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PRESS RELEASE

STATE COUNCIL INFORMATION OFFICE (SCIO) PUBLISHES NATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS ACTION PLAN

Beijing – April 15, 2009 –The State Council Information Office has published National Human Rights Action Plan (2009 - 2010) (HRP) with authorization of State Council today on April 13, 2009. As China's first national human rights plan, the new HRP displays to the world the purpose and specific measures to human rights of the Chinese government in the next two years.

The HRP is divided into six parts, which separately highlight protection measures of economic, social and political rights; civil rights; rights of minority, women, children, the old and the disabled; human rights education and international human rights obligations of China and its cooperation. The HRP indicated that Chinese government would take any possible measures to prevent the negative influence of the present financial crisis to protect the economic, social and political rights of all Chinese people.

The further protection of civil rights and political rights of Chinese citizens is also an important part of HRP. The Chinese government promised that it would continue to promote the construction of democracy and legal system to better protect civil rights of citizens.

The HRP also detailed how the government would "guarantee human rights in the reconstruction of areas hit by the devastating earthquake in Wenchuan, Sichuan Province". "The realization of human rights in the broadest sense has been a long-cherished ideal of mankind and also a long-pursued goal of the Chinese government and people," said by HRP. It pointed out that the Chinese government put human rights protection as one of the most important governing principles as early in the founding of People's Republic of China, which "fundamentally" changed the fate of the Chinese people. Protection of human rights has been written as one of the most important parts of Chinese Constitution.

But the government admitted that "China has a long road ahead in its efforts to improve its human rights situation," though unremitting efforts have been made to promote and safeguard human rights. The government said the plan was framed in response to the United Nations' proposal, on the basis of past experience, "in the light of practicality and China's reality," and by following the essentials of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

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The HPR emphasized that the Chinese government honored the communication and cooperation in the field of international human rights protection and would always devoted to promoting the development of international human rights and the peace of human-being.

The HRP is a further important step in improving the human rights situation in China. Over the past 15 years China has made amazing steps in pulling millions of people out of poverty. The continuation of the economic miracle of China is without a doubt the most effective way of improving real human rights. The HRP is a good sign that the government is committed to make further improvements. Critics will say that this is mere platitudes – time will tell.

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