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Oral Statement by the World Uyghur Congress for Agenda Item 6 ("Concrete steps to advance and build capacity of minorities to participate effectively in economic life") of the 2010 UN Forum on Minority Issues

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The Introduction of the "Draft Recommendations of minorities and effective participation in economic life" noted that there are "many cases of misguided efforts to increase the economic participation of minorities, including the pursuit of forced migration or displacement, and resettlement of dominant groups to 'develop' minority regions." The World Uyghur Congress wishes to highlight some of the problems of these particular types of initiatives and why governments should abandon them as strategies to increase the economic participation of minorities.

With regard to government programs that resettle dominant groups to minority regions, the bottom line is that members of the minority group often end up being left out of the development that occurs and the settlers from the dominant group become the almost exclusive beneficiaries of that development.

This scenario is actually pre-determined when the government offers incentives to the dominant group to resettle to the minority region and therefore sets the stage for the settlers to disproportionately benefit – as compared to the local people - from the development that occurs there. An example of such incentives is seen in the case of East Turkestan (also known as the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region of China). The Chinese government offers economic and social benefits to Han Chinese to encourage them to resettle to the region. National legal provisions implemented in 2005 provide Han Chinese settlers and their dependents with "preferential" working and living conditions and "special treatment in employment and schooling."

Minority groups are also economically disadvantaged by the mass migration of dominant groups to their areas because this resettlement often results in the marginalization of the minority groups' languages. The minority group's language is replaced with the dominant group's language as the area's *lingua franca* and as the primary language for employment in the region. An example of this phenomenon is shown in the Montagnard (Degar) regions of Vietnam. As the majority Kinh have massively resettled to these areas over the past several decades, the Kinh language has become the dominant language for development and employment in these areas and Degar Montagnards, who either do not speak Kinh or are not native speakers of Kinh, are poorly placed to gain employment and benefit from the development. Furthermore, with the massive resettlement of Han Chinese to East Turkestan, Mandarin has become the primary language of employment in the region. Uyghurs who do not speak Mandarin have become almost entirely ineligible for state employment and all Uyghurs, even those who speak Mandarin, are disadvantaged for virtually all jobs compared to the settlers who are native speakers of Mandarin. Besides the minority group members facing linguistic barriers, they are disadvantaged just by being who they are as oftentimes the employers from the dominant group would prefer to just hire their own.

Governments' forced migration of members of minority groups away from their areas and to other parts of the countries for jobs are inherently abusive because they are forced. In addition, these programs alienate the minority group members from their communities, families, and cultures and often place them in abusive and discriminatory working conditions. We see these problems very clearly with the forcible transfer of young Uyghur women and girls to work in factories in eastern China.

Governments should abandon the aforementioned development strategies. Instead, governments should design development programs in minority areas in close consultation with and in partnership with the local peoples. Those programs should expand on industries and trades in which the local peoples have traditionally been engaged. Enhancing such traditional industries would make maximum use of the resources, knowledge, and skills that have been developed over generations within those communities. Doing such would also place the local people in prime positions to assume the roles of trainer, manager, supervisor, and entrepreneur. In addition, for new industries that are introduced to minority areas, governments should invest in training the local peoples in the required skills rather than bringing people from outside those regions to work in those industries. The skills training should include training for management, supervisory, entrepreneurial, and other leadership roles in those industries.

Thank you very much.