

Dear Secretary:

I am writing to express my concern about the lack of protection of the rights of ethnic minorities in the PRC. While the Law on Regional Ethnic Autonomy (LREA) sets forth the policies and structure of regional autonomy, these policies have often resulted in further restrictions on participation in governance by ethnic minorities. I urge you to implement the LREA in such a manner as to encourage the institutional protection and preservation of unique ethnic minority cultures.

As outlined in international legal standards which the PRC has agreed to observe, ethnic minorities must have greater and genuine input into policy-making regarding development in autonomous regions. Recent unrest in Tibetan areas is an example of dissatisfaction with current policies, including inequitable distribution of economic benefits. Sustainable development can only be achieved through community participation in planning and decision-making. You should take the lead in encouraging an institutionalized, transparent, open, and continuous interaction between all stakeholders affected by development projects.

I am likewise concerned that local policies and regulations have infringed on the rights of minorities to practice their religion and preserve their culture. Independent religious and cultural expression is often equated with separatism and is used as a pretext to crackdown on such expression, most notably in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region, the Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region, the Tibetan Autonomous Region, and other Tibetan autonomous areas. I urge you to repeal any local laws, regulations, and other provisions that violate the right to freedom of religion as guaranteed in international and PRC law.

Sincerely,