

Statement of National Health and Family Planning Commission of China on Fertility Policy Improvement

The recent “Decision on Major Issues Concerning Comprehensively Deepening Reforms” (the Decision, hereinafter) states: “China will adhere to the basic national policy of family planning, start to implement the two-child policy for the couples where either the husband or wife is from a single child family, gradually adjust and improve the current fertility policy so as to promote long-term balanced population development.” It represents a momentous adjustment and improvement of the fertility policy of China since the beginning of the 21st century, and an important strategic decision for the national population development.

Since the 1970s, for the purpose of curbing over-rapid population growth and improving the health and education of the population, China has comprehensively implemented a family planning program and identified the promotion of family planning as a basic national policy. The policy has since been improved on a continuous basis to cope with the ever-changing conditions in population dynamics, and economic, social development.

It has been found that the implementation of the family planning policy has made tremendous contribution to alleviating pressure on resources and the environment, promoting sustained and fast economic growth and advancing social development and improving the well-beings of the people. The policy has been approved to be absolutely appropriate and conformed to the reality of China’s national conditions. For the success of the program, the family planning workers have made their great efforts, and the people across the country have made great contribution.

In the course of comprehensively building a moderately well-off society and responding to changes arisen in population dynamics, the implementation of the two-child policy for couples where either the husband or the wife is from a single child family, which is built on the existing nation-wide practice of two-child policy for couple where both the husband and the wife are from single child families, and gradual adjustment and improvement of fertility policy, is of great significance.

Firstly, this adjustment in the policy complies with expectations of the people and is beneficial to harmonious and stable social development. With economic and social development and improvement in living standards of the people, remarkable changes have taken place in the concept of childbearing of people in both urban and rural areas. The traditional idea of “the more children the more happiness” has gradually faded away. In accordance with requirements of the Decision, an integration of the will of the state and that of the people should be gradually realized through adjusting and improving fertility policy, narrowing the gaps between urban and rural areas, different

regions and different ethnic groups, promoting balanced urban-rural development and restoring sex ratio at birth to normal level. The gradual adjustment and improvement of the fertility policy, will surely help to promote the people-centered principle, improve family demographic structure, greatly increase families' ability to resist risks and to provide better care for the aged, and eventually better enhance family happiness and social harmony.

Secondly, the adjustment and improvement of the fertility policy are favorable for achieving a moderately low fertility level and realizing long-term balanced population development. Since the new century, the total fertility rate (TFR) in China has been steady with slight decline, standing at 1.5-1.6 currently. As a result of economic and social development, increase in national income, improvement in healthcare and social security system and the continuous development of urbanization in particular, the total fertility rate of China is expected to further decline. The gradual adjustment and improvement of the fertility policy accord with the rule of population development, facilitate the stabilization of fertility at a moderately low level, slow down the momentum of rapid population decline after it passes its peak value and is beneficial to the long-term balanced population development and long-term development of the Chinese nation.

Thirdly, the adjustment and improvement of the fertility policy help maintain a rational size of labor force and improve its structure, which support sustained and sound economic development. In 2011, the total number of working-age (15-59) population of China reached its peak at 941 million. It declined to 937 million in 2012. Studies on this trend show that China will be able to maintain a workforce of more than 800 million before 2030, notwithstanding that the proportion of young laborers in the total working-age population will decline and the international comparative advantage in labor force will be weakened. Meanwhile, population ageing will accelerate. In 2012, the proportion of people aged 60 and over already reached 14.3%. The figure for the number of people aged 60 and over will be 200 million by the end of 2013, 300 million by 2025, and 400 million by 2030. Should the current fertility policy be maintained without adjustment, China will see, in just a few decades, sharp reduction in the number of working-age population and a too big proportion of the aged population, which are bound to exert huge negative impact on the vitality of economic and social development and international competitiveness of our country. The gradual adjustment and improvement of the fertility policy are exactly targeting at effectively coping with and actively alleviating the long-term impact of the structural contradictions of the population, maintaining a rational size and structure of working-age population and delaying the process of population ageing. The new policy will provide a more favorable population condition for the transformation of economic development mode and fostering new comparative advantages for sustained and healthy economic development.

Population has always been a major issue that influences our nation's coordinated and sustainable development and an important factor affecting economic and social development. The basic condition of our country of having a huge size of population has not been fundamentally changed. As a result, the pressure on economy, society, resources and the environment will long exist. Family planning, as a basic national policy, shall be maintained on a long-term basis and the work of family planning shall be carried out on a continuous basis without any slackening. The National Health and Family Planning Commission will earnestly study and implement the spirits of the Third Plenary Session of the 18th CPC Central Committee and carry forward the adjustment and improvement of the fertility policy in a reliable, steady and orderly manner, in order to promote long-term balanced population development.