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Memorandum on Genuine Autonomy for The Tibetan People

I INTRODUCTION

Since the renewal of direct contact with the Central Government of the People's Republic of China (PRC) in 2002, extensive discussions have been held between the envoys of His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama and representatives of the Central Government. In these discussions we have put forth clearly the aspirations of Tibetans. The essence of the Middle Way Approach is to secure genuine autonomy for the Tibetan people within the scope of the Constitution of the PRC. This is of mutual benefit and based on the long-term interest of both the Tibetan and Chinese peoples. We remain firmly committed not to seek separation or independence. We are seeking a solution to the Tibetan problem through genuine autonomy, which is compatible with the principles on autonomy in the Constitution of the People's Republic of China (PRC). The protection and development of the unique Tibetan identity in all its aspects serves the larger interest of humanity in general and those of the Tibetan and Chinese people in particular.

During the seventh round of talks in Beijing on 1 and 2 July 2008, the Vice Chairman of the Chinese People's Political Consultative Conference and the Minister of the Central United Front Work Department, Mr. Du Qinglin, explicitly invited suggestions from His Holiness the Dalai Lama for the stability and development of Tibet. The Executive Vice Minister of the Central United Front Work Department, Mr. Zhu Wei-qun, further said they would like to hear our views on the degree or form of autonomy we are seeking as well as on all aspects of regional autonomy within the scope of the Constitution of the PRC.

Accordingly, this memorandum puts



forth our position on genuine autonomy and how the specific needs of the Tibetan nationality for autonomy and self-government can be met through application of the principles on autonomy of the Constitution of the People's Republic of China, as we understand them. On this basis, His Holiness the Dalai Lama is confident that the basic needs of the Tibetan nationality can be met through genuine autonomy within the PRC.

The PRC is a multi-national state, and as in many other parts of the world, it seeks to resolve the nationality question through autonomy and the self-government of the minority nationalities. The Constitution of the PRC contains fundamental principles on autonomy and self-government whose objectives are compatible with the needs and aspirations of the Tibetans. Regional national autonomy is aimed at opposing both the oppression and the separation of nationalities by rejecting both Han Chauvinism and local nationalism. It is intended to ensure the protection of the culture and the identity of minority nationalities by powering them to become masters of their own affairs.

To a very considerable extent Tibetan needs can be met within the

constitutional principles on autonomy, as we understand them. On several points, the Constitution gives significant discretionary powers to state organs in the decision-making and on the operation of the system of autonomy. These discretionary powers can be exercised to facilitate genuine autonomy for Tibetans in ways that would respond to the uniqueness of the Tibetan situation. In implementing these principles, legislation relevant to autonomy may consequently need to be reviewed or amended to respond to the specific characteristics and needs of the Tibetan nationality. Given

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Tibet News

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good will on both sides, outstanding problems can be resolved within the constitutional principles on autonomy. In this way national unity and stability and harmonious relations between the Tibetan and other nationalities will be established.

II RESPECT for the Integrity of the Tibetan Nationality

Tibetans belong to one minority nationality regardless of the current administrative division. The integrity of the Tibetan nationality must be respected. That is the spirit, the intent and the principle underlying the constitutional concept of national regional autonomy as well as the principle of equality of nationalities.

There is no dispute about the fact that Tibetans share the same language, culture, spiritual tradition, core values and customs, that they belong to the same ethnic group and that they have a strong sense of common identity. Tibetans share a common history and despite periods of political or administrative divisions, Tibetans continuously remained united by their religion, culture, education, language, way of life and by their unique high plateau environment.

The Tibetan nationality lives in one contiguous area on the Tibetan plateau, which they have inhabited for millennia and to which they are therefore indigenous. For purposes of the constitutional principles of national regional autonomy Tibetans in the PRC in fact live as a single nationality all over the Tibetan plateau.

On account of the above reasons, the PRC has recognised the Tibetan nationality as one of the 55 minority nationalities.

III Tibetan ASPIRATIONS

Tibetans have a rich and distinct history, culture and spiritual tradition all of which form valuable parts of the heritage of humanity. Not only do Tibetans wish to preserve their own heritage, which they cherish, but equally they wish to further develop their culture and spiritual life and knowledge in ways that are particularly suited to the needs and conditions of humanity in the 21st century.

As a part of the multi-national state of the PRC, Tibetans can benefit greatly from the rapid economic and scientific development the country is experiencing.

While wanting to actively participate and contribute to this development, we want to ensure that this happens without the people losing their Tibetan identity, culture and core values and without putting the distinct and fragile environment of the Tibetan plateau, to which Tibetans are indigenous, at risk.

The uniqueness of the Tibetan situation has consistently been recognised within the PRC and has been reflected in the terms of the '17 Point Agreement' and in statements and policies of successive leaders of the PRC since then, and should remain the basis for defining the scope and structure of the specific autonomy to be exercised by the Tibetan nationality within the PRC. The Constitution reflects a fundamental principle of flexibility to accommodate special situations, including the special characteristics and needs of minority nationalities.

His Holiness the Dalai Lama's commitment to seek a solution for the Tibetan people within the PRC is clear and unambiguous. This position is in full compliance and agreement with paramount leader Deng Xiaoping's statement in which he emphasised that except for independence all other issues could be resolved through dialogue. Whereas, we are committed, therefore, to fully respect the territorial integrity of the PRC, we expect the Central Government to recognise and fully respect the integrity of the Tibetan nationality and its right to exercise genuine autonomy within the PRC. We believe that this is the basis for resolving the differences between us and promoting unity, stability and harmony among nationalities.

For Tibetans to advance as a distinct nationality within the PRC, they need to continue to progress and develop economically, socially and politically in ways that correspond to the development of the PRC and the world as a whole while respecting and nurturing the Tibetan characteristics of such development. For this to happen, it is imperative that the right of Tibetans to govern themselves be recognised and implemented throughout the region where they live in compact communities in the PRC, in accordance with the Tibetan nationality's own needs, priorities and characteristics.

The Tibetan people's culture and identity can only be preserved and promoted by the Tibetans themselves

and not by any others. Therefore, Tibetans should be capable of self-help, self-development and self-government, and an optimal balance needs to be found between this and the necessary and welcome guidance and assistance for Tibet from the Central Government and other provinces and regions of the PRC.

IV BASIC NEEDS of Tibetans

Subject Matters of Self-government

1) Language

Language is the most important attribute of the Tibetan people's identity. Tibetan is the primary means of communication, the language in which their literature, their spiritual texts and historical as well as scientific works are written. The Tibetan language is not only at the same high level as that of Sanskrit in terms of grammar, but is also the only one that has the capability of translating from Sanskrit without an iota of error. Therefore, Tibetan language has not only the richest and best-translated literatures; many scholars even contend that it has also the richest and largest number of literary compositions. The Constitution of the PRC, in Article 4, guarantees the freedom of all nationalities "to use and develop their own spoken and written languages ...". In order for Tibetans to use and develop their own language, Tibetan must be respected as the main spoken and written language. Similarly, the principal language of the Tibetan autonomous areas needs to be Tibetan.

This principle is broadly recognised in the Constitution in Article 121, which states, "the organs of self-government of the national autonomous areas employ the spoken and written language or language in common use in the locality." Article 10 of the Law on Regional National Autonomy (LRNA) provides that these organs "shall guarantee the freedom of the nationalities in these areas to use and develop their own spoken and written languages..."

Consistent with the principle of recognition of Tibetan as the main language in Tibetan areas, the LRNA (Article 36) also allows the autonomous government authorities to decide on "the language used in instruction and enrolment procedures" with regard to education. This implies recognition of

the principle that the principal medium of education be Tibetan.

2) Culture

The concept of national regional autonomy is primarily for the purpose of preservation of the culture of minority nationalities. Consequently, the constitution of PRC contains references to cultural preservation in Articles 22, 47 and 119 as also in Article 38 of the LRNA. To Tibetans, Tibetan culture is closely connected to our religion, tradition, language and identity, which are facing threats at various levels. Since Tibetans live within the multinational state of the PRC, this distinct Tibetan cultural heritage needs protection through appropriate constitutional provisions.

3) Religion

Religion is fundamental to Tibetans and Buddhism is closely linked to their identity. We recognise the importance of separation of church and state, but this should not affect the freedom and practice of believers. It is impossible for Tibetans to imagine personal or community freedom without the freedom of belief, conscience and religion. The Constitution recognises the importance of religion and protects the right to profess it. Article 36 guarantees all citizens the right to the freedom of religious belief. No one can compel another to believe in or not to believe in any religion. Discrimination on the basis of religion is forbidden.

An interpretation of the constitutional principle in light of international standard would also cover the freedom of the manner of belief or worship. The freedom covers the right of monasteries to be organised and run according to Buddhist monastic tradition, to engage in teachings and studies, and to enroll any number of monks and nuns or age group in accordance with these rules. The normal practice to hold public teachings and the empowerment of large gatherings is covered by this freedom and the state should not interfere in religious practices and traditions, such as the relationship between a teacher and his disciple, management of monastic institutions, and the recognition of reincarnations.

4) Education

The desire of Tibetans to develop and administer their own education system

in cooperation and in coordination with the central government's ministry of education is supported by the principles contained in the Constitution with regard to education. So is the aspiration to engage in and contribute to the development of science and technology. We note the increasing recognition in international scientific development of the contribution which Buddhist psychology, metaphysics, cosmology and the understanding of the mind is making to modern science.

Whereas, under Article 19 of the Constitution the state takes on the overall responsibility to provide education for its citizens, Article 119 recognises the principle that "[T]he organs of self-government of the national autonomous areas independently administer educational ... affairs in their respective areas..." This principle is also reflected in Article 36 of the LRNA.

Since the degree of autonomy in decision-making is unclear, the point to be emphasised is that the Tibetan need to exercise genuine autonomy with regard to its own nationality's education and this is supported by the principles of the constitution on autonomy.

As for the aspiration to engage in and contribute to the development of scientific knowledge and technology, the Constitution (Article 119) and the LRNA (Article 39) clearly recognise the right of autonomous areas to develop scientific knowledge and technology.

5) Environment Protection

Tibet is the prime source of Asia's great rivers. It also has the earth's loftiest mountains as well as the world's most extensive and highest plateau, rich in mineral resources, ancient forests, and many deep valleys untouched by human disturbances.

This environmental protection practice was enhanced by the Tibetan people's traditional respect for all forms of life, which prohibits the harming of all sentient beings, whether human or animal. Tibet used to be an unspoiled wilderness sanctuary in a unique natural environment.

Today, Tibet's traditional environment is suffering irreparable damage. The effects of this are especially notable on the grasslands, the croplands, the forests, the water resources and the wildlife.

In view of this, according to Articles 45 and 66 of the LNRA, the Tibetan people should be given the right over the environment and allow them to follow their traditional conservation practices.

6) Utilisation of Natural Resources

With respect to the protection and management of the natural environment and the utilisation of natural resources the Constitution and the LRNA only acknowledge a limited role for the organs of self-government of the autonomous areas (see LRNA Articles 27, 28, 45, 66, and Article 118 of the Constitution, which pledges that the state “shall give due consideration to the interests of [the national autonomous areas]”). The LRNA recognises the importance for the autonomous areas to protect and develop forests and grasslands (Article 27) and to “give priority to the rational exploitation and utilization of the natural resources that the local authorities are entitled to develop”, but only within the limits of state plans and legal stipulations. In fact, the central role of the State in these matters is reflected in the Constitution (Article 9).

The principles of autonomy enunciated in the Constitution cannot, in our view, truly lead to Tibetans becoming masters of their own destiny if they are not sufficiently involved in decision-making on utilisation of natural resources such as mineral resources, waters, forests, mountains, grasslands, etc.

The ownership of land is the foundation on which the development of natural resources, taxes and revenues of an economy are based. Therefore, it is essential that only the nationality of the autonomous region shall have the legal authority to transfer or lease land, except land owned by the state. In the same manner, the autonomous region must have the independent authority to formulate and implement developmental plans concurrent to the state plans.

7) Economic Development & Trade

Economic Development in Tibet is welcome and much needed. The Tibetan people remain one of the most economically backward regions within the PRC.

The Constitution recognises the principle that the autonomous authorities have an important role to play in the economic

development of their areas in view of local characteristics and needs (Article 118 of the Constitution, also reflected in LRNA Article 25). The Constitution also recognises the principle of autonomy in the administration and management of finances (Article 117, and LRNA Article 32). At the same time, the Constitution also recognises the importance of providing State funding and assistance to the autonomous areas to accelerate development (Article 122, LRNA Article 22).

Similarly, Article 31 of the LRNA recognises the competence of autonomous areas, especially those such as Tibet, adjoining foreign countries, to conduct border trade as well as trade with foreign countries. The recognition of these principles is important to the Tibetan nationality given the region's proximity to foreign countries with which the people have cultural, religious, ethnic and economic affinities.

The assistance rendered by the Central Government and the provinces has temporary benefits, but in the long run if the Tibetan people are not self-reliant and become dependent on others it has greater harm. Therefore, an important objective of autonomy is to make the Tibetan people economically self-reliant.

8) Public health

The Constitution enunciates the responsibility of the State to provide health and medical services (Article 21). Article 119 recognises that this is an area of responsibility of the autonomous areas. The LRNA (Article 40) also recognises the right of organs of self-government of the autonomous areas to “make independent decisions on plans for developing local medical and health services and for advancing both modern and the traditional medicine of the nationalities.”

The existing health system fails to adequately cover the needs of the rural Tibetan population. According to the principles of the above-mentioned laws, the regional autonomous organs need to have the competencies and resources to cover the health need of the entire Tibetan population. They also need the competencies to promote the traditional Tibetan medical and astro system strictly according to traditional practice.

9) Public Security

In matters of public security it is important that the majority of security personnel consists of members of the local nationality who understand and respect local customs and traditions.

What is lacking in Tibetan areas is absence of decision-making authority in the hands of local Tibetan officials.

An important aspect of autonomy and self-government is the responsibility for the internal public order and security of the autonomous areas. The Constitution (Article 120) and LRNA (Article 24) recognise the importance of local involvement and authorise autonomous areas to organise their security within “the military system of the State and practical needs and with the approval of the State Council.”

10) Regulation on population migration

The fundamental objective of national regional autonomy and self-government is the preservation of the identity, culture, language and so forth of the minority nationality and to ensure that it is the master of its own affairs. When applied to a particular territory in which the minority nationality lives in a concentrated community or communities, the very principle and purpose of national regional autonomy is disregarded if large scale migration and settlement of the majority Han nationality and other nationalities is encouraged and allowed. Major demographic changes that result from such migration will have the effect of assimilating rather than integrating the Tibetan nationality into the Han nationality and gradually extinguishing the distinct culture and identity of the Tibetan nationality. Also, the influx of large numbers of Han and other nationalities into Tibetan areas will fundamentally change the conditions necessary for the exercise of regional autonomy since the constitutional criteria for the exercise of autonomy, namely that the minority nationality “live in compact communities” in a particular territory is changed and undermined by the population movements and transfers. If such migrations and settlements continue uncontrolled, Tibetans will no longer live in a compact community or communities and will consequently no longer be entitled, under the Constitution, to

national regional autonomy. This would effectively violate the very principles of the Constitution in its approach to the nationalities issue.

There is precedent in the PRC for restriction on the movement or residence of citizens. There is only a very limited recognition of the right of autonomous areas to work out measures to control “the transient population” in those areas. To us it would be vital that the autonomous organs of self-government have the authority to regulate the residence, settlement and employment or economic activities of persons who wish to move to Tibetan areas from other parts of the PRC in order to ensure respect for and the realisation of the objectives of the principle of autonomy.

It is not our intention to expel the non-Tibetans who have permanently settled in Tibet and have lived there and grown up there for a considerable time. Our concern is the induced massive movement of primarily Han but also some other nationalities into many areas of Tibet, upsetting existing communities, marginalising the Tibetan population there and threatening the fragile natural environment.

11) Cultural, educational and religious exchanges with other countries

Besides the importance of exchanges and cooperation between the Tibetan nationality and other nationalities, provinces, and regions of the PRC in the subject matters of autonomy, such as culture, art, education, science, public health, sports, religion, environment, economy and so forth, the power of autonomous areas to conduct such exchanges with foreign countries in these areas is also recognised in the LRNA (Article 42).

V APPLICATION OF A SINGLE ADMINISTRATION for the Tibetan Nationality in the PRC

In order for the Tibetan nationality to develop and flourish with its distinct identity, culture and spiritual tradition through the exercise of self-government on the above mentioned basic Tibetan needs, the entire community, comprising all the areas currently designated by the PRC as Tibetan autonomous areas, should be under one single administrative entity.

The current administrative divisions, by which Tibetan communities are ruled and administered under different provinces and regions of the PRC, foments fragmentation, promotes unequal development, and weakens the ability of the Tibetan nationality to protect and promote its common cultural, spiritual and ethnic identity. Rather than respecting the integrity of the nationality, this policy promotes its fragmentation and disregards the spirit of autonomy. Whereas the other major minority nationalities such as the Uighurs and Mongols govern themselves almost entirely within their respective single autonomous regions, Tibetans remain as if they were several minority nationalities instead of one.

Bringing all the Tibetans currently living in designated Tibetan autonomous areas within a single autonomous administrative unit is entirely in accordance with the constitutional principle contained in Article 4, also reflected in the LRNA (Article 2), that “regional autonomy is practiced in areas where people of minority nationalities live in concentrated communities.” The LRNA describes regional national autonomy as the “basic policy adopted by the Communist Party of China for the solution of the national question in China” and explains its meaning and intent in its Preface:

the minority nationalities, under unified state leadership, practice regional autonomy in areas where they live in concentrated communities and set up organs of self-government for the exercise of the power of autonomy. Regional national autonomy embodies the state’s full respect for and guarantee of the right of the minority nationalities to administer their internal affairs and its adherence to the principle of equality, unity and common prosperity of all nationalities.

It is clear that the Tibetan nationality within the PRC will be able to exercise its right to govern itself and administer its internal affairs effectively only once it can do so through an organ of self-government that has jurisdiction over the Tibetan nationality as a whole.

The LRNA recognises the principle that boundaries of national autonomous areas may need to be modified. The need for the application of the fundamental principles of the Constitution on

regional autonomy through respect of the integrity of the Tibetan nationality is not only totally legitimate, but the administrative changes that may be required to achieve this in no way violate constitutional principles. There are several precedents where this has been actually done.

VI The NATURE and STRUCTURE of the AUTONOMY

The extent to which the right to self-government and self-administration can be exercised on the preceding subject matters largely determines the genuine character of Tibetan autonomy. The task at hand is therefore to look into the manner in which autonomy can be regulated and exercised for it to effectively respond to the unique situation and basic needs of the Tibetan nationality.

The exercise of genuine autonomy would include the right of Tibetans to create their own regional government and government institutions and processes that are best suited to their needs and characteristics. It would require that the People’s Congress of the autonomous region have the power to legislate on all matters within the competencies of the region (that is the subject matters referred to above) and that other organs of the autonomous government have the power to execute and administer decisions autonomously. Autonomy also entails representation and meaningful participation in national decision-making in the Central Government. Processes for effective consultation and close cooperation or joint decision-making between the Central Government and the regional government on areas of common interest also need to be in place for the autonomy to be effective.

A crucial element of genuine autonomy is the guarantee the Constitution or other laws provide that powers and responsibilities allocated to the autonomous region cannot be unilaterally abrogated or changed. This means that neither the Central Government nor the autonomous region’s government should be able, without the consent of the other, to change the basic features of the autonomy.

The parameters and specifics of such genuine autonomy for Tibet that respond

to the unique needs and conditions of the Tibetan people and region should be set out in some detail in regulations on the exercise of autonomy, as provided for in Article 116 of the Constitution (enacted in LRNA Article 19) or, if it is found to be more appropriate, in a separate set of laws or regulations adopted for that purpose. The Constitution, including Article 31, provides the flexibility to adopt special laws to respond to unique situations such as the Tibetan one, while respecting the established social, economic and political system of the country.

The Constitution in Section VI provides for organs of self-government of national autonomous regions and acknowledges their power to legislate. Thus Article 116 (enacted in Article 19 of the LRNA) refers to their power to enact "separate regulations in light of the political, economic and cultural characteristics of the nationality or nationalities in the areas concerned." Similarly, the Constitution recognises the power of autonomous administration in a number of areas (Article 117-120) as well as the power of autonomous governments to apply flexibility in implementing the laws and policies of the Central Government and higher state organs to suit the conditions of the autonomous area concerned (Article 115).

The above-mentioned legal provisions do contain significant limitations to the decision-making authority of the autonomous organs of government. But the Constitution nevertheless recognises the principle that organs of self-government make laws and policy decisions that address local needs and that these may be different from those adopted elsewhere, including by the Central Government.

Although the needs of the Tibetans are broadly consistent with the principles on autonomy contained in the Constitution, as we have shown, their realisation is impeded because of the existence of a number of problems, which makes the implementation of those principles today difficult or ineffective.

Implementation of genuine autonomy, for example, requires clear divisions of powers and responsibilities between the Central Government and the government of the autonomous region with respect to subject matter competency. Currently there is no such clarity and

the scope of legislative powers of autonomous regions is both uncertain and severely restricted. Thus, whereas the Constitution intends to recognise the special need for autonomous regions to legislate on many matters that affect them, the requirements of Article 116 for prior approval at the highest level of the Central Government - by the Standing Committee of National People's Congress (NPC) - inhibit the implementation of this principle of autonomy. In reality, it is only autonomous regional congresses that expressly require such approval, while the congresses of ordinary (not autonomous) provinces of the PRC do not need prior permission and merely report the passage of regulations to the Standing Committee of the NPC "for the record" (Article 100).

The exercise of autonomy is further subject to a considerable number of laws and regulations, according to Article 115 of the Constitution. Certain laws effectively restrict the autonomy of the autonomous region, while others are not always consistent with one another. The result is that the exact scope of the autonomy is unclear and is not fixed, since it is unilaterally changed with the enactment of laws and regulations are higher levels of the state, and even by changes in policy. There is also no adequate process for consultation or for settling differences that arise between the organs of the Central Government and of the regional government with respect to the scope and exercise of autonomy. In practice, the resulting uncertainty limits the initiative of regional authorities and impedes the exercise of genuine autonomy by Tibetans today.

We do not at this stage wish to enter into details regarding these and other impediments to the exercise of genuine autonomy today by Tibetans, but mention them by way of example so that these may be addressed in the appropriate manner in our dialogue in the future. We will continue to study the Constitution and other relevant legal provisions and, when appropriate, will be pleased to provide further analysis of these issues, as we understand them.

VII THE WAY FORWARD

As stated at the beginning of this memorandum, our intention is to

explore how the needs of the Tibetan nationality can be met within the framework of PRC since we believe these needs are consistent with the principles of the Constitution on autonomy. As His Holiness the Dalai Lama stated on a number of occasions, we have no hidden agenda. We have no intention at all of using any agreement on genuine autonomy as stepping stone for separation from the PRC.

The objective of the Tibetan Government in Exile is to represent the interests of the Tibetan people and to speak on their behalf. Therefore, it will no longer be needed and will be dissolved once an agreement is reached between us. In fact, His Holiness has reiterated his decision not to accept any political office in Tibet at any time in the future. His Holiness the Dalai Lama, nevertheless, plans to use all his personal influence to ensure such an agreement would have the legitimacy necessary to obtain the support of the Tibetan people.

Given these strong commitments, we propose that the next step in this process be the agreement to start serious discussions on the points raised in this memorandum. For this purpose we propose that we discuss and agree on a mutually agreeable mechanism or mechanisms and a timetable to do so effectively.

The above memorandum was presented by Special Envoys of His Holiness the Dalai Lama to Chinese counterpart during eight round of talk held in China from October 30 to November 5, 2008.



HH the Dalai Lama address to the plenary session of the European Parliament in Brussels

Thursday, December 4, 2008:

Your Excellency, Mr. President, Honorable Members of the Parliament, ladies and gentlemen, It is a great honour to speak before you today and I thank you for your invitation. Wherever I go, my main interest or commitment is in the promotion of human values such as warm heartedness this is what I consider the key factor for a happy life at the individual level, family level and community level. In our modern times, it seems that insufficient attention is paid to these inner values. Promoting them is therefore my number one commitment.

My second interest or commitment is the promotion of inter-religious harmony. We accept the need for pluralism in politics and democracy, yet we often seem more hesitant about the plurality of faiths and religions. Despite their different concepts and philosophies, all major religious traditions bear the same messages of love, compassion, tolerance, contentment and self-discipline. They are also similar in having the potential to help human beings lead happier lives. So these two are my main interests and commitments.

Of course the issue of Tibet is also of particular concern to me and I have a special responsibility to the people of Tibet, who continue to place their hope and trust in me during this most difficult period in the history of Tibet. The welfare of the Tibetan people is my constant motivation and I consider myself to be their free spokesperson in exile.

The last time I had the privilege to address the European Parliament (EP), on October 24, 2001, I stated, "despite some development and economic progress, Tibet continues to face fundamental problems of survival. Serious violations of human rights are widespread throughout Tibet and are often the result of policies of racial and cultural discrimination. Yet, they are only the symptoms and consequences of a deeper problem. The Chinese authorities view Tibet's distinct culture and religion as the source of threat of separation. Hence as a result of deliberate policies an entire people with its unique culture and identity are facing the threat of extinction".

Since March this year, Tibetans from all walks of life and across the entire Tibetan plateau demonstrated against the oppressive and discriminatory policies of the Chinese authorities in Tibet. With full awareness of the imminent danger to their lives, Tibetans from all across Tibet known as Chokha-Sum (U-Tsang, Kham and Amdo), young and old, men and women, monastic and lay people, believer and non-believers, including students, came together to spontaneously and courageously express their anguish, dissatisfaction and genuine grievances at the policies of the Chinese government. I have been deeply saddened by the loss of life, both Tibetan and Chinese, and immediately appealed to the Chinese authorities for restraint. Since the Chinese authorities have blamed me for orchestrating the recent events in Tibet, I have made repeated appeals for an independent and respected international body to conduct a thorough investigation into the matter, including inviting them to Dharamsala, India. If the Chinese government has any evidence to support such serious allegations, they must disclose it to the world.

Sadly, the Chinese authorities have resorted to brutal methods to deal with the situation in Tibet, despite appeals by many world leaders, NGOs and

personalities of international standing to avoid violence and show restraint. In the process, a large number of Tibetans have been killed, thousands injured and detained. There are many whose fate remains completely unknown. Even as I stand here before you, in many parts of Tibet there is a huge presence of armed police and military. In many areas Tibetans continue to suffer under a state of de-facto martial law. There is an atmosphere of angst and intimidation. Tibetans in Tibet live in a constant state of fear of being the next to be arrested. With no international observers, journalists or even tourists allowed into many parts of Tibet, I am deeply worried about the fate of the Tibetans. Presently, the Chinese authorities have a completely free hand in Tibet. It is as though Tibetans face a death sentence, a sentence aimed at wiping out the spirit of the Tibetan people. Many honorable members of the EP are well aware of my consistent efforts to find a mutually acceptable solution to the Tibet problem through dialogue and negotiations. In this spirit, in 1988 at the European Parliament in Strasbourg I presented a formal proposal for negotiations that does not call for separation and independence of Tibet. Since then, our relations with the Chinese government have taken many twists and turns. After an interruption of nearly 10 years, in 2002 we re-established direct contact with the Chinese leadership. Extensive discussions have been held between my envoys and representatives of the Chinese leadership. In these discussions we have put forth clearly the aspirations of the Tibetan people. The essence of my Middle Way Approach is to secure genuine autonomy for the Tibetan people within the scope of the Constitution of the PRC.

During the seventh round of talks in Beijing on 1st and 2nd July this year, the Chinese side invited us to present our views on the form of genuine autonomy. Accordingly, on 31st October 2008 we presented to the Chinese leadership the Memorandum on Genuine Autonomy for the Tibetan People. Our memorandum puts forth our position on genuine autonomy and how the basic needs of the Tibetan nationality for autonomy and self-government can be met. We have presented these suggestions with the sole purpose of making a sincere effort to address the real problems in Tibet. We were confident that given goodwill, the issues raised in our memorandum could be implemented.

Unfortunately, the Chinese side has rejected our memorandum in its totality, branding our suggestions as an attempt at "semi-independence" and "independence in disguise" and, for that reason, unacceptable. Moreover, the Chinese side is accusing us of "ethnic cleansing" because our memorandum calls for the recognition of the right of autonomous areas "to regulate the residence, settlement and employment or economic activities of persons who wish to move to Tibetan areas from other parts of the PRC."

We have made it clear in our memorandum that our intention is not to expel non-Tibetans. Our concern is the induced mass movement of primarily Han, but also some other nationalities, into many Tibetan areas, which in turn marginalizes the native Tibetan population and threatens Tibet's fragile natural environment. Major demographic changes that result from massive migration will lead to the assimilation rather than integration of the Tibetan nationality into the PRC and gradually lead to the extinction of the distinct culture and identity of the Tibetan people.

The cases of the peoples of Manchuria, Inner



His Holiness addresses the European Parliament in Brussels (Photo :Reuters)

Mongolia and East Turkestan in the PRC are clear examples of the devastating consequences of a massive population transfer of the dominant Han nationality upon the minority nationalities. Today, the language, script and culture of the Manchu people have become extinct. In Inner Mongolia today, only 20% are native Mongolians out of a total population of 24 millions.

Despite the assertions by some hard-line Chinese officials to the contrary, from the copies of our memorandum made available to you it is clear that we have sincerely addressed the concerns of the Chinese government about the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the PRC. The memorandum is self-explanatory. I would welcome your comments and suggestions.

I take this opportunity to appeal to the European Union and the Parliament to use your good offices, sparing no efforts, to persuade the Chinese leadership to resolve the issue of Tibet through earnest negotiations for the common good of the Tibetan and Chinese peoples.

While I firmly reject the use of violence as a means in our struggle, we certainly have the right to explore all other political options available to us. In the spirit of democracy, I called for a Special Meeting of Tibetans in exile to discuss the state of Tibetan people and the state of the issue of Tibet and the future course of our movement. The meeting took place from November 17-22, 2008 in Dharamsala, India. The failure of the Chinese leadership to respond positively to our initiatives has reaffirmed the suspicion held by many Tibetans that the Chinese government has no interest whatsoever in any kind of mutually acceptable solution. Many Tibetans continue to believe that the Chinese leadership is bent on the forceful and complete assimilation and absorption of Tibet into China. They therefore call for the complete independence of Tibet. Others advocate the right to self-determination and a referendum in Tibet. Despite these different views, the delegates to the Special Meeting unanimously resolved to empower me to decide the best approach, in accordance with the prevailing situation and the changes taking place in Tibet, China and the wider world. I will study the suggestions made by about 600 leaders and delegates from Tibetan communities around the world, including views we are able to gather from a cross section of Tibetans in Tibet.

I am a staunch believer in democracy. Consequently, I have consistently encouraged Tibetans in exile to follow the democratic process. Today, the Tibetan refugee community may be among the few refugee communities that have established all three pillars

of democracy: legislature, judiciary and executive. In 2001, we took another great stride in the process of democratization by having the chairman of the Kashag (cabinet) of the Tibetan Administration in exile elected by popular vote.

I have always maintained that ultimately the Tibetan people must be able to decide the future of Tibet. As Pundit Nehru, the first Prime Minister of India, stated in the Indian Parliament on December 7, 1950: "The last voice in regard to Tibet should be the voice of the people of Tibet and nobody else."

The issue of Tibet has dimensions and implications that go well beyond the fate of six million Tibetans. Tibet is situated between India and China. For centuries Tibet acted as a peaceful buffer zone separating the two most populated countries on earth. However, in 1962, only a few years after the so-called "peaceful liberation of Tibet" the world witnessed the first ever war between the two Asian giants. This clearly shows the importance of a just and peaceful resolution of the Tibet question in ensuring lasting and genuine trust and friendship between the two most powerful nations of Asia. The Tibetan issue is also related to Tibet's fragile environment, which scientists have concluded, has an impact on much of Asia involving billions of people. The Tibetan plateau is the source of many of Asia's greatest rivers. Tibet's glaciers are the earth's largest ice mass outside the Poles. Some environmentalists today refer to Tibet as the Third Pole. And, if the present warming trend continues the Indus River might dry up within the next 15-20 years. Furthermore, Tibet's cultural heritage is based on Buddhism's principle of compassion and non-violence. Thus, it concerns not just the six million Tibetans, but also the over 13 million people across the Himalayas, Mongolia and in the Republics of Kalmykia and Buryat in Russia, including a growing number of Chinese brothers and sisters who share this culture, which has the potential to contribute to a peaceful and harmonious world.

My maxim has always been to hope for the best and to prepare for the worst. With this in mind, I have counselled the Tibetans in exile to make more rigorous efforts in educating the younger generation of Tibetans, in strengthening our cultural and religious institutions in exile with the aim of preserving our rich

cultural heritage, and in expanding and strengthening the democratic institutions and civil society among the Tibetan refugee community. One of the main objectives of our exile community is to preserve our cultural heritage where there is the freedom to do so and to be the free voice of our captive people inside Tibet. The tasks and challenges we face are daunting. As a refugee community, our resources are naturally limited. We Tibetans also need to face the reality that our exile may last for a longer time. I would therefore be grateful to the European Union for assistance in our educational and cultural endeavors.

I have no doubt that the principled and consistent engagement of the EP with China will impact the process of change that is already taking place in China. The global trend is towards more openness, freedom, democracy and respect for human rights. Sooner or later, China will have to follow the world trend. In this context, I wish to commend the EP for awarding the prestigious Sakharov Prize to the Chinese human rights defender Hu Jia. It is an important signal as we watch China rapidly moving forward. With its newfound status, China is poised to play an important leading role on the world stage. In order to fulfil this role, I believe it is vital for China to have openness, transparency, rule of law and freedom of information and thought. There is no doubt that the attitudes and policies of members of the international community towards China will impact the course of the change taking place in China as much as domestic events and developments.

In contrast to the continued extremely rigid attitude of the Chinese government towards Tibet, fortunately among the Chinese people – especially among the informed and educated Chinese circles – there is a growing understanding and sympathy for the plight of the Tibetan people. Although my faith in the Chinese leadership with regard to Tibet is becoming thinner and thinner, my faith in the Chinese people remains unshaken. I have therefore been advising the Tibetan people to make concerted efforts to reach out to the Chinese people. Chinese intellectuals openly criticized the harsh crackdown of Tibetan demonstrations by the Chinese government in March this year and called for restraint and dialogue in addressing the problems in Tibet. Chinese lawyers

offered publicly to represent arrested Tibetan demonstrators at trials. Today, there is growing understanding, sympathy, support and solidarity among our Chinese brothers and sisters for the difficult situation of the Tibetans and their legitimate aspirations. This is most encouraging. I take this opportunity to thank the brave Chinese brothers and sisters for their solidarity.

I also thank the European Parliament for the consistent display of concern and support for the just and non-violent Tibetan struggle. Your sympathy, support and solidarity have always been a great source of inspiration and encouragement to the Tibetan people, both in and outside of Tibet. I would like to express special thanks to the members of the Tibet Inter-Group of the EP, who have made the tragedy of the Tibetan people not only a focus of their political work but also a cause of their hearts. The many resolutions of the EP on the issue of Tibet have helped greatly to highlight the plight of the Tibetan people and to raise the awareness of the issue of Tibet amongst the public and in governments here in Europe, and all around the world

The consistency of the European Parliament's support for Tibet has not gone unnoticed in China. I regret where this has caused some tensions in EU-China relations. However, I wish to share with you my sincere hope and belief that the future of Tibet and China will move beyond mistrust to a relationship based on mutual respect, trust and recognition of common interest – irrespective of the current very grim situation inside Tibet and the deadlock in the dialogue process between my envoys and the Chinese leadership. I have no doubt that your continued expressions of concern and support for Tibet will, in the long run, have a positive impact and help create the necessary political environment for a peaceful resolution of the issue of Tibet. Your continued support is, therefore, critical.

I thank you for the honor to share my thoughts with you.

Best wishes and Prayers for the New Year from everyone at Tibet Information Office, Canberra.

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