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

Joint written statement submitted by China NGO Network for International Exchanges (CNIE), China Agricultural University, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status*

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

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



Non-State Actors' Local Solutions Closing Global Development Gaps, Tapping Potentiality to Accomplish SDGs before 2030

Introduction

Aligned with the 2026 High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF), with the theme of “Transformative, equitable, innovative and coordinated actions for the 2030 Agenda for a sustainable future for all”, and general debate of the 2026 ECOSOC High-level Segment (HLS) themed “Delivering better: accelerating urgent and transformative action to achieve the SDGs by 2030”, this statement demonstrates how non-state actors' community-driven and locally adapted solutions can close gaps for SDG 1 (No Poverty), SDG 2 (Zero Hunger), SDG 5 (Gender Equality), SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth), and SDG 17 (Partnerships for the Goals).

It highlights several flagship initiatives underscoring their commitment, accelerating and scaling South-South and triangular cooperation based on field-tested solutions. It also puts forward achievable expectations and policy recommendations for the UN to enhance global governance, development effectiveness, and multi-stakeholder collaboration.

Local Actions, Global Progress

Widening gaps in low agricultural productivity, youth out-migration, gender inequality, and insufficient inclusive participation in global development governance have become barriers directly slowing the progress toward SDGs and undermining the urgency of transformative action called for in the 2026 HLPF and HLS themes.

As non-state actors at the forefront of people-to-people cooperation and grassroots development practice, China NGO Network for International Exchanges (CNIE) and China Agricultural University (CAU) have translated their commitments into tangible, scalable action to advance the 2030 Agenda.

As China's largest umbrella organization with Full Consultative Status of UN ECOSOC, CNIE dedicated itself to international exchanges and cooperation. It is mainly composed of NGOs from various social fields engaging in peace and disarmament, social development, science and education, culture and art, health care, environmental protection, democracy and human rights, ethnic and religious affairs, policy advocacy and law, business and commerce, public welfare and charity, poverty alleviation and disability assistance as well as women and youth affairs.

Together with its global partners, CNIE has turned commitments into concrete action through wide-ranging people-to-people cooperation. CNIE launched the Action on Silk Road People-to-People Connectivity, establishing nearly 600 partnerships with social organizations and implementing more than 300 livelihood projects covering education, medical care, poverty alleviation, and cultural exchanges. These efforts strengthen mutual trust, bridge differences, and promote common development across developing countries.

CNIE also initiated China's first non-governmental 5,000-ton oceangoing medical rescue vessel. Equipped with advanced medical equipment, professional operating rooms, and a helicopter deck, the ship will offer free medical treatment, disaster response training, and emergency humanitarian relief to communities in Southeast Asia, the South Pacific, and Africa, supporting local health systems and disaster resilience.

As the first university with Special Consultative Status of UN ECOSOC in mainland China, CAU translates its roles of research, education, social services, and global partnerships into scalable grassroots action in rural communities at home and abroad.

First, “Small Technology, Big Harvest” and “Small Beans, Big Nutrition” projects provide a small-but-smart model advancing SDG 1 (poverty reduction), SDG 2 (zero hunger) and SDG 5 (gender equality). Starting in 2011 from Peapea and Mtego wa Simba pilot villages in Tanzania's Morogoro Region, in partnership with the 4 levels of central, regional, district,

ward authorities, Sokoine University of Agriculture (SUA), and village communities, CAU promotes locally adaptable agricultural technologies, including rational dense planting, tether ranging, maize-soybean intercropping, and improved soil management. Between 2018 and 2021, with an increase of demo farmers from 1 to over a 1,000, benefiting 10 villages, it was awarded as one of the “best practices” of South-South and triangular cooperation by UN Office of South-South Cooperation (UNOSSC), lifting maize yields from 900 kg/hectare (60 kg/mu) to 3 tons/hectare (200 kg/mu), enhancing dietary diversity and strengthening nutrition for lactating women, children under five, and pupils in primary schools. By positioning women as central agents of change and placing them at the heart of technology adoption and household food management, the affordable and labor-friendly soy milk production skills have increased women’s confidence over family nutrition and livelihood stability. Today, this proven model has been scaled to Uganda, bringing the same practices to more smallholder families in the Global South. It exemplifies how a university embeds deeply in rural communities and builds mutually beneficial university–rural partnerships in the Global South.

Second, the CAU-Tencent Global South Rural Development Initiative (GSRDI) builds on China’s proven “Rural CEO” model. It emerged in the 1990s, nurturing young managers for collective economic organizations. Encouraged by this trend, national occupations related with young agricultural managers have been created by China’s Ministry of Human Resources and Social Security. The CAU-Tencent Pro-Village Rural CEO Program was launched in November 2021, with the first cohort starting training in January 2022. The training curriculum features five core modules: (1) Entrepreneurship; (2) Digital Agriculture & Smart Farming Skills; (3) Community Organization; (4) Green Development; (5) Rural Governance. In 2025, this role was officially professionalized as an occupation in China. By the end of 2025, it has completed three cohorts and trained over 110 formal Rural CEOs nationwide. As of 2026, the program has expanded to 20 provinces, with more than 400 grassroots participants engaged in its training and incubation activities. By institutionally investing in youth, such a project-to-occupation model directly advances SDG 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth). In 2021, this model went global when CAU launched the African Youth Rural Revitalization Program--the precursor to today’s GSRDI--recruiting young leaders aged above 25 from rural areas of the United Republic of Tanzania, Kenya, Uganda, Indonesia, and the Lao People’s Democratic Republic. Supported by e-commerce platforms, hybrid learning, and mentorship from academia and the private sectors, young leaders launch village-level enterprises, develop local value chains, and create decent jobs by activating idle resources, linking villages to markets, stimulating economic growth, and tackling rural depopulation.

Third, CAU’s targeted “Closing Global Development Gap” approach strongly advances SDG 17, fostering inclusive global partnership for sustainable development. Emerging from a historic journey from its first receiving international agricultural and poverty-reduction assistance in the 1980s, to gradually shifting to support fellow Global South countries since 2011, CAU has built a distinct theoretical understanding of international development cooperation and South-South cooperation. It centers on inviting sector-specific experts with hands-on experience, instead of general development experts, peer-to-peer dialogue, positive image building, reciprocal learning, and community with a shared future. Grounded in China’s internationally-recognized agricultural heritage systems, it integrates traditional ecological wisdom, smallholder farming solutions, and rural governance experience into global collaboration. CAU has applied this “mutually empowering” model across rural China from Hebian Village, Mengban Town, Mengla County, Xishuangbanna Dai Autonomous Prefecture, Yunnan Province to African and Southeast Asian localities, forming multi-stakeholder partnerships with universities, governments, communities, and enterprises in both the Global North and South. Through this approach, it promotes co-design and joint experimentation among researchers, grassroots practitioners, technicians, and marginalized groups. This model helps fill the administration, incentive, and participation gaps in global public goods production and provision.

A Way Forward: Expectations and Policy Recommendations

To truly “deliver better” and accelerate urgent, transformative action for the SDGs, the UN is uniquely positioned to strengthen inclusive governance, improve development effectiveness, and expand multi-stakeholder collaboration. We urge the UN system to advance the following three priorities.

First, to uphold and operationalize the Right to Development (RTD), by strengthening the voice and agency of marginalized and grassroots actors. Many local communities, smallholders, youth, women, and rural institutions remain underrepresented in global decision-making. Their indigenous knowledge, innovative mechanisms, and practical solutions are often overlooked. The UN should enable grassroots stakeholders to participate, contribute, lead, and increase their influence in development frameworks, resource allocation, and monitoring processes. Local practices must be visible, people’s voices heard, indigenous and community knowledge valued, and successful local models scaled.

Second, to improve development effectiveness through integrated and embedded collaboration across stakeholders, so as to break the silos between local communities, governments, academia, private actors, and international organizations at the global level. It could be found that the UN organizations have been renovating their work styles from “norm internalization” to “model grafting” onto exotic communities who are in need of existing proven experience. Listening, adapting, and co-creation makes development intervention more responsive, tangible, and meaningful in order to avoid the “Samaritan’s Dilemma” of aid fatigue. Effectiveness of international development cooperation could only be possible when the assisted have the imminent potentiality shifting from unconditional handouts to a self-sufficient livelihood.

Third, to advance diversified, inclusive public–private partnerships (PPPs) that share responsibilities, resources, and benefits, mobilizing finance, technology, and expertise. Multi-stakeholder support must be predictable, accountable, and focused on reducing inequality and expanding opportunities. The South-South Galaxy, as a global knowledge platform to elevate community-led solutions, local technologies, and grassroots innovations has been quite considerate to encourage exchanges. However, there is still in need of targeted capacity building systems, such as “UN Poverty Alleviation Universities” bringing in know-how by field-related training modules, or “South-South Cooperation Labs” under UN-facilitated programs, encouraging sector-specific experts going global to disseminate professional and flexible solutions, or “Global Public Goods Market”, like the carbon markets, providing incentives for diverse actors to provide public goods in a market-oriented institutional umbrella.

We stand ready to deepen collaboration with the United Nations, member states, non-government organizations, and private-sector partners to advance accelerated action for the 2030 Agenda.
