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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.

[12 August 2026]

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



Advancing the Right to Development for All through Digital Capacity-Building

The United Nations Declaration on the Right to Development affirms that the right to development is an inalienable human right. In the digital age, emerging technologies, including the Internet and artificial intelligence (AI), are profoundly transforming patterns of economic and social development and reshaping the conditions under which the right to development can be realized. Access to digital infrastructure, the acquisition of digital skills, and the equitable sharing of the benefits of digital transformation have become essential to enabling all people to participate in, contribute to and enjoy development. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development pledges to “leave no one behind”, while the Global Digital Compact, adopted in 2024, calls for closing all digital divides and enabling everyone to participate in and benefit from the digital economy on an equal basis.

Yet digital development remains deeply uneven throughout the world. Computing power, data, talent and technological resources in the field of AI are concentrated in a small number of countries and companies, while the disparities facing many developing countries are particularly acute. According to a report by the Africa Data Centres Association (ADCA), Africa accounts for less than 1 per cent of global data-centre capacity. Limited digital capacity constrains not only the adoption of technology, but also the ability of developing countries to pursue industrial upgrading, improve public governance and participate meaningfully in international rule-making. The digital divide may therefore widen into an AI divide, a knowledge divide and ultimately a development divide. Advancing the right to development for all requires more than supplying digital products to developing countries. It also requires sustained support for their ability to build autonomous, resilient and sustainable digital-development capacities.

Through the Global Development Initiative, China has advocated a development-first, people-centred, inclusive, innovation-driven and action-oriented approach, identifying the digital economy and connectivity in the digital age as priority areas for cooperation. China supports broad-based international cooperation to strengthen capacity-building in the Global South, bridge digital and AI divides, advance sustainable development and prevent AI from creating new forms of historical injustice. China’s approach to AI governance seeks both to manage technological risks and to ensure a fairer distribution of development opportunities, so that technological progress serves the common good and benefits humanity.

First, capacity-building should strengthen the ability of developing countries to pursue self-reliant development. In 2024, China facilitated the adoption by consensus of the United Nations General Assembly resolution entitled “Enhancing International Cooperation on Capacity-Building of Artificial Intelligence” (A/RES/78/311). It also initiated the Group of Friends for International Cooperation on Artificial Intelligence Capacity-building, promoting policy dialogue, technical training, talent development and cooperation on practical applications. At the 2026 World Artificial Intelligence Conference (WAIC), the World Artificial Intelligence Cooperation Organization (WAICO), established on China’s initiative, was launched in Shanghai. China further announced that, over the following five years, it would provide 5,000 places in AI training programmes for participants from developing countries and establish international centres for cooperation on AI applications with ASEAN, the League of Arab States, the African Union, the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States, the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation and BRICS. These initiatives can help developing countries move from being passive recipients of technology to becoming co-designers of practical solutions and equal participants in global governance.

Second, openness and sharing can lower barriers to the use of digital technologies. AI generates significant knowledge spillovers and has attributes of a global public good, yet technological restrictions, platform monopolies and high costs may prevent its benefits from being broadly shared. China has encouraged open-source development, openness and cooperation. Chinese open-source large language models have recorded more than 10 billion cumulative downloads, and China has worked with countries and regions around the world in developing more than 120 international standards related to AI. For example, the open-source Qwen model has been used in the intelligent customer-service system of Airbnb, reducing the time required to resolve certain queries from nearly three hours to only a few

seconds. This demonstrates that open-source cooperation can not only accelerate technological innovation, but also reduce the cost of accessing and using advanced technologies, particularly for small and medium-sized enterprises.

Third, implementing a number of “small and beautiful” projects can translate digital capacity into tangible improvements in the people’s wellbeing. In Takeo Province, Cambodia, China has supported an integrated smart-farming programme under which local farmers use online water-quality monitoring, drones for feeding and remote oxygenation systems in aquaculture. Annual income per hectare has increased from approximately US\$1,000 to more than US\$3,000. In Mozambique, crop-protection drones using China’s BeiDou Navigation Satellite System have been applied to farmland surveying, rice sowing and pesticide spraying. In Djibouti, an intelligent multi-hazard early-warning agent provided by China has helped strengthen local capacity to issue warnings of extreme weather events. These projects may be modest in scale, but they respond directly to practical needs relating to agricultural incomes, food security and disaster preparedness. They reflect the people-centred and results-oriented character of the right to development.

China’s efforts to advance inclusive digital development bring together technological innovation, capacity-building, improvements in people’s well-being and participation in global governance. By making digital technologies more accessible, usable and sustainable, these efforts enable more countries and peoples to participate in digital transformation on an equal footing and help ensure that AI becomes a force for common development and human well-being.

The international community should continue to work through the United Nations as the central platform for cooperation, strengthen North–South cooperation, South–South cooperation and triangular cooperation, and facilitate greater flows of financing, technology, talent and knowledge to developing countries. Such cooperation should be guided by respect for the right of every country to choose its own path of digital development.
