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**Promotion and protection of all human rights, civil,
political, economic, social and cultural rights,
including the right to development**

Written statement submitted by China Foundation for Human Rights Development, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status*

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement, which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[27 January 2026]

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



The System and Practices for the Protection of Children in Difficult Circumstances in China

Safeguarding the rights of children, in particular the rights to survival and development of children in difficult circumstances, is both an inescapable responsibility of governments and a core requirement for fulfilling the commitments of the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

China has consistently prioritized the development of children's causes within its national strategy, continuously improving institutional systems and practical mechanisms to provide a solid foundation for the growth and development of every child.

I. Policies and Laws on the Protection of Children in Difficult Circumstances

At present, China has established a legal framework for the protection of children, with the Constitution as its fundamental basis and the Law on the Protection of Minors as its core, supported by specialized laws including the Anti-Domestic Violence Law and the Family Education Promotion Law. An overall protection framework has thus been formed, encompassing six areas of protection: family, school, society, cyberspace, government, and the judiciary.

The Chinese government has continuously improved the policy framework for safeguarding children in difficult circumstances, promoting the development of related work in a more standardized, systematic, and professional manner. In 2016, the Opinions of the State Council on Strengthening the Protection of Children in Difficult Circumstances systematically established a framework for the classification and protection of such children. In 2019, the Ministry of Civil Affairs, together with other departments, jointly issued the Notice on Further Strengthening the Protection of De Facto Unattended Children, formally incorporating the group of so-called "de facto orphans" into the national protection system. The Opinions on Further Improving the Care and Service System for Left-behind Children and Children in Difficult Circumstances in Rural Areas strengthened grassroots protection networks through measures such as the widespread establishment of "child welfare directors". In the same year, the implementation of the Measures for the Administration of Child Welfare Institutions, along with supporting policies, further built a comprehensive service framework covering both long-term placement and temporary assistance. In 2025, the issuance of the Opinions of the General Office of the State Council on Further Strengthening Welfare Protection for Children in Difficult Circumstances unified the legal framework for safeguarding children in difficult circumstances, advancing China's child welfare undertaking into a new stage characterized by stronger rule of law and greater systematization.

II. Systems and Mechanisms for the Protection of Children in Difficult Circumstances

Under the guidance of a systematic policy and institutional framework, China's practices for safeguarding children in difficult circumstances have primarily focused on the following six dimensions, through which a comprehensive system of protection and mechanisms has been established.

In the field of basic living security, China has fully established a system of basic living allowances for children in difficult circumstances and ensured the steady growth of its standards through a dynamic adjustment mechanism. This policy framework emphasizes multiple levels and full coverage. It provides living and nursing subsidies to children already covered by subsistence allowances as well as eligible children with disabilities in accordance with regulations and establishes a temporary assistance mechanism to ensure that families of children in difficult circumstances receive timely support.

In the field of medical and rehabilitation services, China has fully incorporated children in difficult circumstances into the basic medical insurance system for urban and rural residents, while progressively expanding insurance coverage for the treatment of serious childhood illnesses and for rehabilitation services. At the same time, specialized rehabilitation assistance programs have been implemented to strengthen rehabilitation services for children with disabilities, and categorized subsidies are provided for individual insurance contributions, with full or fixed-amount subsidies granted to groups such as orphans.

For example, the Healthcare Security Administration of Anhui Province has introduced new policies on insurance participation for children in difficult circumstances, which directly provides coverage through automatic system identification and simplified application procedures, thereby improving the precision and responsiveness of policy implementation.

In the field of education, China has established a comprehensive student financial assistance system covering all stages from preschool to higher education and implemented policies that allow migrant children to attend nearby schools with residence permits. At the same time, China places special emphasis on protecting the right to education of children with disabilities by actively promoting inclusive education models such as learning in regular classrooms and home-based instruction. These measures effectively safeguard the equal right of all children to education as guaranteed by the Compulsory Education Law. For example, Shandong Province has maintained an enrollment rate of over 99 per cent for school-age children with disabilities in compulsory education.

In the field of safety protection, China has comprehensively advanced the development of campus safety through measures such as human, physical and technical safeguards, and strengthened the prevention and control of school bullying. In addition, it has intensified the enforcement of the mandatory reporting mechanism, fully implemented the anti-domestic violence system, and enhanced the identification and assistance for child victims.

In the field of mental health protection, schools across the country have gradually been staffed with dedicated mental health teachers, and children in difficult circumstances are provided with psychological counseling and assessment through coordinated mechanisms between the health and education sectors. The state has also carried out extensive mental health education and awareness-raising activities, guiding families, schools, and society as a whole to strengthen care and support for children in difficult circumstances.

In the field of state guardianship, China has leveraged the supportive role of child welfare institutions to provide temporary and long-term guardianship arrangements for children in difficult circumstances, thereby strengthening assistance and placement services for these children. At the same time, China has actively built a public service system for family education, enhanced guardians' awareness of and capacity for fulfilling their responsibilities and strengthened oversight of entrusted care arrangements for left-behind children.

In the process of safeguarding children's rights, China has established a four-tiered work coordination mechanism covering the national, provincial, municipal and county levels. Orchestrated by governments at all levels, this mechanism involves the joint participation of multiple departments including education, public security, justice, finance, and health, as well as mass organizations such as women's federations and disabled persons' federations. It has effectively broken down inter-departmental barriers, enabled information sharing, resource integration and coordinated action, and thus achieved effective connection throughout the entire process of safeguarding children in difficult circumstances.

III. Achievements and Challenges in the Protection of Children in Difficult Circumstances

With the support of a comprehensive framework of policies, laws, and safeguard systems and mechanisms, China has achieved systematic progress in protecting children in difficult circumstances, including left-behind children, migrant children, and children living in poverty. A multidimensional and integrated protection system has been established, encompassing shared responsibilities among multiple stakeholders and covering key areas.

These efforts have strengthened the safety net for these children and led to significant improvements in the realization of their rights to survival and development.

Currently, China's children's cause is undergoing a comprehensive strategic shift from "ensuring basic needs and safeguarding minimum standards" to "promoting development and empowering children". Guided by the principle of safeguarding children's rights, a universal child welfare framework is being progressively strengthened. This framework is built on government accountability and institutional systems, supported by professional services, and involves the collaborative participation of the entire society, driving children's cause toward high-quality development.

Despite the progress achieved, China still faces multiple challenges in safeguarding children in difficult circumstances, including uneven development among regions, insufficient capacity of grassroots service providers, inadequate service resources for specific groups such as children with disabilities, as well as emerging risks arising in the digital era. These challenges require proactive and sustained efforts in future work.

Looking ahead, China will continue to uphold the principle of the best interests of the child and enhance comprehensive protection for children in difficult circumstances. Simultaneously, China will deepen international cooperation, working closely with international organizations such as the United Nations and member states to jointly address new challenges in child protection worldwide, thereby promoting the holistic development of all children.
