of years, regardless of sex, nationality or race ...

Article 9. Local people's governments at various levels shall establish primary schools and junior middle schools at such locations so that children and adolescents can attend schools near their homes.

Local people's governments shall establish special schools (or classes) for children and adolescents who are blind, deaf-mute or retarded ...

Article 10. The State shall not charge tuition for students receiving compulsory education.

The State shall establish a system of grants-in-aid to support the school attendance of poor students.

Article 11. When children have reached school age, their parents or guardians shall send them to school to receive compulsory education for the prescribed number of years ...

No organization or individual shall employ school-age children or adolescents who should receive compulsory education.

Tentative Regulation regarding Implementation of the Contract Labour System in State-run Enterprises (adopted in 1987)

Article 20. Workers in the contract system, when affected by an occupational disease or injury during work, and women during periods of pregnancy, maternal leave and breast-feeding, shall enjoy the same treatment as permanent workers engaged in the same type of work in the enterprise.

Law regarding State-run Enterprises (adopted in 1988)

Article 49. Workers enjoy the rights of participating in the democratic management of the enterprise, putting forward proposals and suggestions about production and work in the enterprise ...

Women workers enjoy special labour protection and insurance according to State regulations.

Article 11. Enterprises shall fully tap the potential of young workers, women workers and technical personnel.

2. Local laws and regulations:

Local laws and regulations regarding protection of the rights of women and children have been promulgated in 26 provinces, autonomous regions and municipalities directly under the Central Government. The following are their major common features:

(a) Upholding and implementing the principle of equality between women and men in school enrolment, labour recruitment, promotion, professional appraisal, remuneration, housing allocation, distribution of land under the household responsibility system and allocation of plots for growing private crops or building homes in the rural areas.

(b) Implementing State regulations on labour protection for women workers and the welfare of women and children.

(c) Protecting women's freedom of marriage and opposing all forms of marriage contracted against the will of the woman.

(d) Protecting mothers giving birth to girls; women enjoy legal rights of inheritance.

(e) Supporting the remarriage of widows.

(f) Encouraging the husband to settle in his wife's home if necessary; the husband is to be accepted as one of the local residents in the locality of his wife's home.

3. Sanctions against violation of the law by individuals, organizations and enterprises:

Compulsory Education Law of the People's Republic of China

Article 15. ... In cases where school-age children or adolescents do not enrol in school to receive compulsory education ... the local people's governments shall admonish and criticize the parents or guardians of those children or adolescents, and adopt effective measures to order them to send the children or wards to school.

In cases where organizations or individuals employ school-age children or adolescents for work, the local people's governments shall admonish and criticize them and shall order them to stop such employment. In serious cases, the offenders may be fined, their business operations suspended or their business licences revoked.

4. Civil courts are established from the central down to local levels to handle civil disputes. Cases of discrimination against women by any individual, organization or enterprise will be dealt with by the court according to law upon receipt of a written complaint from the victim.

Article 5. (a) "To modify the social and cultural patterns of conduct of men and women, with a view to achieving the elimination of prejudices and customary and all other practices which are based on the idea of the inferiority or the superiority of either of the sexes or on stereotyped roles for men and women"

(b) "To ensure that family education includes a proper understanding of maternity as a social function and the recognition of the common responsibility of men and women in the upbringing and development of their children ..."

1. Since the implementation of the policies of opening to the outside world and instituting reform, the nation's productivity has waxed as never before, resulting in more opportunities for employment. As an important part of the work force, women are playing a vital role in all fields. However, due to imperfections in the labour and personnel systems which are also undergoing reform, plus the fact that some of the practical problems of women are not being fully understood and resolved, discrimination against women remains in evidence in matters of employment and promotion in factories and institutions.

The reasons for these phenomena are many, but traditional biases against women constitute the main obstacle to women's full participation in development.

The Chinese Government is taking measures to solve these problems, such as making new laws and local regulations and perfecting existing ones by adding specific provisions concerning protection of women's independent identity, popularizing knowledge of law throughout the country and creating conditions for more women to take part in vocational training and higher education.

In 1988, the NPC Committee on Internal and Judicial Affairs and the Ministry of Civil Affairs jointly set up a special working group to examine and formulate laws safeguarding the rights and interests of women and children, carry out investigations of related problems and deliberate on related draft proposals presented to the NPC.

In the Ministry of Civil Administration, a new marriage affairs department has been set up to find more effective ways of solving women's problems relating to marriage and safeguard their interests.

The All-China Women's Federation (ACWF) is the biggest national women's organization. It calls on women to conduct themselves in the spirit of self-respect, self-confidence, self-reliance and self-improvement, actively participate in social reforms and contribute still more to the nation's development. ACWF investigates and researches women's new problems in matters of work, political participation, education and welfare, and makes suggestions to related departments to facilitate the solution of these problems.

2. Since early 1980, ACWF has sponsored a nationwide effort to develop family education with the collaboration of all sectors of the society. Up to now, around 6,000 family education committees or counselling services and 130,000 schools for parents have been set up in all the 30 provinces, autonomous regions and municipalities directly under the Central Government. They are staffed by family-education professionals trained by ACWF.

The subjects taught in parents' schools include, in particular, knowledge about eugenics, child health and education, maternity health, child and juvenile psychology and physiology, baby feeding and the roles of the father and mother in bringing up a child.

Enrolment in parents' schools is voluntary. Those attending include newly-married couples, expectant mothers, parents of schoolchildren as well as grandparents and domestic helpers. These schools are mostly sponsored by factories, institutions, schools and neighbourhood communities in cities and by production brigades in rural areas. The teachers include experts, professors, and professionals in child psychology and physiology, child health care, nutrition and education.

Article 6. "... to suppress all forms of traffic in women and exploitation of prostitution of women"

Prostitution has been banned in China ever since the founding of the People's Republic in 1949.

Article 169 of China's Criminal Law stipulates: "Whoever, for the purpose of profit, lures women into prostitution or shelters them in prostitution shall be sentenced to fixed-term imprisonment of not more than five years, criminal detention or public surveillance; if the circumstances are serious, the offender shall be sentenced to fixed-term imprisonment of not less than five years and may concurrently be sentenced to a fine or confiscation of property."

Although prostitution and the patronizing of brothels are prohibited, they have occurred in recent years in some areas. The Government and the competent departments and non-governmental organizations are closely following these incidents and taking comprehensive measures to hold them in check by both legal and educational means.

PART II

Article 7. "... to eliminate discrimination against women in the political and public life of the country .."

Since the economic and political structural reforms have provided countless opportunities for women to participate in politics, their political enthusiasm and awareness with respect to good citizenship and democracy have made them more concerned than ever about major events and social changes. They are eager to participate in public administration and supervision through various channels.

In 1987, women who participated in elections at various levels accounted for 90 per cent of the total female population eligible to vote. There were altogether more than 4,000 female deputies elected to the National People's Congress and provincial people's congresses. In China, there are eight million women cadres, taking up 28.8 per cent of the total. Quite a few outstanding women hold important positions in the NPC, the CPC and the Government. In the current Seventh National People's Congress, there are two Vice-Chairwomen of the NPC Standing Committee; and two Ministers and 12 Vice-Ministers in the State Council are women. Among the provincial governors and deputy governors, 13 are women. In the National Scientists' Association, the National Journalists' Association, the All-China Federation of Youth, the All-China Federation of Trade Unions as well as in other non-governmental organizations, there are many female leaders presiding or holding important offices.

ACWF, as a representative body of women from different walks of life and various ethnic groups, plays a significant role in politics. Women members respectively account for 10 per cent, 14 per cent, 7.1 per cent, 6.7 per cent, 11 per cent and 23.5 per cent of the total membership in the NPC Committees on the

Law; Civil and Judicial Affairs; Finance and Economics; Education, Science, Culture and Public Health; Foreign Affairs; and Overseas Chinese Affairs. All of them are either current or former ACWF leaders. ACWF always takes an active part in the formulation of laws pertinent to women and children, keeps government departments posted on women's immediate conditions and problems and makes useful suggestions in an effort to enhance the status of women in the long term.

Article 8. "... to ensure to women ... the opportunity to represent their Governments at the international level and to participate in the work of international organizations"

For historical, social and cultural reasons, China has never sent her nationals to work in international bodies in any significant numbers, especially as regards sending female representatives. The Government is taking measures to improve the situation. The following are some of China's women representatives in international agencies:

Huang Ganying, former ACWF Vice-President, was twice elected a member of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women.

In 1988, Wang Shuxian, member of the Secretariat of ACWF, was elected to succeed Huang Ganying.

Former Director of the ACWF International Liaison Department Guan Minqian has been a member of the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women since 1982.

Lin Shangzhen, Director of the ACWF International Liaison Department, was elected to the Board of the United Nations International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women.

Article 10. Ensuring to women equal rights with men in the field of education

Re (a), the reform and the open-door policy have brought about notable changes in women's outlook and attitude. More and more women have begun to discard inferiority complexes and the sense of dependency on men, and join courses for training in technical or managerial skills. According to 1987 statistics, out of the 100 million strong female work force in the countryside, 95 million have learned some kind of practical skill: among them, 60 per cent have learned more than one skill. In adult education, 410,000 urban and rural women have taken up various courses in TV colleges, correspondence colleges, extension schools or vocational schools. They constitute 32.9 per cent of the total enrolment. Female enrolment accounted for 46.8 per cent in kindergartens, 45.4 per cent in elementary schools, 40.8 per cent in regular secondary schools, 42.7 per cent in secondary vocational schools, 50.3 per cent in secondary teachers' schools, 43.5 per cent in secondary agricultural-vocational schools and 33 per cent in colleges and universities. Since the introduction of academic degrees in 1982, for the first time in China, there have been 70,000 female college graduates studying for the master's degree, and 789 female postgraduates studying for the doctorate degree.

Re (b), (c) and (d), there is no sex-based discrimination among students.

Re (e), at the inception of the People's Republic, 80 per cent of the Chinese population were illiterate, with women constituting the majority. In the thirty years that followed, the Government made continuous efforts to eliminate illiteracy. By 1978, more than 30 million Chinese had become literate; of these,

about two-thirds were women. At present, there are still 220 million illiterates in China, with women accounting for 70 per cent or so. They are mainly found in mountainous areas, regions inhabited by minority ethnic groups and other underdeveloped areas.

In August 1988, the Government called a national conference on the problem of illiteracy. The conference decided on a number of measures to further combat illiteracy, especially among women.

Re (f), since the promulgation of the Compulsory Education Law in 1985, universal primary education has made certain progress. Today, 97.1 per cent of school-age children are in school, and 1,240 counties, i.e., 60 per cent of the total, have achieved universal primary education. But there are drop-outs and most of them are girls. The main reasons for dropping-out are as follows:

1. The feudal concept that women are inferior to men still lingers in some rural areas, which seriously interferes with girls' access to education. Some of the parents are not willing to send their daughters to school because they feel that, after all, girls will be married off to other families.

2. In underdeveloped areas, family members, including children, are expected to help earn income for the family in one way or another.

Remedial measures:

1. Intensifying publicity for the Compulsory Education Law through mass media aided by films, slide shows, wall newspapers, special columns in magazines and public forums animated by stage performances.

2. Adopting flexible school systems. In addition to regular primary schools, other types of schools such as boarding schools, semi-boarding schools, mobile schools and half-day schools are set up to suit the local conditions in mountainous, agricultural and pastoral areas or in areas inhabited by minority peoples such as the Inner Mongolian Autonomous Region, the Xinjiang Ughur Autonomous Region, the Tibet Autonomous Region and Qinghai Province. Small classes or individual coaching are organized in areas where homes are scattered and schoolchildren have to travel long distances. To ensure the enrolment of girl students, some areas make it a rule that they may come to school late or leave early and take along their young siblings. The school looks after their charges during class hours.

Re (g), in China, women and men have the same opportunities to actively participate in sports and physical education. Of the Chinese athletes who have won world titles, 60 per cent are women.

Re (h), radio and TV stations and mass organizations such as trade unions and women's federations often sponsor women-related talks or consultations. Family planning, child education, marriage and the family are among the popular topics.

Article 11. "... to eliminate discrimination against women in the field of employment ..."

Re (a) and (b), with the intensification of economic reform providing women with more job opportunities, China had, by 1987, 62 million women within the age bracket of 16 to 54 and 51 million of them, i.e. 82 per cent of the total, were in employment.

The number of self-employed women has increased rapidly. Among the 21 million self-employed persons, 24 per cent are women, who are mainly engaged in commerce, arts and crafts, and catering, tailoring or hairdressing services.

Apart from working on the farm, rural women are extensively engaged in industrial and sideline production. Since the rural economic reform, nearly one-third of the specialized households are headed by women, and 42 per cent of the 85 million rural labour force in township enterprises are women.

The economic reform brings more job opportunities to women and poses challenges at the same time. In the face of increasing competition in market-oriented economic activities, those women who are physiologically weak and professionally inadequate to fully participate in the reform and who have duties at home soon find themselves at a disadvantage. They face the danger of redeployment or even dismissal when new business deals, such as contracting and leasing and new employment policies are introduced.

To ensure to women equal opportunities in employment and the choice of occupation, the Government and the mass organizations concerned have taken the following measures:

1. Upgrading women's technical and professional expertise to increase their competitiveness. To this end, factories and other enterprises either train the workers on the job or organize training courses which they can attend by turns. Various types of adult education programmes are equally available to women.

2. Restructuring industry to expand light industries, commercial undertakings and tertiary industry such as catering and service trades to create more job opportunities for women.

3. Reforming the employment system to give job seekers greater freedom in the choice of occupations and equal opportunities in competition. These measures provide an institutionalized guarantee against discrimination against women.

4. Introducing varied modes of employment. Besides the regular 8-hour workday, new working systems such as reckoning work by the piece or making working hours flexible are being widely tried out; some have been put into practice in certain parts of the country.

Re (c), (d), (e) and (f):

1. Women enjoy equal rights and opportunities with men in attending training courses.

(a) Pre-employment training

The government policy is to set up professional schools such as secondary technical schools and vocational schools, which mainly train junior technical personnel and skilled workers for factories, enterprises and institutions.

(b) In-house training

Such training is an important part of China's adult education. Women employees in factories and enterprises have equal chances with men to receive such training, which is intended to improve their educational level, technical ability and working efficiency.

(c) Launching all forms of higher adult educational programmes

After graduation they will be assigned to work and treated like graduates.

In China, women enjoy equal treatment with men in matters of social welfare, social insurance and working conditions.

Equal pay for equal work: Women and men receive the same wages for work of equal value.

Social welfare: Workers enjoy free medical treatment, and a retiree receives a lifelong monthly pension ranging from 75 to 100 per cent of his or her wages, depending on the length of service.

Working conditions: Protective equipment is issued free to workers to ensure safety during work.

Social insurance: Workers who are injured on the job and elderly people who have lost their ability to take care of themselves and who have nobody to look after them are cared for by their organizations. Workers laid off by bankrupt enterprises are put on relief for a fixed period of time.

2. The Women Workers' and Employees' Labour Protection Regulations adopted on 28 June 1988 include:

Article 4. Working women shall receive their regular salary and their contract shall not be terminated during pregnancy, childbirth, and the nursing period.

Article 6. During menstruation, working women are protected from working high above the ground, in low temperatures or in cold water and from doing work that the Government has stipulated as of third-degree intensity.

Article 7. ... Working women in an after the seventh month of pregnancy shall normally not be assigned to the night shift and shall be allowed longer break time during working hours ...

Article 8. Working women are allowed 90 days' leave during and after childbirth, including 15 days before giving birth. Those who have difficult labour or multiple births can have more days of maternity leave.

Article 11. A unit with many women staff and workers should set up a clinic for women, a lounge for expectant mothers, a special room for breast-feeding, a nursery and a kindergarten ...

The Regulation is being put into practice in all factories and enterprises throughout the country.

Article 12. "... to eliminate discrimination against women in the field of health care ..."

Since health work for women has been described in some detail in the preceding report, this one will concentrate on the progress of family planning in China during recent years.

It is a basic government policy to carry out family planning, control the size of the population and improve their quality. Since 1979, the policy has been highly successful, with the population growth rate kept at 11-16 per thousand.

Beginning from 1980, the one-child family was advocated, and as a result women's average fertility rate on the mainland declined from 5.82 per person in 1970 to 2.30 as of now. The number of single children has been constantly on the rise, and women's concept of family size has changed considerably.

During recent years, in implementing family planning programmes, much attention has been paid to setting up and perfecting a working system, training professional programme officers, and linking family planning to women and children's health care. A working system has taken shape on a national scale to ensure a good pregnancy outcome and the healthy growth of children. The measures include pre-marriage check-ups, health care during pregnancy, genetic counselling, pre-natal diagnosis, monitoring of the growth of infants and young children, guidance on nutrition, disease prevention and planned immunization. Counselling centres have been set up in many parts of the country to provide guidance in genetics, perinatal care, the monitoring of congenital defects, and contraception. According to 1987 statistics, there were across the country 3,000 maternity and child care stations, 290 maternity and child health hospitals and maternity hospitals, 29 children's hospitals, 40 family planning counselling and research institutes. About 80,000 gynaecologists, obstetricians and paediatricians and 130,000 technical personnel specializing in maternal and child health care and family planning received their training in these units.

Family planning as a special discipline has developed fairly rapidly in recent years. Since 1984, three colleges for training family planning administrative personnel and two specialized colleges on family planning have been established. Special classes teaching the subject have been set up in 21 universities and colleges and 10 secondary vocational schools. Some universities and colleges and the China Academy of Social Sciences have set up over 30 research institutes on demography in all parts of the country; there are about 1,000 people who are researchers in demography or teachers of future researchers in this subject.

Article 13. "... to eliminate discrimination against women in other areas of economic and social life ..."

1. In China female employees in financial difficulties may apply for subsidies from the units that employ them. Housewives having financial difficulties may apply for subsidies from the units that employ their children or their husbands. Jobless single women who have lost their ability to work may petition for relief from government departments in charge of civil affairs.
2. The Agricultural Bank of China and its branches have loan departments, and set up credit co-operatives in rural areas to extend loans to women who need funds to run their businesses. There is no discrimination against women in the arrangement of loans.
3. Women have complete freedom to take part in various sports and other recreational or cultural activities. At the national sports meeting of rural athletes held not long ago, many sportswomen took part in track and field events, swimming, ball games and shooting and chalked up some impressive records.

Article 14. "... to eliminate discrimination against women in rural areas"

2 (a) "To participate in the elaboration and implementation of development planning at all levels"

China's rural population is 370 million, half of them being women. Before 1979, rural women mainly worked in the fields. Since the household-contract responsibility system and the structural reform of the rural economy were

introduced in 1979, they began to take up occupations other than farming. Besides growing cash crops on small plots of land, keeping fowls or breeding fish or domestic animals, they have gone into processing industries, textile and electronic industries, service trades, traditional crafts and commerce. Thus, rural women are playing an increasingly important role in diversifying the rural economy and developing township enterprises, some of which are export-oriented. In rural areas, about one-third of the households specialized in non-agricultural undertakings of one kind or another are headed by women. Eighty to ninety per cent of the work involved in raising pigs and fowls and collecting eggs is done by women. Of the 85 million employees in township enterprises, 42 per cent are women, and of the 13 million self-employed businesspersons, women make up one-third. They have created wealth for the nation and earned handsome incomes for themselves. The per capita income of the rural population in China had increased from 355.3 yuan in 1984 to 463 yuan in 1987. In some relatively well-developed areas, the average earnings of women constitute 65 per cent of their families' total income.

2 (b) "To have access to adequate health care facilities ..."

A three-tier maternity and child health protection network from county and township down to village levels set up by public health departments provide medical care and family planning guidance for women.

2 (c) "To benefit directly from social security programmes"

Women in rural areas are protected by the following social security measures:

1. Female employees in township enterprises are covered by the Women Workers' and Employees' Labour Protection Regulations mentioned earlier under article 11.
2. In better-developed rural areas, retired women are entitled to a certain amount of pension, the amount of which varies with the developmental level of the area they live in.
3. The production commune provides for aged widows and widowers who cannot work any more and who have no kith and kin to take care of them, and sees to it that they spend their old age in happiness.
4. Farmers can buy social insurance from insurance companies. Social insurance is just beginning in China, particularly in the countryside. The protection offered by insurance is not yet accessible to the farmers in underdeveloped areas. The Government is steadily developing social insurance to cover more people.

2 (d) "To obtain all types of training and education ..."

For women's education in general, please refer to the section under article 10. Here the focus will be on the more recent developments of the ACWF-sponsored practical-skill training programme for rural women.

This programme has been in place for many years. In response to the growing demand for science and technology in rural production in recent years, this programme has widened its scope.

The provincial women's federations have organized female graduates from secondary schools to enrol in agricultural correspondence colleges and agricultural radio schools to learn practical skills in forestry, animal husbandry, freshwater fishery, agronomy, accounting and economic management of agriculture. The curriculum is carefully graded and includes both traditional skills and new technologies.

For less-educated women, the curriculum includes extended courses on general education. Other educational measures include scientific and technological lectures and counselling services, supply of printed materials and the organization of short-term training courses. About one-third of the rural women population have benefited from these training programmes.

The availability of visual aids has made the training programmes more attractive and diversified. Working in co-ordination with other departments, provincial women's federations have had educational films, video-tapes and slides made for the training classes. The federations also organize exhibitions of practical science or quiz programmes on scientific knowledge. Sometimes they set up an information desk in villages or on market days to answer queries.

The women's federations arrange teaching missions for women professionals in the more-developed coastal regions to go to underdeveloped areas and use their expertise to help promote the local economy through various means, such as developing tertiary industries, service trades, processing industries, transportation, handicrafts and so on. This is a good way to train local technical personnel with the help of experts from other regions.

Currently, the women's cadre schools' activity centres, training centres and evening schools sponsored by women's federations at all levels have a total enrolment of 4.43 million.

2 (e) "To organize self-help groups and co-operatives in order to obtain equal access to economic opportunities ..."

The contract responsibility system which started with an individual, a household or a small group of people as contractors ten years ago is taking on new dimensions in the reform process. As the rural economy becomes more diversified and complex, such as in the areas of commerce, handicrafts and the planting of grain and cotton, in which many women are involved, the contractors are no longer individual households but units composed of several scores or even a hundred or more people. The growing scale of production, which yields more profit and which makes scientific management a necessity, has become an irreversible trend in China's rural development.

2 (f) "To participate in all community activities"

Women's right to participate in public activities is guaranteed by law in China.

2 (g) "To have access to ... equal treatment in land and agrarian reform ..."

The economic structural reform gives the contracting farmers the right to use the land while the State retains the ownership of the land.

The land is shared out to the farmers under the contract responsibility system. In case a woman is denied a share of land or is given a smaller share due to sex bias, the local government will look into the matter and have it rectified.

2 (h) Enjoyment of equal living conditions

Farmers in China usually build their own houses on the farm. Generally speaking, rural women live with their parents before marriage and with their husbands' family after marriage. A single woman or a widow lives with her relatives on either her own or her husband's side. If she is not accepted, the court will step in.

Many new homes have been built in rural areas over the last five years with a total floor space of 390 million square metres. Living conditions in the countryside are in general better than in the cities. Energy supply in rural areas has increased considerably in the last few years. By the end of 1987, about 837,370 homes have installed firewood-saving and coal-saving cooking stoves. About 4.63 million homes have their own methane-generating pits or solar cookers; 350,000 square metres of solar collectors have been installed for heating purposes; there are over 50,000 small wind generators; about 2.31 million homes cook with liquefied petroleum gas or natural gas. One-ninth of the nation's electric power is supplied by small hydro-electric stations in 100 experimental counties where electric power has reached more than 6 million homes.

There is steady progress in the supply of safe drinking water. For example, in Hunan Province, 28 million people accounting for 56 per cent of the total rural population have solved the problem. In Yunnan Province, 2.3 million people have solved it, and in the Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region about 4 million people have easy access to safe drinking water by way of water pipes, reservoirs or wells.

PART IV

Article 15. According women equality with men before the law

Provisions specifying equality between men and women are included in various laws in China. In dealing with cases involving women, courts at all levels always take into account women's legitimate rights and interests in accordance with the law. Additionally, women's federations at all levels provide legal advisory services to help women handle legal matters. The services include recommending lawyers, preparing written complaints, acting as agent or spokesman in court proceedings and exercising surveillance over the execution of law.

Article 16. "... to eliminate discrimination against women in all matters relating to marriage and family relations ..."

The principles embodied in this article are clearly stipulated in the Marriage Law of China.

Re 1 (a), article 2 of the Marriage Law states:

"The marriage system based on the free choice of partners, on monogamy and on equal rights for the sexes, is put into effect ..."

Re 1 (b), article 4 of the Marriage Law states:

"Marriage must be based upon the complete willingness of the two parties. Neither party shall use compulsion and no third party is allowed to interfere."

Re 1 (c), (d) and (f):

In chapter III, "Family Relations", and chapter IV, "Divorce", the Marriage Law contains detailed provisions concerning these three aspects. The main points are: parents have the duty to rear and educate their children; and after divorce, both parents continue to have the right and duty to rear and educate their children.

Re 1 (e), article 2 of the Marriage Law states:

"Family planning is practised." Family planning as a basic State policy is increasingly being understood and supported by the people. Please refer to the presentations under article 12.

Re 1 (g), article 10 of the Marriage Law states:

"The husband and wife each have the right to use their own family name."
Article 11 states: "Both husband and wife have the freedom to engage in production, to work, to study and to participate in social activities; neither party is allowed to restrain or interfere with the other."

Re 1 (h), article 13 of the Marriage Law states:

"The property acquired during the period in which husband and wife are under contract of marriage is in the joint possession of the two parties unless they have agreed otherwise. Husband and wife enjoy equal rights in the management of the property in their joint possession."

Re 2, the Marriage Law stipulates that no marriage shall be contracted before the man has reached 22 years of age and the woman 20 years of age. To marry late and to have a child late are encouraged. Both the man and the woman desiring to contract a marriage shall register in person with the marriage registration office. Marital status is protected by the law. Childhood engagement is disapproved and childhood marriage is disallowed.

Changes that have taken place in family and marriage relations since the economic structural reform:

1. Changes in marriage and family relations:

(a) As a result of the tremendous increase of job opportunities under the contract responsibility system in rural areas, the relative positions and division of labour among family members have undergone notable changes. In most urban families, over 90 per cent of husbands do household chores. In half the urban families, husband and wife share housework. In rural homes, women enjoy equal status with men. Young people now have more say in the family, and the senior member's traditional hegemony is on the decline.

(b) The functions of the family have begun to change. Family members do not live just under one roof but together make business plans as a productive entity. For instance, many family restaurants and family grocery stores have appeared in the cities.

(c) In the cities, 80 per cent of families only have one child, and nuclear families are gradually becoming the majority.

2. Changes in the style of marriage and courtship in rural areas:

The contract system in economic life has created more opportunities for young people to associate freely, thereby enabling them to mix with more people of the opposite sex. As feudal, conservative ideas give way to modern concepts, young people are beginning to make their choice of a life partner on the basis of mutual affection. At present, 20 per cent of the new couples married by free choice and 60 per cent were introduced to each other by a matchmaker but married with mutual consent. The other 20 per cent are still arranged by their parents or elder brothers.

In the choice of a husband, the traditional criteria used to be candour, sincerity and good temper. In recent years, young people began to give more stress to intelligence, educational background, professional skill, sociability and helpfulness at home. Today members of prosperous, specialized households, craftspersons and capable managers of various enterprises are high in young people's favour.

Girls used to prefer young men from well-off families that had a roomy house and few siblings and dependants. Today they begin to lay great store by mutual affection and the prospect of together making a go of their own business after marriage.

The shift in preference is a welcome sign that signifies the role of new family relations in rural development.

3. Rise in the rate of divorce:

Family relationships in China are on the whole stable, with divorce rates hovering around 3 to 5 per cent. In the past few years, the rate has been on the rise. Every year nearly 5 million families fall apart and the current divorce rate has gone up to 7 per cent. The following are the main reasons:

(a) Along with the emancipation of the mind in the wake of economic structural reform and the revision of the Marriage Law considering complete alienation of mutual affection as a legal ground for divorce, the traditional view regarding divorce as something immoral and shameful has gradually changed. Many cases of broken marriages left legally unsettled over the years have been cleared up by the court in recent years. This partly explains the rise in the divorce rate.

Since 1981, 70 to 80 per cent of the petitions for divorce have been lodged by wives. The main reason is that more and more women now attach great importance to mutual affection and are no longer willing to put up with a marriage without it. They have come to realize that freedom of divorce is part of freedom of marriage and are ready to challenge their unsuccessful marriages. In this sense, the preponderance of wife-initiated divorce cases is a sign of social advancement.

(c) Some of the divorce cases are the outcome of rash or perfunctory marriage. Some people have no sense of responsibility towards their marriage and family; some couples did not get to know each other well enough before marriage. In the countryside many girls married against their will because their parents had accepted betrothal gifts.

Divorce does not constitute a social problem in China despite the increase in the divorce rate. The overwhelming majority of divorce cases are justifiable according to law. However, the adverse effects of a broken family on the children remain a problem of public concern.

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The Chinese Communist Party and the Government consistently support the advancement of women's status and defend their rights and interests. Nevertheless, China under socialism at the primary stage has not yet acquired the material and spiritual maturity to eliminate all forms of discrimination against women. A big gap remains between de facto and de jure equality of the sexes. The complete emancipation of women continues to be a long and arduous task. That is why the Chinese Government firmly supports the Convention and tries to implement it in the light of the realities in the country as a step toward the eventual elimination of all discrimination against women.

At the opening ceremony of the Sixth National Women's Congress held not long ago, President Yang Shangkun of the People's Republic of China said: "We must fight against all the obnoxious practices of discrimination against women and inflict punishment for all criminal violations of the rights and interests of women

and children according to law. Respecting women and protecting children is the sign of a civilized society and it is the common task of the whole society to safeguard their rights and interests." At the Congress, the two thousand women delegates were each given a copy of excerpts from the Nairobi Forward-Looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women and a copy of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. The Congress called on the women of China to incorporate the strategy of equality, development and peace in all their endeavours.