

Chinese expert sets guidelines on human rights

Fan Guoxiang, one of the expert members of the Sub-Commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities under the United Nations Human Rights Committee, made the following remarks at the sub-commission's 49th session in Geneva.. He maintained that the following guidelines should be adhered to in any discussion on human rights:

- Views and experiences should be exchanged in search of a better understanding and the abnormal exercise of reaching conclusions prior to talks should be abandoned.
- Well-organized attacks with a view to forcing political resolutions run counter to the objective of promoting human rights.
- Arbitrary accusations should be replaced by strengthened co-operation.
- Common ground should be sought. It is admirable to engage in discussions on questions, for example, of the universality and specificity of human rights; the status, scope and focus of human rights in the contemporary world as compared to their features in various historical periods; ties between economic, social and cultural rights and civil and political rights; the birth and development of conceptions of and practices related to human rights in different regions and countries, and the problems they are facing; the impact of human rights of differing historical backgrounds and cultural heritages; relations between human rights on the one hand and the maintenance of international peace and security and co-operation in economic development on the other; individual freedom and the interests of the community; rights to be enjoyed and duties to be fulfilled.

A reasonable attitude should be adopted toward divergences. One should not be surprised by existing differences. The problem is how to deal with them. Shouldn't we, on the basis of equality and mutual respect, calmly explore the origin and scope of different views? At the least, this approach will prove to be much more positive than an endless human rights arm-twisting. (*China Daily*, 11 August 1997, p. 7)