

Building of Political Democracy in China

The State Council Information Office of the People's Republic of China

9 October 2005

Contents

Preface

I. A Choice Suited to China's Conditions

II. The CPC Led the People to Become Masters of the State

III. The People's Congress System

IV. The System of Multi-Party Cooperation and Political Consultation Under the Leadership of the CPC

V. The System of Nationalities Regional Autonomy

VI. Grassroots Democracy in Urban and Rural Areas

VII. Respecting and Safeguarding Human Rights

VIII. The Democratic Rule by the Communist Party of China

IX. Government Democracy

X. Judicial Democracy

Conclusion

Preface

Democracy is an outcome of the development of political civilisation of humanity. It is also the common desire of people all over the world. Democracy of a country is generated internally, not imposed by external forces.

In the course of their modern history, the Chinese people have waged unrelenting struggles and made arduous explorations in order to win their democratic rights. But only under the leadership of the Communist Party of China (CPC) did they really win the right to be masters of the state. The Chinese people dearly cherish and resolutely protect their hard-earned democratic achievements.

Because situations differ from one country to another, the paths the people of different countries take to win and develop democracy are different. Based on the specific conditions of China, the CPC and the Chinese people first engaged in a New Democratic Revolution, and after New China was founded in 1949, and proceeding from the actual situation of the primary stage of socialism, began to practice socialist democracy with its own characteristics. The experience over the past few decades has proved that embarking on this road of development of political democracy chosen by the Chinese people themselves not only realised the Chinese people's demand to be masters of their own country, but is also gradually realising their common ideal to build their country into a strong and modern socialist country.

Socialist democracy with Chinese characteristics is being constantly improved and developed. Since China adopted the reform and opening-up policies at the end of the 1970s, while making efforts to steadily deepen the reform of its economic system, the country has unswervingly pushed forward reforms of its political system. China's democratic system has been continuously improved, and the forms of democracy are becoming more varied. The people are exercising fully their right to be masters of the state. The building of political democracy with Chinese characteristics is progressing with the times, exhibiting great vigour and vitality.

I. A Choice Suited to China's Conditions

The experience of political civilisation of humanity over a history of several millennia is ample proof of the truth that the political system a country adopts and the road to democracy it takes must be in conformity with the conditions of that country. The socialist political democracy of China is rooted in the vast land of fertile soil on which the Chinese nation has depended for its subsistence and development over thousands of years. It grew out of the experience of the CPC and the Chinese people in their great practice of striving for national independence, liberation of the people and prosperity of the country. It is the apt choice suited to China's conditions and meeting the requirement of social progress.

China has a history of 5,000 years of civilisation. Boasting a splendid civilisation in the same league as those of ancient Egypt, India and Babylon, China has contributed greatly to the development and progress of humanity. The Chinese people are industrious, courageous and full of wisdom. It is generally acknowledged in the world that the Chinese nation has a long, uninterrupted history and a rich cultural heritage.

China had a long history of feudal society, and when, from 1840 on, the Western imperialist powers launched, time and again, aggressive wars against China, the corrupt and weak feudal ruling class buckled, and China was reduced to a semi-colonial, semi-feudal society. For nearly 110 years after that, China became a target of plunder for almost all the imperialist countries, big and small. The Chinese nation was plunged into the most dangerous situation: suffering from invasion by imperialism from the outside and oppression by feudalism on the inside. The Chinese people had no democratic rights whatsoever. To change the fate of the country and the nation, generation after generation of Chinese people rose up and waged heroic struggles, one stepping into the breach the moment another fell.

In this movement to save China from destruction, some of the elite turned their eyes to the West for a road that would save the country and the people. They started a bourgeois democratic revolution in China. The Revolution of 1911, led by Dr. Sun Yat-sen, forerunner of the democratic revolution in China, brought to an end the autocratic monarchical system that had been in place for more than 2,000 years. But the bourgeois republic, including the parliamentarism and multi-party system that were subsequently established after the Revolution of 1911 in imitation of the mode of Western democracy, did not fulfil the fervent desire of the Chinese people for independence and democracy. The new republic soon collapsed under the onslaught of domestic and foreign reactionary forces. A contemporary said in anger and grief, "Many lives were lost and a lot of blood was shed, but what we achieved was a counterfeit republic." The Chinese people had still not shaken off oppression, slavery and exploitation. What was the way out for China? The Chinese people were pondering, exploring and struggling in the dark.

Through painstaking exploration and hard struggle, the Chinese people finally came to realise that mechanically copying the Western bourgeois political system and applying it to China would lead them nowhere. To accomplish the historic task of saving China and triumphing over imperialism and feudalism, the Chinese people needed new thought and new theories to open up a new road for the Chinese revolution and establish a totally new political system. The important historic task of leading the Chinese people to find this new road and establish a new system landed on the shoulders of the Chinese communists. In 1921, some progressive intellectuals who had studied the ideology of democracy and science combined Marxism and Leninism with the Chinese workers' movement, and founded the CPC. After that, under the leadership of the CPC, the Chinese revolution entered the period of New Democracy, characterised by thorough opposition to imperialism, feudalism and bureaucratic capitalism.

After fighting bravely for 28 difficult years, China finally achieved national independence and the people's liberation.

As the vanguard of the Chinese working class, the Chinese people and the Chinese nation, the CPC has taken as its own task the realisation and development of a people's democracy right from the date of its founding. The goal of the CPC's leadership of the people in revolutionary struggles is to realise democracy for the overwhelming majority of people, and not just for a minority of the people. The CPC creatively combines the general truth of Marxism-Leninism with the actual situation of the Chinese revolution, setting out such democratic concepts as "democracy for the workers and peasants," "people's democracy," and "new democracy," to enrich and develop Marxist theories on political democracy. In its history, the CPC has adopted many different organisational forms, such as the congress of workers on strike, peasants' association, the Soviet of representatives of workers, peasants and soldiers, the congress of councilors, and the congress of people from all walks of life. These forms of political democracy were suited to the actual conditions in China at various periods of time and were able to guarantee that the people were the masters of the state. These forms of political democracy were a striking contrast to the ruling system of the Kuomintang, and they reflected the people's wishes and enjoyed popular support.

The first plenary session of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC) was convened in September 1949, on the eve of the founding of the People's Republic of China (PRC). It was an important meeting at which the CPC discussed major matters concerning the founding of the new republic in line with the principle of democracy with all democratic parties, people's organisations and democratic personages without party affiliation. It decided on the state system and organisational form of state power of New China. The meeting adopted the "Common Program of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference," which served as a provisional constitution of the new republic. The Common Program clearly stipulated, "The People's Republic of China is a state of new democracy, or of the people's democracy. It will practice people's democratic dictatorship under the leadership of the working class, on the basis of the alliance of workers and peasants, uniting all democratic classes and people of all nationalities in China"; "The state power of the People's Republic of China belongs to the people. The organs through which the people exercise state power are the people's congresses and people's governments at all levels." The founding of the PRC on October 1, 1949 marked the great victory of the New Democratic Revolution won by the Chinese people under the leadership of the CPC and the fundamental change that had taken in the political status of the Chinese people. From then on, the Chinese people became the real masters of their country, society and their own fate. The establishment of New China marked a great leap from the 2,000-year-old autocratic feudal political system and the unsuccessful trials in contemporary China imitating the mode of Western democratic political systems to the new people's democratic political system.

Not long after the founding of New China, the first general election in Chinese history - with the biggest-ever turnout of the people - was held all over the country in 1953. The people exercised the power of being masters of the state by electing their own deputies, and people's congresses were held first at lower levels and then at higher levels. In September 1954, the first session of the First National People's Congress was held, marking the formal establishment of the system of people's congress all over China. The Constitution of the People's Republic of China, which had been discussed widely among the people prior to the session, was adopted at the congress. It established the state system of the people's democratic dictatorship led by the working class and based on the alliance of workers and peasants, and

the political system, i.e., the people's congress system, as the basic political systems of the PRC. It also clearly stipulated that "All power in the People's Republic of China belongs to the people. The National People's Congress and the local people's congresses at various levels are the organs through which the people exercise state power. Democratic centralism shall be practised in the National People's Congress and the local people's congresses at various levels as well as in all other state organs."

The establishment of the system of people's congress and the promulgation of the Constitution of the People's Republic of China meant that the Chinese people's exercise of the right to be masters of the state now had a reliable institutional guarantee and constitutional basis. By 1956, most areas in China had completed the socialist transformation of the private ownership of the means of production, thereby completing the transition from the historical period of New Democracy to that of socialism. Thus, the basic system of socialism was established, and the widest and deepest social transformation in Chinese history has accomplished. But, New China made some detours in its quest of the way to build political democracy. The grave mistakes of the "cultural revolution" (1966-1976), in particular, caused a serious setback for China in building its political democracy, and the nation learned a bitter lesson.

After China adopted the reform and opening-up policies in the late 1970s, the CPC summed up both its positive and negative historical experiences, and led the people into a new period in building China's socialist political democracy. Without democracy there could be no socialism, much less socialist modernisation; the socialist legal system had to be strengthened so that democracy could be institutionalised; it was necessary to govern the country by law and build a socialist country under the rule of law; socialist political democracy had to be developed and socialist political civilisation had to be built; the CPC's leadership, the people being the masters of the state and governing the country by law had to be integrated; and the people had to be put first, and the country must be governed for the people so as to build a harmonious socialist country. All these have become the common understanding of the CPC and the people of all nationalities of China as they improve and develop socialist political democracy, and will serve as their guiding principles as they move forward.

Over the past 20 years and more, great progress has been made in China's practice of building a socialist democratic political system. The system of the people's congress, the system of multi-party cooperation and political consultation under the leadership of the CPC, and the system of regional autonomy for minority nationalities - all important components of China's democratic system - have been continuously improved and developed. The democratic rights of people at the grassroots level in urban and rural areas have been constantly increased, and the citizens' basic rights are respected and guaranteed. The CPC's capability to rule the country in a democratic manner has been enhanced further, while the government's capability to administer the country in a democratic manner has been strengthened noticeably. Continual progress has been made in building a democratic system within the legal framework. Marked achievements have been recorded in the reform of the state leadership system, legislative system, administrative management system, decision-making system, judicial system, personnel system, and supervision and checking system. Guided by the objective of ruling the country by law and building a socialist country under the rule of law, more efforts are being made to build socialist democracy so that it is institutionalised, standardised and in line with prescribed procedures. A socialist law regime with Chinese characteristics and with the Constitution at its core has been preliminarily formed. Major aspects of China's politics, economics, culture and social life are now within the purview of the rule of law.

In building socialist political democracy, China has always adhered to the basic principle that the Marxist theory of democracy be combined with the reality of China, borrowed from the useful achievements of the political civilisation of humanity, including Western democracy, and assimilated the democratic elements of China's traditional culture and institutional civilisation. Therefore, China's socialist political democracy shows distinctive Chinese characteristics.

- China's democracy is a people's democracy under the leadership of the CPC. Without the Communist Party there would be no New China. Nor would there be people's democracy. This is a fact that has been borne out by history. The Chinese people won the right to be masters of the state only after many years of arduous struggle under the leadership of the CPC. The democratic political system in China was established by the Chinese people led by the CPC. The development and improvement of this system are also carried out under the CPC's leadership. The leadership of CPC is a fundamental guarantee for the Chinese people to be masters in managing the affairs of their own country.

- China's democracy is a democracy in which the overwhelming majority of the people act as masters of state affairs. That the people are the masters is the quintessence of China's socialist democracy. In China, the publicly owned sector of the economy is the economic foundation of China's socialist system. In the primary stage of socialism, the state persists in the basic economic system with public ownership playing a dominant role and diverse forms of ownership developing side by side and the distribution system in which to each according to his work is predominant while other forms of distribution exist side by side. This ensures, from the perspective of economic foundation, that China's democracy will not be manipulated by capital; it is not a democracy for a small number of people, but one for the overwhelming majority of the people. In China, people enjoying the democratic rights include everyone who has not been deprived of political rights by law.

- China's democracy is a democracy guaranteed by the people's democratic dictatorship. Under the people's democratic dictatorship, on the one hand, democracy of the widest scope is practised among the people, human rights are respected and ensured, and state power is in the hands of the people and serves the interests of the people. On the other, criminal activities, such as sabotage of the socialist system, endangering state security and public security, infringement on citizens' rights of the person or their democratic rights, embezzlement, bribery and dereliction of duty, are penalised according to law so as to safeguard the fundamental interests of the broad masses.

- China's democracy is a democracy with democratic centralism as the basic organisational principle and mode of operation. Democratic centralism is the fundamental principle of organisation and leadership of state power in China. When democratic centralism is practised, it requires that we give full play to democracy and discuss matters of concern collectively, so that people's wishes and demands are fully expressed and reflected. Then, all the correct opinions are pooled, and decisions are made collectively so that the people's wishes and demands are realised and met. The practice of democratic centralism also requires that "the majority be respected while the minority is protected." We are against the anarchic call for "democracy for all," and against anybody placing his own will above that of the collective.

II. The CPC Led the People to Become Masters of the State

The CPC's leading status was established gradually in the protracted struggle and practice of the Chinese people in pursuing national independence, prosperity and a happy life. It was a choice made by history and by the people. The Chinese revolution, construction and reform have demonstrated to the

world that it was the CPC that led the Chinese people to find the correct road to win national independence and liberation. It was the CPC that led the Chinese people to find the correct road to build China into a prosperous, democratic and civilised modern country. It is precisely because of this historical reason that the CPC's leading status is clearly described in the Constitution of the People's Republic of China.

Today, the CPC's leadership and rule in China is an objective requirement of the country's development and progress.

- The CPC's leadership and rule is needed for promoting socialist modernisation and realising great national rejuvenation. It has been the aspiration and dream for the Chinese people to rid their country of its poor and backward outlook, and realise modernisation and national rejuvenation over the past 100 years. Under the leadership of the CPC, after making a range of explorations and efforts over the past 56 years since the founding of New China, China has cast off its former state of abject poverty. Productivity has grown rapidly, overall national strength has increased greatly and people's life has improved markedly. China's international status has been elevated, and its international influence is increasing day by day. Especially in the 26 years since the initiation of the reform and opening-up policies, China has created an economic miracle - its GDP has been increasing at an average annual rate of 9.4 percent, and the general living standard of the 1.3 billion Chinese people has, in general, reached the moderately well-off level. It is the unswerving choice of the Chinese people to march toward the goal of prosperous, democratic, civilised socialist modernisation under the leadership of the CPC.

- The CPC's leadership and rule is needed for safeguarding China's unification and keeping Chinese society harmonious and stable. History has proved time and again that, without the unification of the country and social stability, there will be no prosperity for the country, and the people will not be able to live and work in peace and contentment. Foreign invasions, warlord rampages and political turmoil brought disaster after disaster to contemporary China. That period of history left an indelible impression on the memory of the Chinese people. The unification and stability of China is a blessing for the Chinese people. It is also in keeping with the interests of the people of all other countries in the world. To safeguard the country's unification and social stability has always been a matter of paramount importance at which the people of all nationalities in China are most concerned. The CPC is the faithful representative of the fundamental interests of the Chinese people of all nationalities. Guided by scientific theories, with the support of nearly 3,500,000 Party organisations and 69,600,000 Party members and based on its rich experience in exercising state power and its capability in controlling the overall situation, the CPC has been planning as a whole social and economic development and making efforts to build a harmonious socialist society to safeguard the country's unification as well as social harmony and stability.

- The CPC's leadership and rule is needed for making the state power stable. China is a vast country with a large population. There are great disparities in terms of development between urban and rural areas, and between different regions. It is of unusual significance for China to have a stable state power. Only then can China concentrate on construction and development, and only then can the country's development strategy and goal of modernisation be pursued for a long time and through to the end. Only then can all kinds of unnecessary and unwanted internal political strife be minimised, all positive factors be exploited to the full, and all resources, strength and wisdom be pooled to tackle major problems that

have a bearing on the nation's economy and the people's livelihood, and to ensure sustainable social and economic development.

- The CPC's leadership and rule is needed for uniting hundreds of millions of people to work in concerted efforts in building a beautiful future. In Old China, the society was disunited, like a heap of loose sand. That was a painful experience for the Chinese people. In a big country like China, with such a large population and where things are complicated, if there had not been a strong political core and if there had not been a lofty goal that can unite the people of all nationalities in their common struggle, the country would have disintegrated easily, and it would have been impossible for China to develop and make progress. Experience has shown that, in China, it is the CPC that unites the Chinese people, gives full play to their enthusiasm, initiative and creativity, and has them engage, heart and soul, in the common struggle for their common interests, common cause, common ideal and a better future for China.

- The CPC's leadership and rule is, in essence, to lead, support and ensure that the people are the masters of the state. All power in the PRC belongs to the people. This is a fundamental principle for building political democracy in China. It is also an essential requirement of the CPC's leadership and exercise of state power. In China, the CPC leads and supports the people to be the masters of the state and ensures its realisation. This provides an institutional and legal guarantee that the fundamental principle, that is, all power in the PRC belongs to the people, is fully and thoroughly implemented and embodied in every aspect of national and social activities. The CPC has led the people to formulate the Constitution and laws. It takes the lead in observing and safeguarding the Constitution and laws, and combats resolutely all activities that violate the Constitution and laws.

The following specific forms explain how the CPC leads and supports the people to be the masters of the state, and ensures its realisation: First, it provides leadership to the people in wielding state power through the people's congress system. In this way, it ensures that the laws, guiding principles and policies formulated by the state reflect the common will of the people and protect their fundamental interests, and guarantees that the people become the masters of the state. Second, it leads the people to manage state affairs, economic and cultural undertakings and social affairs by abiding by the Constitution and the provisions of the laws and through various channels and in different forms, so as to ensure that the development of all undertakings of the state is in line with the people's wishes, interests and demands. Third, it leads the people to practice grassroots democracy and manage their own affairs in accordance with the law, so as to enable them to exercise self-management, self-education and self-service through democratic elections, democratic decision-making, democratic management and democratic supervision. Fourth, it leads the people to strictly observe the principle that all citizens are equal before the law, so as to enable the citizens to enjoy widespread freedom and rights as prescribed in the law as well as in practice, respect and protect human rights, and safeguard fairness and justice. These institutional and legal guarantees ensure that the people are the masters of the country, and they can use their own public rights and all rights of citizenship to safeguard and realise their own interests.

III. The People's Congress System

The people's congress system is the fundamental political system by which the Chinese people act as masters of the state. The Chinese people exercise state power through the National People's Congress (NPC) and the local people's congresses at various levels.

China has adopted a unicameral parliamentary system based on its national conditions, rather than the bicameral system instituted in Western countries. The Chinese Constitution stipulates: the NPC of the PRC is the highest organ of state power. In China, all administrative, judicial and procuratorial organs of the state are created by the people's congresses to which they are responsible and by which they are supervised. All major issues of the state are decided by the people's congresses. The administrative organs are responsible for implementing the laws, resolutions and decisions adopted by the people's congresses. The courts and procuratorates exercise their respective powers of jurisdiction and prosecution independently, in line with the stipulations of the law, free from interference by any administrative authority, social organisation or individual.

The NPC and the local people's congresses at various levels are established through democratic elections. They are responsible to the people and subject to their supervision. The Chinese Constitution states that all citizens who have reached the age of 18 have the right to vote and stand for election, regardless of nationality, race, sex, occupation, family background, religious belief, education, property status or length of residence, except for persons deprived of political rights in accordance with the law. The deputies to the local people's congresses at county and township levels are elected directly by the electors. Over the years, the population that has enjoyed the right to vote and stand for election has accounted for more than 99 percent of the number of citizens at or above the age of 18, and the ratio of participation in elections has been around 90 percent. Due to China's realities, the deputies to the people's congresses above the county level are elected indirectly, that is, by the people's congress at the immediately lower level. A competitive election system is adopted in both direct and indirect elections in accordance with the law. The electors and the electoral units have the power to recall or replace deputies they have elected according to the procedures prescribed by law. At present, there are 2.8 million deputies to the people's congresses at all levels nationwide, and they are from various nationalities, trades, social strata and political parties and are therefore highly representative. The deputies from workers and farmers account for a considerable proportion of deputies to people's congresses at different levels. For instance, worker and farmer deputies account for 18.4 percent of the total number of deputies to the Tenth NPC (March 2003-March 2008). To ensure that state power is truly in the hands of the entire people, the deputies must convey and represent the interests and will of the people when exercising their functions and powers. They have the right to propose bills, examine and discuss bills and reports, and vote on bills in accordance with the law, and may not be held legally liable for their speeches or votes at the meetings of the people's congresses.

The Chinese Constitution and law stipulate that the term of office of each NPC and each of local people's congresses at various levels is five years, and the NPC meets in session once a year, and local people's congresses at various levels meet at least once a year. The Election Law of People's Congresses also prescribes that the number of deputies to each NPC shall not exceed 3,000. Since the number of deputies to the NPC is fairly large and makes it inconvenient to hold frequent meetings, the NPC Standing Committee is established in accordance with the stipulation of the Constitution to exercise the functions and powers of the highest organ of state power when the NPC is not in session. The NPC Standing Committee normally meets once every two months. It is composed of one chairperson, a number of vice-chairpersons, one secretary-general and a number of members. The Standing Committee of the Tenth NPC has 175 members, including one chairperson and 15 vice-chairpersons. Standing committees have also been established by local people's congresses at and above the county level. The members of the Standing Committee of the NPC and standing committees of the local people's

congresses at and above the county level are elected from among the deputies to the people's congresses in competitive elections, and for the same term as the NPC and local people's congresses at the corresponding levels.

The people's congresses and their standing committees pursue a democratic style of work, draw on the wisdom of all deputies, and represent and convey the will and basic interests of the people. The principle of absolute majority is observed when the people's congresses and their standing committees vote on bills, that is, a bill can only be adopted by the agreement of more than half of the total number of members. Amendments to the Constitution are adopted by a vote of more than two-thirds of all the deputies to the NPC.

When the people's congresses and their standing committees hold meetings, persons in charge of departments concerned may attend as non-voting delegates, and the departments and individuals concerned may audit. Those attending as non-voting delegates have the right to speak, but not the right to vote. Those auditing are not entitled to speak. If they have any comment on the bills discussed by the standing committee, they may submit their opinions to the working organ of the standing committee in writing. In recent years, the standing committees in some localities have opened their doors to citizens who wish to be observers at their meetings. The auditors are chosen in sequence of applications of citizens.

The people's congresses have four main functions and powers: legislation, supervision, appointment and removal of officials, and making decisions on major issues. These functions are a major reflection of the way the Chinese people exercise their power as masters of the state through the system of people's congress.

- Power of legislation. The Chinese Constitution states that the NPC and its Standing Committee exercise the legislative power of the state, mainly to amend the Constitution, and enact and amend the basic laws concerning criminal offences, civil affairs, state organs and other matters. The people's congress at provincial level and its standing committee may, in the light of the specific conditions and practical needs of that particular administrative area, enact local regulations under the precondition that the regulations they enact must not contravene the Constitution, the law or the administrative regulations of the state. The people's congress of a big city and its standing committee may, in the light of the specific conditions and practical needs of the city, enact local regulations under the precondition that the regulations they enact must not contravene either the Constitution, the law or the administrative regulations of the state, or the regulations of the province or autonomous region the city belongs to, and submit the newly enacted local regulations to the standing committee of the people's congress of the province or autonomous region for approval before they are put into effect. The people's congress and its standing committee of a province or city that has special economic zones may, in line with authorisation by the NPC, enact local regulations that take effect within the special economic zones. The people's congresses of the nationalities autonomous areas have the power to enact regulations on the exercise of autonomy and other separate regulations in the light of the political, economic and cultural characteristics of the nationality (nationalities), and make appropriate adaptations of the laws and administrative regulations.

In the three decades from 1949, when the PRC was founded, to 1978, the NPC formulated 134 laws, 16 of which are still in force today. When the reform and opening-up policies were initiated in the late 1970s, China's socialist democratic legal construction entered a new era. In 1982, the NPC revised the

Constitution, and adopted four amendments to it in the ensuing years. So far, the NPC and its Standing Committee have enacted more than 200 laws that are still in effect and over 200 decisions on legal issues. The local people's congresses and their standing committees have enacted more than 7,500 local regulations that are still in effect, and the people's congresses of nationalities autonomous areas have enacted more than 600 regulations on the exercise of autonomy and other regulations.

In recent years, democracy has been promoted continuously in China's legislation. Experts are invited to give their opinions at symposia organised on the draft of almost every bill. In some cases, the legislative organ even entrusts specialised research institutions to draft the bills. For bills aiming at adjusting important social relations, the standing committees of local people's congresses often hold hearings to let parties with different interests voice their opinions. The Legislation Law of China has included provisions on legislative hearings. Since 1982, the NPC and its Standing Committee have published the drafts of a dozen important bills that are closely related to the immediate interests of the people, including the amendments to the Constitution, the draft for revision of the Marriage Law, the draft of the Contract Law, and the draft of the Property Law, to solicit public opinion during the process of formulation. The direct participation of the people in the formulation of laws has not only improved the quality of legislation and ensured that the laws fully represent the will and demands of the people, but has also enhanced the whole society's sense of law, so that the laws can be enforced in a smooth way after adoption.

- Power of supervision. To supervise the enforcement of the Constitution and the law is a major content of the supervisory power exercised by the NPC and its Standing Committee. The basic way such supervision is carried out is by examination of the enforcement of laws and by checking the reporting of regulations for the record. Regarding the examination of law enforcement, the Standing Committee of the Ninth NPC conducted 22 examinations of the enforcement of 21 laws, and the Standing Committee of the Tenth NPC examined the enforcement of 10 laws in the period 2003-2004. The standing committees of the local people's congresses have also examined the enforcement of laws and relevant regulations within their respective administrative areas. Through the examination of law enforcement, the standing committees of the people's congresses have obtained detailed information about the true situation and existing problems in the enforcement of laws and regulations, and urged the governments, the courts and the procuratorates at the same level to improve their law-enforcement work, and thus ensured that the organs in charge of law enforcement act in accordance with the law and exercise judicial power justly. Regarding checking on the reporting of regulations for the record, more than 7,500 local regulations, 600 regulations on the exercise of autonomy and separate regulations, and nearly 300 regulations applied to the special economic zones have so far been filed to the NPC Standing Committee for the record. The Standing Committee of the Tenth NPC has set up a special examining organ to further standardise this work. The standing committees of the people's congresses at the provincial level and of big cities have also examined, in accordance with the law, the reporting of rules and regulations for the record by the local governments. Through these efforts, rules and regulations that contravene the Constitution and the law are annulled, and organs that have formulated regulations that include inappropriate articles and clauses are urged to correct them. This is of great significance for keeping the legal system of the state in unison. In recent years, the NPC Standing Committee has started to examine the reporting for the record of judicial interpretations by the Supreme People's Court and the Supreme People's Procuratorate.

To supervise the work of the governments, the courts and the procuratorates are another important part of the supervisory power of the people's congresses and their standing committees at the corresponding

level. To hear and review the work reports of the State Council, the Supreme People's Court and the Supreme People's Procuratorate are a basic means by which the NPC and its Standing Committee exercise their power of supervision. When the people's congresses are in session, the people's governments, people's courts and people's procuratorates at the same level shall report their work to the session, and the people's governments shall submit their draft budgets and draft plans for national economic and social development, and the draft budgets shall be reviewed for approval by the session. When the standing committees of the people's congresses are in session, they hear work reports and reports on issues that are significant to the reform, development and stability, as well as urgent topics or difficulties that are related to the immediate interests of the people. The Standing Committee of the Ninth NPC heard and reviewed 40 special reports during its five-year tenure, and the Standing Committee of the Tenth NPC has heard and reviewed 22 special reports in the first two years of its tenure.

- Power of personnel appointment and removal. The people's congresses and their standing committees have the power to elect, decide on, appoint or remove, replace or recall members of relevant organs of state power. The NPC elects the president and the vice-president of the PRC, and the chairperson of the Central Military Commission of the state; decides on the choice of the premier of the State Council upon nomination by the president; decides on the choice of the vice-premiers, state councillors, ministers in charge of various ministries or commissions, the auditor-general and the secretary-general of the State Council upon nomination by the premier; upon nomination by the chairman of the Central Military Commission of the state, decides on the choice of all other members of the Central Military Commission; and elects the president of the Supreme People's Court and the procurator-general of the Supreme People's Procuratorate. The local people's congresses at all levels exercise their power to elect, decide on, appoint or remove, replace or recall members of local organs of state power in accordance with the law.

- Power to making decisions regarding major issues. The NPC is entitled by the Constitution to approve the establishment of provinces, autonomous regions, and municipalities directly under the central government, decide on the establishment of special administrative regions and the systems to be instituted there, and decide on questions of war and peace, and other major issues. Issues that are significant to the national economy and social development, such as the Three Gorges Project, can only be implemented after a resolution has been made by the NPC. In recent years, the people's congresses and their standing committees have exercised their power to make decisions on urban construction planning, environmental protection and other major issues in their own areas.

Practice has proved that the system of people's congress is a fundamental political system that is in accord with the national conditions of China, embodies the nature of the socialist state of China and ensures the people to be the masters of the country. It has taken root among the masses and, therefore, is full of vigor; it represents the common will and fundamental interests of the people, and motivates the whole people to plunge in state construction as the masters of the state, guarantees that state organs operate in a coordinated and efficient way, and safeguards national unification and unity of nationalities. Through the system of people's congress, the Chinese people of all nationalities hold the future and destiny of the state and the nation firmly in their own hands.

IV. The System of Multi-Party Cooperation and Political Consultation Under the Leadership of the CPC

What kind of political party system to adopt is determined by the nature of the country, the national conditions, as well as the demands of national interests and social development. The political party

system China has adopted is multi-party cooperation and political consultation under the leadership of the CPC, which is different from both the two-party or multi-party competition system of Western countries and the one-party system practised in some other countries. This system was established and has been developed during the long-term practice of the CPC and democratic parties in the course of the Chinese revolution, construction and reform. It is a result of the united struggle of the CPC and the democratic parties through thick and thin and is a basic political system in contemporary China.

There are nine political parties in China at present. Besides the CPC, there are the Revolutionary Committee of the Chinese Kuomintang (founded in 1948), the China Democratic League (founded in 1941), the China National Democratic Construction Association (founded in 1945), the China Association for Promoting Democracy (founded in 1945), the Chinese Peasants and Workers Democratic Party (founded in 1930), the China Zhi Gong Dang (founded in 1925), the Jiusan Society (founded in 1945) and the Taiwan Democratic Self-Government League (founded in 1947). Since most of these political parties were founded during the War of Resistance Against Japanese Aggression (1937-1945) and the War of Liberation (1946-1949) in the pursuit of national liberation and democracy of the people, they were given the joint name of "democratic parties." In present-day China, these democratic parties are political alliances of the socialist working people, builders of socialism and patriots who support socialism, among whom they have maintained ties respectively. Another important force in China's political life is the personages without party affiliation, or people who have not joined any political party but have certain public influence coupled with positive contributions. The majority are intellectuals.

The salient characteristics of China's political party system are: multi-party cooperation under the leadership of the CPC, with the CPC holding power and the democratic parties participating fully in state affairs. These democratic parties are close friends of the CPC. They unite and cooperate with the latter in their participation in state affairs, instead of being opposition parties or out-of-power parties. They participate in the exercise of state power, the consultation in fundamental state policies and the choice of state leaders, the administration of state affairs, and the formulation and implementation of state policies, laws and regulations.

In China, the CPC and the democratic parties share the same goal of struggle. The Chinese Constitution states that "under the leadership of the Communist Party of China multi-party cooperation and the political consultative system will continue to exist and develop for a long time to come." The cooperation between the CPC and the democratic parties is based on the basic principle of "long-term coexistence, mutual supervision, treating each other with sincerity and sharing each other's weal and woe." The national conditions and the nature of the state determine that the leadership of the CPC is the first and foremost prerequisite and fundamental guarantee for the multi-party cooperation. At the same time, such a leadership is not one of simple monopoly, but one of political leadership, that is, leadership in terms of political principle, political orientation, and major policies and programs. Both the CPC and the democratic parties take the Constitution as the basic norms of their conduct, and shoulder the responsibility to uphold the dignity of the Constitution and ensure its implementation.

The Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC) is an organisation of the patriotic united front of the Chinese people. It is an important organ of multi-party cooperation and political consultation under the leadership of the CPC, and an important instrument of democracy in the country's political life. The CPPCC National Committee is composed of members of the CPC and the democratic parties, personages without party affiliation, representatives of people's organisations,

minority nationalities and all walks of life, representatives of compatriots of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region, the Macao Special Administrative Region and Taiwan, as well as of returned overseas Chinese and other specially invited people, who are divided into several circles. The CPPCC National Committee has one chairperson, a number of vice-chairpersons and one secretary-general, serves for a term of five years, and holds a plenary session once a year. The provinces, autonomous regions, municipalities directly under the central government establish CPPCC committees of the provinces, autonomous regions and municipalities. The autonomous prefectures, cities divided into districts, counties, autonomous counties, cities not divided into districts and districts under the jurisdiction of cities, where there are suitable conditions for setting up local committees, may establish CPPCC committees in the corresponding areas. The tenure of these committees is five years, and a plenary session shall be held at least once a year. The CPPCC conducts its work centring on the two themes of unity and democracy, and exercises the functions of political consultation, democratic supervision, and participating in the administration and discussion of state affairs. The CPPCC plays an important role in the state's political life, social life and overseas friendship activities, as well as the country's modernisation drive and the struggle to safeguard national reunification and unity. The CPC and the governments at all levels consult the CPPCC on fundamental policies and important issues in political, economic, cultural and social affairs before a decision is adopted and during the implementation of such decisions, so as to heed and canvass a wide range of opinions. This is a key link for the CPC and the governments at all levels to ensure that decision-making is scientific and democratic.

The increasing importance of the system of multi-party cooperation and political consultation under the leadership of the CPC in the state's political and social life can be specified as follows:

- Political consultation between the CPC and the democratic parties and personages without party affiliation has been gradually institutionalised and standardised. The CPC Central Committee routinely invites leaders of the democratic parties and representative personages without party affiliation to consultative conferences, small-scale meetings and forums at which CPC leaders inform the participants of major events, hear their opinions and suggestions, and discuss state affairs with them. In addition to these consultation meetings, the central committees of the democratic parties may submit suggestions in writing to the CPC Central Committee. Consultations may cover important documents of the CPC National Congress and the CPC Central Committee; proposed amendments to the Constitution and important laws; candidates for senior offices of the state; important decisions concerning the reform and opening-up program; the medium- and long-term plans for national economic and social development; major issues that have a bearing on the overall situation of the country; circulation of information about important documents and situations, and soliciting of opinions; as well as other major issues that need to be discussed with the democratic parties. In 2003 and 2004, 36 consultative conferences, forums and briefings were convened by CPC leaders or entrusted by them to be convened by relevant departments, 13 of which were presided over by the General Secretary of the CPC Central Committee.

- Members of the democratic parties and personages without party affiliation play an important role in the people's congresses. Members of the democratic parties and personages without party affiliation hold an appropriate proportion in the deputies to the NPC, the Standing Committee and the special committees of the NPC. Through their activities in the people's congresses, they reflect the wishes of the people, participate in decision-making on major state issues and in the formulation of laws, and supervise the work of the government. In 2003, when a new term of office began, 176,000 members of the

democratic parties and personages without party affiliation were elected deputies to the people's congresses at various levels nationwide. Among them, seven are vice-chairpersons of the NPC Standing Committee and 50 are members of the NPC Standing Committee; 41 are vice-chairpersons of the standing committees of provincial-level people's congresses and 462 are members of such standing committees; and 352 are vice-chairpersons of the standing committees of municipal-level people's congresses and 2,084 are members of such standing committees.

- Members of the democratic parties and personages without party affiliation hold leading positions in government and judicial organs at various levels. At the end of 2004, over 32,000 members of the democratic parties and personages without party affiliation held leading positions in government and law-enforcement departments at and above the county level. Among them, 19 held leading posts in the Supreme People's Court, the Supreme People's Procuratorate as well as the various ministries and commissions under the central government; 27 served as deputy governors, vice-chairpersons or deputy mayors in the 31 provinces, autonomous regions and municipalities on the mainland of China; 354 served as deputy mayors in the people's governments of 397 cities (prefectures, leagues or districts); 19 were vice-presidents of courts or deputy chief procurators of procuratorates at the provincial level; and 87 were vice-presidents of courts or deputy chief procurators of procuratorates at the prefecture level. Engaging in mutual support with CPC officials, they play a significant role in the organs of state power.

- Members of the democratic parties and personages without party affiliation play an important role in the CPPCC. As deputies to the CPPCC, members of the democratic parties and personages without party affiliation can air their opinions, put forth bills and motions, and participate in the administration and discussion of state affairs. They also hold a fairly big proportion in the members, standing committees members and leaders of the CPPCC at various levels. The latest CPPCC election, held in 2003, saw 337,000 members of the democratic parties and personages without party affiliation elected CPPCC members at various levels nationwide. About 60.1 percent of the members of the Tenth CPPCC National Committee and 65.2 percent of the members of its Standing Committee were members of the democratic parties and personages without party affiliation; and of 24 vice-chairpersons of the vice-chairpersons of the Tenth CPPCC National Committee, 13 are members of the democratic parties and personages without party affiliation.

- Members of the democratic parties and personages without party affiliation exercise democratic supervision over the work of the party in power and the state organs through diversified channels and means. Such supervision mainly covers the implementation of the Constitution, and laws and regulations of the state; the formulation and implementation of major principles and policies of the CPC and the government; and the performance and honesty of the CPC organisations and CPC members who hold leading posts. In recent years, government departments and judicial organs have appointed members of democratic parties and personages without party affiliation as special inspectors, invited and organised members of democratic parties and personages without party affiliation to examine the work style of the CPC, and to take part in other special checks and supervision over law enforcement, thus further opening up the channels of, and constantly strengthening, democratic supervision.

- Members of the democratic parties and personages without party affiliation actively participate in the country's reform and opening-up and modernisation drive, and make suggestions to promote the reunification of the motherland and overall social progress. Since 1989, the central committees of the democratic parties have submitted to the CPC Central Committee, the State Council and departments

concerned nearly 180 important proposals on the overall work of the CPC and the state, as well as on issues that are key to the national economy and the people's livelihood, especially the two major tasks of economic construction and peaceful reunification, on the basis of investigations they have conducted, and their local organisations have submitted more than 80,000 proposals and motions. Many of the proposals and motions have been adopted. The local organisations of the democratic parties at various levels have devised more than 40,000 consulting programs, run more than 1,000 schools of various kinds and trained about 3 million people in various special skills.

In February 2005, the CPC promulgated the "Opinions of the CPC Central Committee on Further Strengthening the Building of the System of Multi-Party Cooperation and Political Consultation Under the Leadership of the CPC," which, on the basis of summing up historical experience and successful operations in multi-party cooperation and political consultation, further clarified the principles, contents, ways and procedures of the system of multi-party cooperation and political consultation, and pointed the direction for improving the socialist political party system with Chinese characteristics.

The political advantages of the system of multi-party cooperation and political consultation under the leadership of the CPC lie in the fact that it can both achieve wide democratic participation, pool the wisdom of the democratic parties, mass organisations and people of all walks of life and promote the scientific and democratic decision-making of the party in power and the governments at all levels, and realise centralisation and unity and draw up unified plans with due consideration given to the interests of different sections of the people. Moreover, it can avoid both the problem of insufficient supervision common under one party rule, and political chaos and a lack of stability and unity that may be caused by the disputes and strife of several parties.

V. The System of Nationalities Nationalities Regional Autonomy

China is a unitary multi-national country. To date, 56 nationalities have been identified and recognised by the central government. The population of the Han nationality accounts for the majority. As the population of the other 55 nationalities is relatively small, they are customarily referred to as "minority nationalities." According to statistics collected in the fifth national census, conducted in 2000, the population of all minority nationalities totalled 106.43 million, accounting for 8.41 percent of the national total.

To solve the problems of nationalities, different systems have been adopted by different multi-national countries around the world, and what China practices is the system of nationalities regional autonomy. Nationalities regional autonomy means that, under the unified leadership of the state, organs of self-government are established for the exercise of autonomy and regional autonomy is practised in areas where people of minority nationalities live in compact communities. China's adoption of nationalities regional autonomy to solve problems of nationalities is an institutional arrangement based on its own historical development, cultural characteristics, relations between nationalities and distribution of nationalities, as well as other specific conditions, which is in accord with the common interests of all nationalities and their demands for development. Both the Constitution and the Law on Nationalities Regional Autonomy contain clear stipulations on nationalities regional autonomy and its implementation. The system of nationalities regional autonomy is a basic political system of China.

Nationalities autonomous areas in China are divided into three levels, namely, autonomous regions, autonomous prefectures and autonomous counties. In 1947, before the People's Republic of China was founded, under the leadership of the CPC, the first provincial-level autonomous region in China – the

Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region – was established in the liberated areas inhabited by Mongolians in compact communities. After New China was founded in 1949, the Chinese government began to introduce the system of nationalities regional autonomy to all areas where minority nationalities lived in compact communities. In October 1955, the Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region was established; in March 1958, the Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region was established; in October 1958, the Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region was established; and in September 1965, the Tibet Autonomous Region was established. Now, China has established 155 nationalities autonomous areas, including five autonomous regions, 30 autonomous prefectures and 120 autonomous counties (banners). Of the 55 minority nationalities, 44 have their own autonomous areas. The population of minority nationalities implementing regional autonomy accounts for 71 percent of the total population of minority nationalities. Meanwhile, China has established 1,173 autonomous townships in places equivalent to townships where minority nationalities live in compact communities, as a supplement to the autonomous areas. Of the 11 minority nationalities for which regional autonomy is not implemented because their populations and habitats are relatively small, nine have set up autonomous townships.

In accordance with the Constitution and the Law on Nationalities Regional Autonomy, the organs of self-government of nationalities autonomous areas are the people's congresses and people's governments of autonomous regions, autonomous prefectures and autonomous counties. In addition to exercising the functions and powers of local state organs at the corresponding level, they also exercise the power of autonomy. First, independently managing the internal affairs of their nationalities in their autonomous areas. Among the chairpersons or vice-chairpersons of the standing committees of the people's congresses of all 155 autonomous areas in China, there are citizens of nationalities or groups exercising regional autonomy in the area concerned. The chairperson of an autonomous region, the prefect of an autonomous prefecture and the head of an autonomous county are all citizens of the nationalities group or groups exercising regional autonomy in the area concerned. In the working departments of the self-government organs in these autonomous areas, a rational proportion of officials from the nationality or groups exercising regional autonomy as well as members of other minorities living in the area concerned are appointed in accordance with the law. At present, minority officials total more than 2.9 million nationwide. Second, having the power to formulate regulations on the exercise of autonomy and separate regulations. By the end of 2004, the nationalities autonomous areas had formulated 133 regulations on the exercise of autonomy and 418 separate regulations, all of which are still effective now. In the light of the particular situation in each area, they had made 68 flexible alterations or supplementary regulations to such laws as the Marriage Law, the Law of Succession, the Election Law, the Law on Land Administration and the Grassland Law. Third, using and developing their own spoken and written languages. At present, 22 minority nationalities in China use 28 written languages of their own. In 2003, 4,787 titles of books with a total print-run of 50.34 million copies, 205 magazines with a total print-run of 7.81 million volumes, and 88 newspapers with a total print-run of 131.3 million copies were published in the languages of minority nationalities. Now available are coded character sets, national standards for fonts and keyboards in the Mongolian, Tibetan, Uygur, Korean and Yi languages, software in these languages can be run using the Windows system, and laser photo-typesetting in these languages has been realised. Fourth, respecting and protecting the freedom of religious belief of minority nationalities. By the end of 2004, Tibetan Buddhist sites numbered more than 1,700 in the Tibet Autonomous Region, with 46,000 resident monks and nuns, and mosques numbered 23,900 in the Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region, with 27,000 clerical personnel. In addition, regional autonomous areas have the right to preserve or reform their own

folk ways and customs, independently arrange, manage and develop the economic construction of the locality concerned, independently manage local revenues, and independently develop undertakings of education, science and technology, culture and sports.

The state assists nationalities autonomous areas to accelerate their economic and social development through various measures. Primarily they are: giving strategic prominence to speeding up the development of nationalities autonomous areas, giving priority to, and rationally allocating, infrastructure construction projects in these areas, strengthening financial input and support to these areas, attaching importance to ecological and environmental protection in these areas, adopting special measures to help these areas develop education, science and technology, augmenting assistance to impoverished habitats of minority nationalities, expediting input into the social undertakings in these areas, helping them open wider to the outside world, pairing them up with more-developed areas for support, and attending to the special needs of minority nationalities in their life and work. From 2000, when the grand strategy for development of western China was adopted, to the end of 2004, 60 key projects, involving transportation, energy, education, public health and environmental protection, had been launched in succession, with a total investment of over 850 billion yuan. All the five autonomous regions, 27 autonomous prefectures, and 83 of the 120 autonomous counties are covered in the strategy. Assisting the nationalities minority areas to accelerate their development has been listed as a major task in the state's "Seven-Year Program for Delivering 80 Million People from Poverty" and "Outline for Poverty Alleviation and Development in China's Rural Areas," as well as in the pairing-off assistance between the more-developed east coast and the western regions, the "National Project of Compulsory Education in Poor Areas," the "Food and Clothing Fund for Impoverished nationalities Minority Areas," the "National Natural Forest Protection Project" and the "Broadcast and TV to Every Village Project." The state has made special arrangements for the development of Tibet. From 1994 to 2001, 30 projects were constructed there, with 3.9 billion yuan in total investment directly from the central government. During the Tenth Five-Year Plan (2001-2005), the central government has invested 31.2 billion yuan in Tibet to construct 117 projects.

With the energetic assistance and support from the state and the more-developed areas, the nationalities autonomous areas have fully exploited their own advantages and maintained a sound situation featured by economic growth, political stability, social progress and harmony between nationalities. From 1994 to 2003, the GDP of the nationalities autonomous areas grew by an annual average of 9.87 percent, which was nearly one percentage point higher than the national average. In 1994, the per-capita GDP of these areas was equivalent to 63.5 percent of the national per-capita figure; in 2003, it rose to 66.5 percent. Also in 2003, the local revenue of the nationalities autonomous areas reached 67.4 billion yuan, 3.3 times that of 1994. In the same year, the per-capita GDP in Tibet was 6,871 yuan, equivalent to 75.5 percent of the national per-capita average; and the per-capita GDP in Xinjiang was 9,700 yuan, equivalent to 106.6 percent of the national per-capita average.

The successful implementation of the system of regional autonomy for minority nationalities has enabled the minority nationalities to manage their own affairs in accordance with the law and participate in the democratic management of state and social affairs. It has also ensured that all nationalities in China, whether their populations are big or small, enjoy equal economic, political, social and cultural rights and work together to safeguard national unity and national solidarity and fight against any attempt to split the country and destroy national solidarity, thus form among them harmonious relations characterised by mutual support, mutual help, striving in unison and common prosperity.

VI. Grassroots Democracy in Urban and Rural Areas

Expanding the scope of grassroots democracy is an inevitable trend and the important base for the improvement and development of political democracy with Chinese characteristics. Along with China's development and progress, the scope of grassroots democracy in urban and rural areas has been expanding continuously, with more channels for citizens' orderly political participation and ever-increasing ways to realise democracy.

China has now established a grassroots democratic self-government system, which mainly includes the rural villagers' committee, urban neighbourhood committee and the conference of workers and staff in enterprises. In these grassroots mass organisations of self-government in urban and rural areas, the Chinese people directly exercise their legal rights of democratic election, democratic decision-making, democratic management and democratic supervision, so that they can manage the public affairs and welfare undertakings of their grassroots organisations and communities by themselves. This has become the most direct and broadest practice of democracy in China today.

(1) Building of Grassroots Political Democracy in Rural Areas

Among China's population of 1.3 billion, over 800 million are rural residents. So, it is an issue of great importance in China's building of political democracy to expand and develop rural grassroots democracy, so that the farmers can fully exercise their democratic rights as real masters in their villages. After years of exploration and practice, the CPC has led the hundreds of millions of Chinese farmers to find, in view of China's realities, an appropriate way to promote the building of grassroots political democracy in rural areas - villagers' self-government.

Self-government by villagers is a basic system by which the broad masses of the rural people directly exercise their democratic rights to run their own affairs in accordance with the law and carry out self-administration, self-education and self-service. Burgeoning in the early 1980s, developed in the 1980s and popularised in the 1990s, this system has become an effective way to develop grassroots democracy and improve the level of governance in rural China.

The Chinese Constitution prescribes the legal status of the villagers' committee as a mass organisation of rural grassroots self-government. The Law of the People's Republic of China on Organisation of the Villagers' Committee expressly specifies the nature, functions, procedures of establishment, term of service and other issues related to villagers' committees to ensure the healthy development of grassroots democratic self-government in rural areas. The implementing rules of the Law on Organisation of the Villagers' Committees and the measures of election of villagers' committees have been enacted or revised in 31 provinces, autonomous regions and municipalities directly under the central government on the mainland of China, which provides a more specific legal guarantee for the villagers' self-government.

Democratic election, democratic decision-making, democratic management and democratic supervision are the major contents of villagers' self-government.

- Democratic election. Villagers can directly elect or dismiss members of the villagers' committees according to the Constitution and the Law on Organisation of the Villagers' Committee. A villagers' committee is composed of three to seven members, including the chairperson and vice-chairpersons. Each committee serves a term of three years. In the process of election, the candidates of the committee members are nominated and voted for directly by the villagers, and the election results are declared on the spot to ensure that the election is just, open and fair. The villagers are enthusiastic about these elections and, according to incomplete statistics, the average participation rate in such elections is above

80 percent in rural China, with some places even boasting over 90 percent. By the end of 2004, some 644,000 villagers' committees had been established throughout the country, with most of the provinces, autonomous regions and municipalities directly under the central government having elected their fifth or sixth committees.

- Democratic decision-making. All important matters touching on the villagers' interests are to be discussed at meetings of villagers or their representatives, and decisions are to be made according to the opinion of the majority. As situations differ greatly from place to place in the rural areas of China, the villages vary in size and it is especially difficult to organise and hold a committee meeting to make a decision in big villages with villagers scattered around a wide area, the problem is solved by holding meetings of villagers' representatives. To date, 85 percent of the villages in China have established the system of villagers' meetings or villagers' representative meetings for democratic decision-making.

- Democratic management. In accordance with the state laws, regulations and related policies, the villagers' self-government rules, or villagers' code of conduct are discussed, formulated or revised by all the villagers in line with the local situation. In line with the self-government rules, vividly called the "lesser constitution," the villagers' committees and villagers practice self-management, self-education and self-service. Now, more than 80 percent of the villages in China have enacted villagers' self-government rules or villagers' code of conduct and established systems of democratic financial management and auditing, and for village affairs management.

- Democratic supervision. The villagers supervise the committee's work and the conduct of the village cadres through making village affairs open, democratic evaluation of village cadres, regular work reports by the villagers' committee, and the system of auditing the work of the outgoing village cadres. Making village affairs public, in particular, is widely welcomed by villagers.

The successful experience of villagers' self-government is a great creation of millions of Chinese farmers led by the CPC in developing socialist political democracy with Chinese characteristics. The promotion of rural grassroots democracy and the practice of villagers' self-government have greatly aroused the enthusiasm of the broad masses of rural people to act as the masters of their own affairs, enhanced their creativity and sense of responsibility, thus opening up a new chapter in the building of political democracy in rural China.

(2) Building of Political Democracy in Urban Communities

The urban neighbourhood committee is a mass self-government organisation of urban residents in China for self-management, self-education and self-service. It is an important form of direct grassroots democracy in Chinese cities.

After the founding of New China in 1949, neighbourhood committees were set up in cities all over the country to make urban residents carry out democratic self-government over public affairs in their residential areas. In 1982, the system of urban neighbourhood committee was, for the first time, written into the Constitution of the People's Republic of China. The Law of the People's Republic of China on the Organisation of Neighbourhood Committees in the Cities, enacted by the NPC Standing Committee in 1989, provides the legal basis and institutional guarantee for the development of urban neighbourhood committees. In 1999, the state experimented with community building in 26 municipal districts, and then activities for community building demonstration were held all over the country. By the end of 2004, 71,375 neighbourhood committees that were deemed up to the requirements for the building of new-type communities had been set up in Chinese cities. At present, urban community building is spreading from

selected places to wider areas, from large cities to medium-sized and small cities, and from eastern to western areas. To improve the level of urban residents' self-government, a new type of urban communities with well-organised management and services as well as a pleasing environment and harmonious neighbourhood relationships are being built throughout the country.

Like rural villagers' self-government, the major contents of the urban residents' self-government are also democratic election, democratic decision-making, democratic management and democratic supervision. In terms of democratic election, the form of election has developed from candidate nomination to self-nomination, from nominating one candidate for election to each post to multi-candidate election, and from indirect election to direct election, breaking down the limitations on place and status, and continuously enhancing the degree of democracy. In recent years, direct elections have been promoted vigorously in urban communities. A survey made by the government department concerned on the 26 experimental urban locations shows that the urban community residents participate actively in the direct elections of neighbourhood committees and over 90 percent of them turn out to vote. As a result of the direct elections, neighbourhood committee members have tended to become younger, better educated and more professional. In terms of democratic decision-making, the residents of a community, as the mainstay in this respect, exercise their decision-making power by holding residents' meetings, forums, hearings and through other effective forms and channels. In the aspect of democratic management, the neighbourhood committees work within the framework of law, standardise their work according to the community residents' self-government rules and regulations, in an effort to make the residents more conscious of being the masters of their own affairs and concerned about public affairs in the community. In the aspect of democratic supervision, the neighbourhood committee practices open management; all issues of public concern, difficult problems and important matters involving the residents' interests are made public to the residents in a timely manner and subject to their discussions, comments, suggestions and supervision.

(3) Building of the System of Conferences of Workers and Staff

The conference of workers and staff is a basic system ensuring the democratic management of an enterprise or public institution by its workers and staff members. In China, this democratic right as master of an enterprise enjoyed by all the members of an enterprise or public institution is largely exercised through the system of conference of workers and staff.

This conference system was adopted in the publicly owned enterprises after the founding of New China, and was widely promoted in the whole country after 1957. There are related stipulations on the system of conference of workers and staff in China's Constitution, the Law on Industrial Enterprises of Public Ownership, the Labour Law, the Trade Union Law, and the Regulations Concerning the Conference of Workers and Staff in Publicly Owned Industrial Enterprises. According to these related laws, the conference of workers and staff has five functions and rights: the right to make deliberations and suggestions on the plan and scheme of the enterprise's production management and development; the right to examine and adopt important regulations and rules on wages, bonus, labour protection, punishments and rewards; the right to deliberate and decide on important matters concerning workers' and staff members' life and material benefits; the right to appraise and supervise the administrators and leaders of the enterprise; and the right to recommend or elect the head of a factory.

The conference of workers and staff enjoys broad mass support in China, and among its representatives are not only workers but also technological staff, managerial personnel and other members. It can

represent all workers and staff in the democratic management of an enterprise. While the conference is in recess, the committee of the trade union of the enterprise will function as its work organ and take care of the day-to-day work of the conference. Since 1998, the system of making factory affairs public has been adopted in state-owned enterprises, collective enterprises and the enterprises whose equities are controlled by the two, and has also been extended to non-publicly owned enterprises. By the end of 2004, 1.732 million enterprises and public institutions had established trade unions and 369,000 had set up the conferences of workers and staff, covering 78.364 million employees. In addition, 316,000 had introduced the system of making their affairs public, covering 70.612 million employees. Now, 52.8 percent of the publicly owned enterprises with trade union organisations have set up conferences of workers and staff, covering 35.026 million employees and accounting for 72.9 percent of the employees in publicly owned enterprises with trade union organisations; 32.6 percent of the non-publicly owned enterprises with trade union organisations have introduced the system of conference of workers and staff, covering 27.87 million employees and accounting for 46.7 percent of the employees in non-publicly owned enterprises with trade union organisations.

Since the reform and opening-up policies were instituted, the conference of workers and staff and other forms of democratic administrative system have been playing an irreplaceable role in democratic management, coordinating labour relationships, guaranteeing and safeguarding the legitimate rights and interests of the employees and promoting reform, development and stability in enterprises and public institutions. The state will continue to adhere to the principle of running enterprises by depending on the workers and staff wholeheartedly. With the deepening of the reform and opening-up, the state will make great efforts to promote the establishment and improvement of democratic management systems in institutions and enterprises under all forms of ownership and take practical measures to tackle salient problems in these respects, so as to ensure the employees to really enjoy their democratic and legitimate rights and interests.

VII. Respecting and Safeguarding Human Rights

In March 2004, an Amendment to the Constitution was adopted by the Second Session of the Tenth National People's Congress, which included the statement "the State respects and safeguards human rights" in the Constitution, thus ushering in a new chapter in the progress of China's human rights undertakings.

Respecting and safeguarding human rights, ensuring that the people enjoy extensive rights and freedom according to law, represents an intrinsic requirement for the development of socialist democracy. Socialist democracy means that all power of the state belongs to the people and people enjoy in real terms the civil rights prescribed in the Constitution and law. China's socialist democracy is a kind of democracy built on the basis that citizens' rights are guaranteed and constantly developed.

As a committed representative of the Chinese people's fundamental interests, the CPC has always taken as its basic task the maintenance of national sovereignty and independence, as well as the safeguarding and development of the various rights of the people, and regards the rights to subsistence and development as the paramount human rights. The CPC adheres to taking development as the task of first importance, implements the scientific concept of putting the people first and seeking an overall, coordinated and sustainable development, and strives to promote economic development and social progress to satisfy the people's multiple needs and realise their all-round development.

The Chinese Constitution comprehensively stipulates the citizens' basic rights and freedoms. Based on the Constitution, China has enacted a series of laws on the protection of human rights, and set up a relatively comprehensive legal system for the protection of human rights. On the basis of achievements made over the 50-plus years of economic and social development, the Chinese people are now enjoying human rights more comprehensive and fuller than they have ever enjoyed in the past.

- The people's rights to subsistence and development are guaranteed. The CPC focuses on economic construction and has made tremendous efforts to realise the people's rights to subsistence and development. After more than 50 years of hard work, two great historical leaps have been accomplished in people's life - from being poverty-stricken to having enough food and clothing, and then to reaching the moderately well-off stage. China has successfully solved the problem of feeding 22 percent of the world's population with less than 10 percent of the world's arable land. From 1979 to 2004, China's economy kept growing rapidly. Its GDP soared from US\$147.3 billion to US\$1,650 billion, exceeding US\$1,200 per person. The annual per-capita income of urban residents rose 5.5 times in real terms, and that of rural residents, 5.9 times. The average housing space per person increased from 6.7 sq m to 25 sq m in urban areas, and from 8.1 sq m to 28 sq m in rural areas. The rural poverty-stricken population went down from 250 million to 26.1 million. The Chinese people's overall health level has surpassed the average of countries with a moderate level of income, leading most developing countries in this aspect. The people's average life expectancy was raised from 35 years before the founding of New China in 1949 to nearly 72 years in 2004. The mortality rate of pregnant women and women in childbirth decreased from 1,500 per 100,000 before 1949 to 48.3 per 100,000 in 2004; and the infant mortality rate also dropped - from 200 per 1,000 before 1949 to 21.5 per 1,000 in 2004. In recent years, the Chinese government has promulgated and implemented a series of regulations and measures, such as the National Plan for the Construction of an Information System for Public Health Monitoring and the National Plan for the Construction of a System for Medical Rescue and Treatment in Public Health Emergencies, thus greatly strengthening the protection of citizens' rights to health and life.

- Citizens' civil and political rights are guaranteed. China's Constitution and law protect citizens' rights to freedom of religion, speech and press, and of association. Citizens' rights to property, reputation, personal name, honour, personal dignity and personal safety as well as the right to keep one's property from encroachment are also acknowledged and protected. China has set up and improved an open information system and other related systems to ensure that the citizens enjoy full democratic rights to information, supervision and participation in public affairs. The state encourages proactively the development of the press and publishing undertakings. In 2004, 25.77 billion copies of national and provincial newspapers, 2.69 billion copies of periodicals of various kinds, and 6.44 billion copies of books were published. In recent years, the Internet has developed with a great momentum in China, and by June 30, 2005, the amount of Internet users had exceeded 100 million, including 53 million broad-band users. The state respects and protects citizens' freedom in religious belief, and guarantees that the legitimate rights and interests of religious adherents and religious groups, and venues for religious activities are not violated. According to incomplete statistics, there are now over 100 million religious adherents, about 300,000 members of the clergy, and more than 100,000 venues for religious activities in China. The state has formulated the Regulations on Social Organisation Registration and Management, the Provisional Regulations for the Registration and Administration of Private Non-Enterprise Units and the Regulations for the Management of Foundations to guarantee that citizens have the legal freedom to

form associations. By the end of 2004, there were over 289,000 NGOs of various types in China, including 153,000 social organisations, 135,000 private non-enterprise units and nearly 900 foundations.

- People's economic, social and cultural rights are guaranteed. There are comprehensive stipulations in the Chinese Constitution, laws and regulations on citizens' rights to labour, rest, gender equality, equal pay for equal work for men and women, intellectual property, social security, receiving material aid and education, marriage and divorce, as well as the right to engage and participate in scientific research, literature, art and other cultural activities. In recent years, the state has taken various measures to solve the problem of employment and re-employment, stepped up efforts in the establishment of a social security system, increased support to education, science and technology, culture, public health and other social undertakings, and striven to ensure that citizens' economic, social and cultural rights are guaranteed. By the end of 2004, the numbers of urban people taking out policies of basic pension insurance, unemployment insurance, medical insurance and industrial injury insurance had reached 164 million, 106 million, 124 million and 68.45 million, respectively, 8.47 million, 2.11 million, 15.02 million and 22.70 million more respectively than at the end of the previous year. In the rural areas, 55 million people had participated in social old-age pension system, and the number is increasing rapidly. A total of 22.05 million urban residents in China were issued minimum living allowances by the government. China has generally achieved the goal of basic nine-year compulsory education and elimination of illiteracy among young and middle-aged people. In 2004, the central treasury appropriated various special-purpose funds, totalling over 10 billion yuan, for compulsory education in rural areas, an increase of 70 percent over the previous year. There are over 20 million students in institutions of higher learning in China, bringing the gross enrolment ratio for higher education to 19 percent. By the end of 2004, China had 282 radio stations and 314 TV stations, and the overall population coverage rates of radio and TV broadcasting had reached 94.1 percent and 95.3 percent, respectively. The government has made continuous efforts to strengthen the protection of the legitimate rights and interests of migrant workers from rural areas, and formulated the Provisional Measures for the Management of Payment of Wages to Migrant Construction Workers from Rural Areas in 2004, which provided for an overall clearing-up and settlement of defaults on payment of project fees as well as wages of migrant construction workers from rural areas.

- The legitimate rights and interests of the special groups of people, such as women, the aged and minors, and the underprivileged groups, such as the disabled, are guaranteed. China has enacted the Law on the Protection of the Rights and Interests of Women, the Law on the Protection of the Rights and Interests of the Aged, the Law on the Protection of Minors and the Law on the Protection of the Disabled to provide special stipulations for the protection of special social groups, such as women, the aged and minors, and the underprivileged groups, such as the disabled. Women's right to participate in the management of state affairs is protected in China. Among the deputies to the Fourth NPC in 1975 to the Tenth NPC in 2003, women made up more than 20 percent of the total. At present, the scope of employment, pay for work and educational level for women are basically the same as for men. As China is becoming an ageing society, aged people receive special care from the government and society. In 2004, basic pensions issued to retirees from enterprises throughout the country totalled 303.1 billion yuan, including 52.2 billion yuan in subsidies from the central treasury. There are 376 million people below the age of 18 in China, more than a quarter of the total population. The Chinese government formulated the "Outline Plan for the Development of Chinese Children in the 1990s" in 1992 and the "Outline for the Development of Chinese Children, 2001-2010" in 2001, to promote the development of children in the aspects of health, education, legal protection and environment. There are 60 million disabled people in

China, almost the population of an average medium-sized country. In 2004, the employment rate of the disabled reached 80 percent, and over 3.3 million disabled people overcame their disabilities to varying degrees.

- The rights of the minority nationalities are guaranteed. In China, people of all minority nationalities, like citizens of the Han nationality, enjoy all equal civil rights specified in the Constitution and laws, and participate in the management of state and local affairs on an equal basis. Meanwhile, their rights are offered special protection by the law and related policies. In accordance with the Constitution and the Election Law, every minority nationality is represented by appropriate numbers of deputies, in the highest organ of the state power, the NPC, and there should be at least one deputy for a nationality with a very small population. Starting from the First NPC, the proportion of deputies of minority nationalities in the total number of deputies has remained around 14 percent, much higher than their population proportion of about 8 percent in the nation's total population. All minority nationalities living in compact communities or in a scattered manner are represented in the local people's congress at all levels, and a deputy of a minority nationality can speak for a smaller number of people than the required number represented by a deputy to the local people's congress. People of all minority nationalities are eligible to hold any position in any state organs and government departments. Each nationality has the freedom to use and develop its own spoken and written languages. The state respects and protects the folk ways, customs and freedom of religious belief of minority nationalities.

The Chinese government pays serious attention to the positive role played by international conventions on human rights in promoting human rights. To date, China has joined 21 international conventions on human rights, and has adopted a series of measures to fulfil its obligations as specified in those conventions. In October 1997, the Chinese government signed the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, which was approved by the Standing Committee of the NPC in February 2001. The Chinese government submitted its first report on the implementation of the Covenant to the United Nations in 2003 as scheduled, and accepted the consideration and examination of the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights of the United Nations in April 2005. The Chinese government also signed the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights in October 1998. At present, the Chinese government departments concerned are pressing on with their research and preparations, and when conditions are ripe, the State Council will submit a request to the Standing Committee of the NPC for examination and approval.

VIII. Democratic Rule by the Communist Party of China

In its practice of ruling the country over the past five decades and more, the CPC has developed a series of important theories on, and established an institutional system of, democratic rule, and is actively exploring new ways and new methods of democratic rule. The sense of democracy among the CPC members has been continuously enhanced, and notable progress has been made to improve the democratic work style of Party officials at all levels.

Democratic rule means that the CPC sticks to the principle of ruling the country for the people and relying on the people in its rule, guarantees that the people are the masters of the state, upholds and improves the people's democratic dictatorship and the democratic centralism of the Party and the state, and promotes people's democracy by enhancing inner-Party democracy. In September 2004, the Decision of the CPC Central Committee on the Enhancement of the Party's Governance Capability was adopted at the Fourth Plenum of the 16th CPC Central Committee. The document made democratic rule, scientific

rule and rule in accordance with the law the three basic pillars of the Party in ruling the country, thus marking a new stage in strengthening the building of the Party's capability of democratic rule and enhancing the level of its democratic rule.

(1) Reforming and Improving the Leadership System and Working Mechanism

Leadership of the state and society by the CPC mainly refers to its political, ideological and organisational leadership, that is, the Party exercises leadership in line with its basic theory, program and line, by formulating major principles and policies, making suggestions on legislation, recommending cadres for important positions, conducting ideological education, and giving full play to the role of the Party organisations and members.

In practice, the CPC sticks to scientific and democratic rule and rule in accordance with the law, constantly reforms and improves the leadership system and working mechanism, and, acting on the principle that the ruling party commands the overall situation and coordinates the efforts of all quarters, standardises relations between Party committees and the people's congresses, the governments, the CPPCC organisations as well as the mass organisations. The Party committees, playing the role as the core of leadership over all other organisations at corresponding levels, support these organisations in assuming their responsibilities independently and making concerted efforts in their work, and make sure that the Party's line, principles and policies as well as major decisions and work arrangements of Party committees are implemented through the Party organisations and Party members in these organisations. At the same time, Party committees support the people's congresses in carrying out their functions as organs of state power in accordance with the law, ensuring that the Party's views become the will of the state and that candidates recommended by the Party organisations become leading cadres of the organs of state power through democratic discussions and legal procedures, and exercising supervision over them. They support the governments in fulfilling their statutory functions and performing their official duties in accordance with the law; support the judicial organs in exercising their judicial and procuratorial authorities independently and justly in accordance with the law; support the CPPCC committees in performing their functions of political consultation, democratic supervision and participating in the administration and discussion of state affairs by focusing on the two major principles of unity and democracy; strengthen cooperation with the democratic parties and bring into full play the characteristics and advantages of China's socialist political party system; and support the trade unions, Communist Youth League organisations, women's federations and other mass organisations to work independently in accordance with the law and their respective constitutions so as to act better as a bridge between the Party and the masses of all walks of life.

(2) Developing Inner-Party Democracy

Promoting people's democracy by improving inner-Party democracy is an important component of the CPC's democratic rule. In recent years, the CPC has been unceasingly progressing in promoting inner-Party democracy.

- Making efforts to establish and improve a mechanism to guarantee the democratic rights of Party members. In September 2004, the CPC Central Committee promulgated the revised Regulations on the Guarantee of Rights of CPC Members, which, on the basis of the rights and obligations prescribed in the Constitution of the CPC and by summarising the new experience gained in developing inner-Party democracy, improves the procedures for CPC members to exercise their democratic rights, thus further institutionalising and standardising the exercise of such rights.

- Improving and perfecting the system of Party congress. The CPC has established the system of congress in its organisations at and above the county level. The national congress and the congresses of the provinces (autonomous regions and municipalities directly under the central government), cities divided into districts, autonomous prefectures, counties (banners), autonomous counties, cities not divided into districts and municipal districts are held once every five years. To give full scope to the Party congresses at all levels, since the end of the 1980s the CPC has tried out the system of permanent Party congress in 12 cities, counties and urban districts in five provinces, with satisfactory results. The CPC Central Committee has decided to adopt the system of motion-raising by Party congress delegates, extend the experiment with the system of permanent Party congress to more cities and counties, and actively explore ways and forms that can give better play to the role of delegates when Party congresses are not in session.

- Giving full play to the role of plenary sessions of Party committees. In accordance with the principle of collective leadership, democratic centralism, individual consultation and decision-making by meeting, the CPC endeavours to improve the rules of procedure and the decision-making mechanism within Party committees, with priority given to strengthening the role of plenary sessions of Party committees at all levels. At the third, fourth and fifth plenums of the 16th CPC Central Committee, General Secretary Hu Jintao of the CPC Central Committee, on behalf of the Standing Committee of the Political Bureau, delivered a work report to the Central Committee. This represented a significant move taken by the new generation of the central collective leadership to give better play to the role of the plenum. Leaders of local Party committees at all levels now, at the requirement of the CPC Central Committee, report on their work to and accept the supervision of the plenums of the Party committees at the corresponding level.

- Reforming and improving the system of inner-Party elections. The CPC has constantly reformed and improved the method of candidacy nomination in inner-Party elections, and the nominations by Party organisations and Party members are combined in democratic recommendations. The ratio in competitive elections has been raised appropriately and the scope of direct elections of leaders of grassroots Party organisations has been gradually expanded.

- Establishing and improving the mechanism of inner-Party supervision. In December 2003, the CPC Central Committee promulgated the Regulations on Inner-Party Supervision of the CPC (trial version), which, for the first time and in the form of inner-Party code, makes comprehensive provisions concerning the focus, ways, methods and other major issues regarding inner-Party supervision, and clearly states that leading organs and leading cadres at all levels, especially principal ones, are the main target of inner-Party supervision. In the same month, the CPC Central Committee promulgated the revised Regulations of the CPC on Disciplinary Punishments, which specifies the punishments for all breaches of discipline by Party members in the new situation.

(3) Expanding Democracy in Cadre and Personnel Work

Over the years, the CPC has continuously reformed its cadre and personnel system and intensified efforts to make its cadre and personnel work more scientific, democratic and institutionalised.

First, establishing and improving a scientific mechanism for selection, appointment, management and supervision of cadres. In 2002, the CPC Central Committee issued the Regulations on the Work of Selecting and Appointing Leading Party and Government Cadres, which contained comprehensive

provisions on all links in selecting and appointing leading cadres, thus further improving work in this regard.

Second, introducing the system of open selection and competition for leading posts. The Regulations on the Work of Selecting and Appointing Leading Party and Government Cadres, as well as the Provisional Regulations on the Open Selection of Leading Cadres of the Party and Government and the Interim Provisions on the Work of Competition for Posts in the Party and Government, both of which were issued by the General Office of the CPC Central Committee in 2004, all included clear provisions on the scope of application, procedure of selection, and methods of examination and review, discipline and supervision regarding open selection and competition in this field, thus making the work more regularised and institutionalised.

Third, improving the mechanism of democratic decision-making by Party committees regarding the selection and appointment of cadres. On the basis of summing up past experience, the Voting Methods for the Plenum of CPC Local Committees Concerning Candidates Nominated and Recommended as Head of a Party Committee or Government of an Immediate Lower Level, issued by the CPC Central Committee in 2004, clearly stipulates that the would-be head of a Party committee or government of a city (prefecture, league) or county (county-level city, district or banner) shall be, in usual circumstances, nominated by the standing committee of the Party committee at a higher level and submitted to the plenum of the said Party committee for a secret vote. If an urgent appointment is needed while the plenum concerned is not in session, the plenum members shall be consulted.

Fourth, introducing the civil service system. Since the Provisional Regulations on Civil Servants of the State was put into effect in October 1993, a large number of outstanding young talented people with higher education have been recruited as civil servants through open examination and selection. In April 2005, the Law of the People's Republic of China on Civil Servants was deliberated and adopted by the NPC Standing Committee, and announced to take effect as of January 2006. The implementation of this law symbolises an important step forward in pursuit of a scientific, democratic and institutionalised practice for cadre and personnel work, and has a great bearing on the execution of the strategy of ruling the country by law and the building of socialist political democracy.

(4) Tightening Restraints and Supervision over Use of Power

With the goal of establishing a mechanism for the exercise of power featuring a rational structure, scientific disposition, rigorous procedures and effective restraint, the CPC has combined reinforcing the building of the system of restraint over power with effective supervision over cadres. First, it has augmented supervision over leading organs and cadres, especially principal ones in leading bodies at all levels. The supervision covers the implementation of democratic centralism and the rules of procedure for leading bodies, and the implementation of the system under which leading cadres report on major matters, their work and their efforts to perform their duties honestly and the system of democratic appraisal, instruction and admonishment, and the system that requires leading cadres to reply to letters of inquiry from Party organisations. Second, it has beefed up supervision over the use of power at key links and sectors, such as the selection and appointment of cadres, the operation of financial funds and the management of state-owned assets and finances. Third, it has given full scope to various supervisory bodies to raise overall efficiency. This means strengthening inner-Party supervision, and supporting and guaranteeing supervision by the people's congresses, special government organs and judicial departments, democratic supervision by CPPCC organisations and the supervision of public opinion.

After long-term unremitting efforts, the CPC has developed a set of systems, mechanisms and methods to restrict and monitor the exercise of power, build a clean government and combat corruption, that are in accord with the national conditions. In January 2005, the CPC Central Committee promulgated the Implementation Outline for Building and Improving the System to Punish and Prevent Corruption with Equal Stress on Education, System and Supervision, which represents an overall arrangement in line with the principle of addressing both the symptoms and the root causes of corruption, taking comprehensive measures to rectify both and trying both methods of punishment and prevention, with priority given to the latter.

In recent years, the CPC has, in line with the principle of democratic centralism, gradually introduced transparency into Party affairs, and set up and improved a set of systems regarding the circulation of information among Party members, soliciting opinions on important decisions and reporting on major matters and their own incomes by leading cadres, thereby making the systems play an important role in building a clean government and combating corruption. The CPC will continue to battle corruption by improving its institutional and legal instruments, improve the relevant leadership system and working mechanism, and work out overall medium- and long-term plans for the institutional building of laws and rules to build a clean government and combat corruption, so as to put the use of power under institutional and legal control. It will urge the state legislative organs to expedite the legislation procedures regarding the building of a clean government, study and formulate specific anti-corruption laws, and amend and improve relevant provisions in the Criminal Law and the Criminal Procedure Law. It will continue to deepen the reforms of the cadre and personnel system, judicial system and administrative examination and approval system, as well as the financial and monetary system, investment system, and supervision over and control of state-owned assets, so as to reduce and finally eliminate the soil for and root causes of corruption.

The CPC deals severely with Party members and cadres who violate discipline and laws, and is resolute in removing and punishing corrupt members. From December 2003 to November 2004, the Party's discipline inspection organs and the government's supervision departments at all levels had put in file 162,032 cases of corruption, wound up 160,602 cases, and disciplined 164,831 persons with Party and administrative discipline penalties. Among them, 5,916 were cadres at county (division) level, 415 at department (bureau) level, and 15 at provincial (ministerial) level. The cases of 4,775 people, or 2.9 percent of the total punished, were transferred to judicial organs for criminal investigation.

IX. Government Democracy

The Chinese government is the government of the people. The fundamental purpose of the entire work of the Chinese government is to serve the people, be responsible to the people, and support and guarantee the people's right as the masters of the state. Since the adoption of the reform and opening-up policies, especially in recent years, governments at all levels have, in line with the requirements of democratic rule and centring on the goal of "forming an administrative management system that is standard in conduct, coordinated in cooperation, and being fair, transparent, honest and efficient," energetically augmented the building of their capability of administration. In February 2005, the Working Rules of the State Council were revamped and announced, fully reflecting the spirit of democracy that encourages scientific and democratic decision-making, administration in accordance with the law and the strengthening of administrative supervision.

(1) Promoting Administration in Accordance with the Law

In November 1999, the State Council promulgated the Decision on Pushing Forward Administration by Law in an All-Round Way, and identified the tasks and requirements with regard to rule by law. In March 2004, it issued the Implementation Outline for Pushing Forward Administration by Law in an All-Round Way, and announced the goal of basically realising a law-abiding government in 10 years. On July 1, 2004, the Law of the People's Republic of China on Administrative Licensing went into effect. Under the principle of "rational and legal, efficient and convenient for the people, and supervision and responsibility," the law sets a series of principles and systems for administrative licensing, and, while requiring the government to administer according to law, highlights the major contents of democracy in the government's exercise of power.

- Strengthening the legislation work of the government. Since 1978, the State Council has submitted to the Standing Committee of the NPC several hundred bills for deliberation according to law, formulated more than 650 administrative regulations that are still in effect today. In recent years, the Chinese government has persisted in putting the people first and governing for the people, set great store by legislation directly related to the immediate interests of the people, and promoted the coordinated development of economic and social undertakings in an all-round way. The State Council has submitted to the NPC Standing Committee a number of bills for deliberation, including the Production Safety Law (draft), the Law on Prevention and Treatment of Infectious Diseases (revised draft) and the Law on Civil Servants (draft), promulgated or amended such administrative regulations as the Regulations on Unemployment Insurance, the Regulations on Guarantee of Minimum Subsistence Allowances for Urban Residents, the Regulations on Labour Security Supervision, the Regulations on Religious Affairs, the Regulations on Industrial Injury Insurance, the Methods on the Aid to and Management of Indigent Vagrants and Beggars in Cities, the Regulations on Marriage Registration, the Regulations on Legal Aid, and the Regulations on the Implementation of the Law on Road Traffic Safety. The care shown for disadvantaged people are fully reflected in such legislation, showing the government's humanistic concern in administration. In 2005, once again the State Council amended and promulgated the Regulations on Letters of Petition and Personal Petition, which protects in accordance with the law the rights of citizens to criticism, suggestion, appeal, accusation and impeachment, emphasises the responsibilities of the government departments in charge, and gives prominence to the spirit of "unification of power and responsibility, open operation to facilitate petitioning and guarantee of the rights of citizens."

- Improving administrative enforcement of the law. The Chinese government stresses exercising powers and functions strictly in line with the legal limits of authority and legal procedures, introduces in an all-round way the responsibility system in administrative enforcement of law, strictly investigates and affixes the responsibility for mistakes in law enforcement, constantly strengthens the law enforcers' sense of administration in accordance with the law, and reduces and eventually eliminates acts of enforcing law at liberty. In the course of enforcing the law, attention has been placed on protecting the legitimate rights and interests of the parties concerned and the parties of interest, and on resolutely rectifying misconduct that encroaches on the interests of the people, abuse of power for personal gain and other breaches of the law, so as to ensure that the laws are enforced in a strict, just and civilised manner. Over the past few years, the government has made sincere efforts to rectify illegal administrative acts of infringements on people's rights in the work of demolition and relocation in cities and land expropriation and requisition in rural areas.

- Improving the systems of administrative supervision. While accepting the supervision of the NPC, CPPCC, judicial organs, public opinion and the masses, the Chinese government has established and improved a set of systems of administrative supervision. The first is the system geared to tracking down the responsibility for erroneous administrative decisions. Based on the principle of "he who makes the decision will be held responsible," where massive losses are caused because of stepping beyond the bounds of one's power or because of violation of procedures, the decision-makers shall be held strictly accountable. The second is the introduction of the system of affixing administrative responsibilities, under which government officials are held responsible if their administrative conduct violates the law. The third is the implementation of the administrative review system and the filing and examination system of regulations and regulatory documents so as to promptly and effectively ensure that subordinate departments and governments act in accordance with the law. The fourth is strengthening supervision by auditing and monitoring organs. The National Audit Office is empowered to conduct careful auditing of the implementation of the central financial budget and other financial revenues and expenditures before making relevant reports to the NPC Standing Committee and the State Council, and made penalty decisions for the violation of financial laws and regulations. China decided in 2005 to enlarge the auditing of economic responsibilities to all leading cadres at department (bureau) level while continuing a similar practice among provincial-level (ministerial-level) officials.

(2) Accelerating the Transformation of Government Functions

In line with the requirements of democratic administration, the Chinese government has accelerated its structural reform and the transformation of government functions, pressed ahead with innovations in management structures and systems, with special focus on efficiency of administration, and striven to build a clean, efficient and pragmatic government.

- Defining the administrative functions of the government in accordance with the law. Guided by the principle that things that can be handled by citizens, legal persons or other organisations independently, or be regulated by the market competition mechanism, or be solved by industrial organisations or intermediaries through self-disciplinary mechanism, shall not be solved through administrative ways by administrative organs, the relations between government and enterprise, government and the market, and government and society have been rationalised gradually, and things that the government need not bother about shall be shifted to enterprises, the market or society correspondingly.

- Deepening the reform of the system of administrative examination and approval. To solve the problem of excessive administrative examination and approval and uproot corruption, the Chinese government has pressed forward with reform of administrative examination and approval, comprehensively sorted out projects subject to administrative examination and approval, and scrapped or adjusted the examination and approval of such projects. From 2002 to 2004, the State Council eliminated or moderated 1,806 such projects in three batches. By the end of 2004, the number of projects that needed review and approval by State Council departments had been cut by 50.1 percent. In the meantime, local governments have also endeavoured to streamline similar projects and standardise their conducts of examination and approval. The Chinese government will continue to deepen the reform of the system of administrative examination and approval, improve the examination and approval methods, and reinforce follow-up supervision and control, so as to build a scientific and rational mechanism of administrative management and supervision.

- Strengthening social management and public services. The Chinese government has made great efforts to improve its social management system and pattern, and maintain social order and stability to promote social justice. The State Council has promulgated 106 plans for emergency, including the Regulations on Response to Public Health Emergencies and the Regulations on Preventing and Dealing with Geological Disasters, worked out the State General Plan for Handling Public Health Emergencies, and is constantly improving its capacity to deal with all emergencies of various kinds. To make itself a better supplier of public services, the Chinese government is paying more attention to responding to the common demands of society, and gradually improving and completing its public policy and service system. In addition, it is shoring up financial support for education, science and technology, culture, public health and other social undertakings, and pushing forward the commercialisation process of some public products and services in an active and steady way.

(3) Making Decisions in a Scientific and Democratic Manner

The Chinese government has kept reforming and improving its decision-making mechanism, made efforts in introducing a scientific and democratic practice in decision-making, and encouraged and expanded all forms of effective participation of the masses in government decision-making.

- Establishing a system of open administration. The Chinese government requires its subordinate departments at all levels to make public their administrative affairs as far as possible, so as to enhance the transparency of government work and guarantee the people's right to know, participate in and supervise the work of the government. In particular, it requires schools, hospitals, as well as water, power, gas, public transportation and other public departments and units that are closely related to the people's interests to adopt the system of open administration in an all-round way. In recent years, the work of the government has become more transparent with the establishment of government websites and promotion of e-government, as well as the introduction and improvement of the system of press spokesmen and the mechanism of media reporting on emergencies. Now, the Chinese government is enacting regulations to enhance the transparency of government administration with the aim to provide institutional guarantees to standardising open administration.

- Increasing the public's participation in government legislation. By way of media publicity of drafts of laws and regulations, consultation and discussion with experts, seminars and hearings, the Chinese government has stepped up the practice of open government legislation to ensure the effective participation of the public in the work. On the basis of summing up past experience, the Implementation Outline for Pushing Forward Administration by Law in an All-Round Way has codified and improved relevant systems and mechanisms, so as to ensure that the wisdom of the masses and the will of the people are embodied in government legislation.

- Establishing a system of expert consultation, discussion and appraisal. When making important decisions, governments at all levels earnestly listen to and accept the opinions of experts. In recent years, the state has organised experts to complete several important strategic study reports on development, including the state medium- and long-term development plans for science and technology, the development plan for agricultural science and technology, the national strategy on sustainable development of water resources, and the plan for building a public health system, thus providing intellectual support for government decision-making. When formulating or revising administrative regulations, the State Council extensively solicits the opinions of experts, accepts their suggestions, and make great efforts to ensure that the regulations are in accord with reality and are practical.

- Building a system of public hearing and publicity. Public hearing and publicity are increasingly becoming a common practice adopted by governments at all levels when making decisions. The Law on Legislation, the Law on Price, the Law of Administrative Licensing, the Law on Administration of Toll Highways, and other rules and regulations include expressly specified provisions on public hearings. Some local governments have also worked out their own rules on hearings concerning administrative decision-making. In January 2002, the government departments concerned conducted a hearing on the "plan for government-guided pricing of some passenger train tickets," the first national hearing on an administrative decision in Chinese history, which attracted wide attention from the society. In recent years, several thousand hearings of various kinds have been held across the country, and the public's enthusiasm for participating in government decision-making is higher than ever before.

X. Judicial Democracy

China's judicial structure and system are important components of the country's system of socialist political democracy. Over the years, China has endeavoured to build and improve its judicial system and working mechanism, strengthen the building of judicial democracy, and guarantee the legitimate rights and interests of citizens and legal persons through judicial justice, and realise social fairness and justice.

China has set up separate judicial organs and procuratorial organs under the people's congresses, and practices a judicial system with separation between judicial organs and procuratorial organs. The judicial system reveals the nature of the socialist system in which the people are the masters of the country, and also learns from the experience of other countries in their building of judicial systems. Chinese judicial organs use facts as the basis and law as the yardstick, and punish crimes in strict accordance with the law to protect the legitimate rights and interests of citizens.

According to the Chinese Constitution and relevant laws, the people's courts and people's procuratorates exercise judicial power and procuratorial power independently in accordance with the law, and are responsible to, and supervised by, the people's congresses. They are not subject to interference by any administrative organ, public organisation or individual. The judicial organs carry out their duties independently within the limits as prescribed by the law, and any interference in their independent exercise of judicial power and procuratorial power in accordance with the law is a violation of the Constitution and the law. Based on this, China has established a system in which the courts independently exercise their judicial power to conduct civil, administrative and criminal trials in accordance with the law, and the procuratorates independently exercise their power to approve arrests, institute public prosecutions, lodge protests and supervise law enforcement in accordance with the law.

As the judicial organs of the state, the people's courts take judicial justice as the aim, reform and complete the trial system in line with the principle of independence in trial, and punish criminals and protect the people through trials: they practice the system of defence in criminal trials, attach importance to evidence, not give credence to confessions and see to it that the rights of accused are protected. In civil trials, they pay attention to protecting the rights of the litigants and provide judicial guarantees for citizens to exercise their democratic rights and for litigants to enjoy their civil rights. In administrative trials, they protect citizens' legitimate rights from infringement by illegal conduct of administrative organs. In 2004, local courts at various levels nationwide closed 644,248 criminal cases of first instance, 4,303,744 civil cases of first instance and 92,192 administrative cases, and corrected, in accordance with the law, wrong judgements in 16,967 cases, which accounted for 0.34 percent of the total effective judgements handed down that year. In recent years, the people's courts have been constantly

improving litigation procedures to protect legal rights and interests of citizens and legal persons, and truly solve the issue of difficulty in enforcement.

China has established the Supreme People's Court and people's courts at various local levels, as well as the military courts and other special people's courts. By the end of 2004, there were 3,548 people's courts at various levels and special people's courts, with a total of 190,627 judges.

As the state organs for legal supervision, the people's procuratorates bear, in accordance with the law, the responsibility of cracking down on criminal offences, investigating embezzlement, bribery, misconduct and infringement on the people's rights by state functionaries, as well as exercising legal supervision over lawsuits and safeguarding judicial justice and legal uniformity. With regard to the legal supervision over criminal lawsuits, they supervise in an all-round way the placing of cases on file, investigation, trial and execution of penalties, and give equal stress to both the extirpation of crime and the protection of human rights. In legal supervision over civil and administrative lawsuits, they protect the legitimate rights and interests of the parties on an equal footing, with priority given to cases of unjust judgements caused by serious violation of legal procedures, taking bribes and bending the law, and committing irregularities for personal gain. In recent years, the procuratorial organs have made public their operations, adopted the system of notifying litigants of their rights and obligations, the system of public review of non-prosecution cases, criminal appeals and civil administrative counter-appeals, and a working mechanism that guarantees that lawyers perform in accordance with the law in handling criminal lawsuits, in an effort to ensure judicial justice. In 2004, procuratorial organs turned down requests for arrest warrants in 68,676 cases, reversed prosecution decisions in 26,994 cases, corrected 2,699 cases that had been improperly placed on file by investigation organs, allowed appeals in 3,063 criminal cases and 13,218 civil administrative judgements, demanded retrials in 4,333 cases, placed 5,569 criminal appeal cases on file for re-investigation, and changed 786 original decisions.

China has established the Supreme People's Procuratorate and the people's procuratorates at various local levels, as well as military procuratorates and other special people's procuratorates. By the end of 2004, there were 3,630 people's procuratorates at various levels, with 140,077 procurators.

Chinese judicial practice abides, both in institutional and procedural terms, by the principle that everyone is equal and the principle that the punishment must be made to fit the crime. The systems of trial by levels, challenge, open trial, people's jurors, people's supervisors, lawyers, legal assistance and people's mediation have been introduced to safeguard judicial justice, and guarantee the democratic rights of the people and the legitimate rights and interests of citizens.

- System of open trial. The system of open trial is prescribed in both the Chinese Constitution and relevant laws. In recent years, the Supreme People's Court requires courts at all levels to try cases openly and in strict accordance with the law, in open courts and with evidence openly submitted, question the witness openly, and announce all judgements openly. The people's courts at various levels have further reinforced the system of open trial. Except for cases which should be tried in camera, as specified by law, they now hear all cases in public. Notice of cases to be tried in public shall be announced in advance to open the entire process to the auditing of ordinary citizens and the press. The people's courts also, on their own initiative, invite deputies to the people's congresses and members of CPPCC organisations to audit open trials so that the NPC deputies can supervise and the CPPCC members can inspect judicial activities.

- System of people's jurors. After New China was founded in 1949, the state prescribed the system of people's jurors in relevant laws, and made detailed provisions for such a system in the Organisation Law of People's Courts and other laws enacted later. The Decision on Improving the System of People's Jurors, adopted by the NPC Standing Committee in August 2004, clearly states the scope of trials in which jurors could participate, as well as the qualifications and selection, and rights and obligations of jurors. In line with the law and relevant provisions, the people's courts implement the system of people's jurors in earnest to ensure people's direct participation in and supervision of judicial activities.

- System of people's supervisors. Adopting the system of people's supervisors and placing procuratorial work under the effective supervision of the people embody the requirements of lawsuit democracy. Since October 2003, the procuratorial organs began to try out the system of people's supervisors in 10 provinces, autonomous regions and municipalities directly under the central government. Later, this system was spread to 86 percent of all procuratorates nationwide. People's supervisors are selected at the recommendation of various organs, groups, institutions and enterprises, with such major duties as conducting independent appraisals and submitting supervisory comments on cases the procuratorial organs have directly placed on file for investigation but have later decided to withdraw or halt the prosecution of, and in cases of refusal to submit to arrest. They can also participate, upon invitation, in other law-enforcement examination activities organised by the people's procuratorates regarding crimes committed by civil servants, and make suggestions and comments on violations of law and discipline discovered. By the end of 2004, a total of 18,962 people's supervisors had been selected, who had supervised the conclusion of 3,341 cases.

- System of lawyers. The Lawyers Law, promulgated in 1996, initially established the basic framework of a system of lawyers with Chinese characteristics, and it contains provisions on the rights and obligations of lawyers in the course of judicial and administrative procedures, and other social activities. By the end of 2004, there were 118,000 certified lawyers and 11,691 law firms in China; the unitary state law firms had been replaced by the coexistence of a multiple variety of law firms, including partnership law firms, state law firms and cooperative law firms, with the partnership law firms accounting for 68.6 percent of the total. In addition, 148 foreign law firms from 17 countries had been allowed to establish offices that are allowed to operate within the boundaries of China, and the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region had established 48 law offices on the mainland of China. In 2004, lawyers throughout the country handled over 1.5 million lawsuits and more than 800,000 non-lawsuit cases. The establishment and improvement of the system of lawyers enable the lawyers to make use of legal means to protect the rights and interests of the litigants, and ensure correct application of law and social fairness and justice.

- System of legal assistance. Legal assistance is a key measure to guarantee the legitimate rights and interests of the disadvantaged groups and achieve judicial justice. Since 1994, China has explored the building of a legal assistance system with Chinese characteristics. Provisions on the status of the system are stipulated in the Criminal Procedure Law, the Lawyers Law and other laws. The Regulations on Legal Assistance, which came into effect in September 2003, set the basic framework for the system. By the end of 2004, some 3,023 government-sponsored legal assistance organs had been set up across the country, including 2,628 at county and district level, thus initially forming a basic network giving access to people with various difficulties in both urban and rural areas. Nationwide, some 10,458 persons are designated to provide legal assistance, of whom 4,768 are professional lawyers. Input of funds for legal assistance from the treasuries of governments at various levels has increased year by year, up from 18.69 million yuan in

1999 to 217.12 million yuan in 2004, representing an annual average growth of 212 percent. Over the past decade, legal assistance organisations throughout the country have organised lawyers, grassroots legal service workers and volunteers to handle some 1.1 million legal assistance cases, providing such services to more than 1.6 million people. In recent years, many social groups, NGOs and institutions of higher learning have also participated in legal assistance work.

- System of people's mediation. By people's mediation, it means to, under the guidance of people's mediation committees established in accordance with the law, on the basis of voluntariness from the parties to a dispute and taking the state laws, regulations, rules, policies and social morality as the yardstick, help the parties to a dispute to reach an agreement by way of ample reasoning and patient persuasion. To date, over 860,000 people's mediation committees have been established nationwide. Manned by 6.6 million people's mediators, they provide mediation services to about 6 million civil disputes of various kinds, and the rate of success exceeded 95 percent.

To further meet the demands for rule of the country by law and building a harmonious socialist society, China is, in accordance with the requirements of judicial justice and strict enforcement of law, improving the establishment of judicial organs, the delimitation of their functions and powers and their management systems, in the hope of establishing a better judicial system that features clearly specified powers and responsibilities, mutual coordination and restraint, and highly efficient operation, so as to ensure, institutionally, that the judicial and procuratorial organs exercise adjudicative power and procuratorial power independently and impartially in accordance with the law, better safeguard the judicial authority, safeguard the democratic rights as well as legitimate rights and interests of the people and maintain fairness and justice for the society.

Conclusion

China's socialist political democracy has enabled the Chinese people, who account for one fifth of the world's population, to become masters of their own country and society, and enjoy extensive democratic rights. This is a great contribution to the development of the political civilisation of humanity.

China's socialist political democracy accords with the national conditions, ensures that the people give full play to their enthusiasm, initiative and creativity in building and managing the state as masters of the country and society, and promotes China's economic development and social progress in an all-round way. Despite the tremendous achievements scored in building a socialist political democracy, the CPC and the Chinese people are clearly aware of the many problems yet to be overcome. The major ones include: The democratic system is not yet perfect; the people's right to manage state and social affairs, economic and cultural undertakings as masters of the country in a socialist market economy are not yet fully realised; laws that have already been enacted are sometimes not fully observed or enforced, and violations of the law sometimes go unpunished; bureaucracy and corruption still exist and spread in some departments and localities; the mechanism of restraint and supervision over the use of power needs further improvement; the concept of democracy and legal awareness of the whole society needs to be further enhanced; and the political participation of citizens in an orderly way should be expanded. There is still a long way to go in China's building of political democracy, which will be a historical process of continuous improvement and development.

The history and reality of human political civilisation have proved that there is no one single and absolute democratic mode in the world that is universally applicable. To say whether a political system is democratic or not, the key is to see whether the will of the overwhelming majority of the people is fully

reflected, whether their rights as masters of the country are fully realised, and whether their legitimate rights and interests are fully guaranteed.

The arduous explorations and struggles made by the Chinese people over the past 100 years and more in order to realise democracy, and especially China's success in building a socialist political democracy, have made the CPC and the Chinese people realise that China must base the building of political democracy on its reality, review its own experience gained in practice, treasure its own achievements, and learn from the experience and achievements of the political civilisation of other countries. But, it must not copy any model of other countries.

China's building of political democracy will abide by the following principles:

- Upholding the unity of the leadership of the CPC, the people being the masters of the country and ruling the country by law. This is the most important and fundamental principle for developing socialist political democracy in China. Leadership by the CPC is the fundamental guarantee for the people to be the masters of the country and the country to be ruled by law. The people being masters of the country is the essential requirement of socialist political democracy. Ruling the country by law is the basic principle the CPC pursues while it leads the people in running the country. Only by upholding the unity of these three in China's building of political democracy is it possible to ensure that it is on the right track, and that socialist political democracy is institutionalised and standardised, and in good order.

- Giving play to the characteristics and advantages of the socialist system. The biggest characteristic and advantage of China's socialist system is as follows: Under the leadership of the CPC, the people of all nationalities, being masters of the country, give full scope to their enthusiasm, initiative and creativity in building a socialist country, and are united in striving to realise socialist modernisation and the great cause of rejuvenation of the Chinese nation. Sticking to this characteristic and this advantage is the fundamental guarantee for the Chinese people to grasp their own destiny in their own hands, create a better and happier life, and build a prosperous, democratic and civilised modern country.

- Being conducive to social stability, economic development and continuous improvement of the people's life. Social stability, economic development and the continuous improvement of people's life are both important goals and necessary conditions for the people to be masters of the country. The political development, economic development and cultural development of a country interact and precondition one another. Without social stability, smooth economic development cannot be expected, while the goal of development is to let the people enjoy the fruits of development together. The CPC and the Chinese government will firmly concentrate on economic construction, and make every effort to solidify the material and cultural foundations for continuously raising the level of socialist political democracy.

- Facilitating the safeguarding of national sovereignty, territorial integrity and state dignity. The Chinese people's struggle for democracy was closely related to the safeguarding of national sovereignty, territorial integrity and state dignity from the very beginning. If state sovereignty, territorial integrity and state dignity, which represent one of common and basic interests of the whole Chinese people, cannot be safeguarded, democratic achievements they have obtained will be lost.

- Being in accord with the objective law of progress step by step and in an orderly way. China's building of socialist democracy is a historical process with continuous progress in realising the goal and enhancing the level of the people being the masters of the country. A complete model of democracy cannot be built overnight. The CPC and the Chinese people are unswervingly pressing ahead with an all-round and coordinated development of socialist material, political and cultural civilisation and the

building of a harmonious society, continuously studying new situations and new problems arising in the course of the building of political democracy, exploring and creating new mechanisms and new ways to ensure that the people become the masters of the country, and developing socialist political democracy under prescribed leadership, step by step and in an orderly way in line with the objective law of the development of socialist political democracy.

The socialist system has been introduced and practised in China for only a few decades, which is a short period compared with other social systems adopted in the history of humanity. To keep improving and developing socialist political democracy to enable the people to fully enjoy and exercise their rights as the masters of the country has always been the firm goal of all the endeavour of the CPC and the Chinese people. At present and for a period to come, the CPC and the Chinese government will actively and steadily push forward the reform of the political system, stick to and improve the socialist democratic system, strengthen and improve the socialist legal system, reform and improve the methods of leadership and rule of the CPC, reform and improve the government's decision-making mechanism, promote the reform of the system of administrative management, boost the reform of the judicial system, deepen the reform of the cadre and personnel system, reinforce the restraint and supervision over power, strive to maintain social stability, and promote economic development and social progress in an all-round way.

The immense achievements of the construction of the socialism with Chinese characteristics have made the CPC and the Chinese people full of confidence in the road of political development chosen by themselves. Along with economic development and social progress, China's socialist political democracy will be further perfected, and with its great advantages and strong vitality, fully demonstrated. In the future, the Chinese people will surely enjoy more and more substantial fruits of their political civilisation.