



Tibet News

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The Newsletter of the **Tibet Information Office** for Australia, New Zealand & South East Asia

European Parliament Adopts Resolution in Support of Tibetan Language



MEPs voting in Strasbourg

Thursday, 25 November 2010

Dharamshala: CONDEMNING THE USE OF Chinese government plan to make Chinese as main medium of instruction in Tibet, the European Parliament on Thursday adopted a resolution in support of a language policy in which all subjects can be taught in the Tibetan language.

The resolution was passed during a plenary session on EP's urgent debate on Tibet, titled "plans to make Chinese the main language of instruction " in Strasbourg.

"In a resolution on Tibet, MEPs urge the Chinese authorities to support a genuine bilingual language policy, in which all subjects can be taught in the Tibetan language. They condemn the "increased

crackdown on the exercise of cultural, linguistic, religious and other fundamental freedoms" of the six million Tibetan people as well as the Chinese authorities' plan to make Chinese the main language of instruction in Tibet," said a press release issued by the European Parliament.

"[European] Parliament deplores the often discriminatory treatment of ethnic and religious minorities in China and asks the European Commission to report on the use made by China of the €1 million fund requested in 2009 to support Tibetan civil society," it said.

In a separate resolution on Burma, the European Parliament welcomes the recent release of Burmese democratic leader Aung San Suu Kyi. ■

Chinese-Tibetan Cultural Exchange Meet Held in Australia

The Chinese-Tibetan Friendship Association and the Office of Tibet in Australia jointly organised a cultural exchange meet in Sydney on Saturday on 11 December to "foster peace and harmony between the Chinese and Tibetan communities".

Monday, 13 December 2010

OVER 70 PEOPLE, INCLUDING His Holiness the Dalai Lama's Representative to Australia, Mr Sonam Norbu Dago, Chinese liaison officer Ms Dadon, Chinese scholars, writers, students, democracy activists from Sydney and Adelaide, and former Chinese embassy official in Australia, attended the meeting.

The event, which includes interactive debate on the theme "peace and harmony between Chinese and Tibetans" aims to share ideas and remove biased views and misunderstandings on both sides.

The president of the *Chinese-Tibetan Friendship Association*, Ms. Mei Leech, said: "The Chinese government not only brutally suppressed the Tibetan people's peaceful protests in 2008, but also fomented serious discord between the two communities. In order to have an interactive free exchange of ideas and way

of thinking from both sides, we have organised a new way to achieve that in the form of this cultural exchange meeting."

The participants held interactive discussion and shared ideas on wide-range of Tibet related issues, such as religion and culture, human rights and environmental issues in Tibet, democracy in China and the dialogue process on Tibet.

The question and answer session during the experts' talk has helped in promoting the Chinese people's understanding of the truth about the Tibetan culture and the real situation in Tibet.

It has also helped in cultivating trust among Tibetans to learn about China's culture and strengthening co-ordination with its people, the office of Tibet said. ■

Photo: Prof. Hong Bing Yuan speaking during the cultural exchange meet between the Chinese and Tibetan participants held in Sydney on 11 December, 2010



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Tibet News

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Statement of His Holiness the Dalai Lama on the 52nd Anniversary of the Tibetan National Uprising Day



Dharamshala, 10 March: "TODAY MARKS THE 52ND ANNIVERSARY of the Tibetan people's peaceful uprising of 1959 against Communist

China's repression in the Tibetan capital Lhasa, and the third anniversary of the non-violent demonstrations that took place across Tibet in 2008. On this occasion, I would like to pay tribute to and pray for those brave men and women who sacrificed their lives for the just cause of Tibet. I express my solidarity with those who continue to suffer repression and pray for the well-being of all sentient beings.

For more than sixty years, Tibetans, despite being deprived of freedom and living in fear and insecurity, have been able to maintain their unique Tibetan identity and cultural values. More consequentially, successive new generations, who have no experience of free Tibet, have courageously taken responsibility in advancing the cause of Tibet. This is admirable, for they exemplify the strength of Tibetan resilience.

This Earth belongs to humanity and the People's Republic of China (PRC) belongs to its 1.3 billion citizens, who have the right to know the truth about the state of affairs in their country and the world at large. If citizens are fully informed, they have the ability to distinguish right from wrong. Censorship and the restriction of information violate basic human decency. For instance, China's leaders consider the communist ideology and its policies to be correct. If this were so, these policies should be made public with confidence and open to scrutiny.

China, with the world's largest population, is an emerging world power and I admire the economic development it has made. It also has huge potential to contribute to human progress and world peace. But to do that, China must earn the international community's respect and trust. In order to earn such respect China's leaders must develop greater transparency, their actions corresponding to their words. To ensure this, freedom of expression and freedom of the press are essential. Similarly, transparency in governance can help check corruption. In recent years, China has seen an increasing number of intellectuals calling for political reform and greater openness. Premier Wen Jiabao has also expressed support for these concerns. These are significant indications and I welcome them.

The PRC is a country comprising many

nationalities, enriched by a diversity of languages and cultures. Protection of the language and culture of each nationality is a policy of the PRC, which is clearly spelt out in its constitution. Tibetan is the only language to preserve the entire range of the Buddha's teachings, including the texts on logic and theories of knowledge (epistemology), which we inherited from India's Nalanda University. This is a system of knowledge governed by reason and logic that has the potential to contribute to the peace and happiness of all beings. Therefore, the policy of undermining such a culture, instead of protecting and developing it, will in the long run amount to the destruction of humanity's common heritage.

The Chinese government frequently states that stability and development in Tibet is the foundation for its long-term well-being. However, the authorities still station large numbers of troops all across Tibet, increasing restrictions on the Tibetan people. Tibetans live in constant fear and anxiety. More recently, many Tibetan intellectuals, public figures and environmentalists have been punished for articulating the Tibetan people's basic aspirations. They have been imprisoned allegedly for "subverting state power" when actually they have been giving voice to the Tibetan identity and cultural heritage. Such repressive measures undermine unity and stability. Likewise, in China, lawyers defending people's rights, independent writers and human rights activists have been arrested. I strongly urge the Chinese leaders to review these developments and release these prisoners of conscience forthwith.

The Chinese government claims there is no problem in Tibet other than the personal privileges and status of the Dalai Lama. The reality is that the ongoing oppression of the Tibetan people has provoked widespread, deep resentment against current official policies. People from all walks of life frequently express their discontentment. That there is a problem in Tibet is reflected in the Chinese authorities' failure to trust Tibetans or win their loyalty. Instead, the Tibetan people live under constant suspicion and surveillance. Chinese and foreign visitors to Tibet corroborate this grim reality.

Therefore, just as we were able to send fact-finding delegations to Tibet in the late 1970s and early 1980s from among Tibetans in exile, we propose similar visits again. At the same time we would encourage the sending of representatives of independent

The UN Encourages China to Reassess Policies on Tibetan Nomads

Tuesday, 28 December 2010

Dharamshala: FOLLOWING HIS OFFICIAL visit to China from 15-23 December, the UN Special Rapporteur on the right to food, Mr Olivier De Schutter, has encouraged the Chinese government to reassess its policies in Tibet and Inner Mongolia which he said “leave the nomads with no other options than to sell their herd and resettle”.

The Special Rapporteur noted that the Chinese government enforces “measures such as grazing bans, grazing land non-use periods, rotational grazing and accommodation of carrying capacity, limitations on pastures distribution, compulsory fencing and slaughter of animal livestock”.

“...While there is little doubt about the extent of the land degradation problem, the Special Rapporteur would note that herders should not, as a result of the measures adopted under the tuimu huancao policy (“removing animals to grow grass”), be put in a situation where they have no other options than to sell their herd and resettle,” Mr Schutter said in his report.

“The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights prohibits depriving any people from its means of subsistence, and the 1992 Convention on Biodiversity acknowledges the importance of indigenous communities as guarantors and protectors of biodiversity (Art. 8 j). China has ratified both of these instruments,” the report noted.

“The Special Rapporteur encourages the Chinese authorities to engage in meaningful consultations with herding communities, including in order to assess the results of past and current policies, and examine all available options, including recent strategies of sustainable management of marginal pastures such as the New Rangeland Management (NRM) in order to combine the knowledge of the nomadic herders of their territories with the information that can be drawn from modern science,” it said.

“The Special Rapporteur also encourages the Chinese authorities to invest in rehabilitating pasture, and to support remaining nomads with rural extension. The potential of livestock insurance programmes should also be explored, as tested successfully in Mongolia. Such programs, which pay nomads to restock and recover after a major disaster, encourage nomads to keep herds at much smaller scale as they would not fear losing their herding activity after such disasters if covered by such insurances,” it noted.

The Environment & Development Desk of the Central Tibetan Administration's Department of Information and International Relations in Dharamshala, which monitors the issue of nomads in Tibet, said the UN report shows that Chinese government policies for Tibetan nomads are unsuccessful.

“The UN Special Rapporteur has underscored the need to involve the herding community in the decision and policy making process, and to put into place livestock insurance programmes,” said Mr Tenzin Norbu, Executive Head of the Environment & Development Desk.



Nomad resettlement site in Darchen, Ngari prefecture, Tibet Autonomous Region. The majority of Tibetans live in rural areas, and for centuries many have sustained themselves through a nomadic herder lifestyle, uniquely adapted to the harsh conditions and fragile ecosystem of the Tibetan plateau/Photo:ICT

Under the controversial “ecological migration” scheme launched in 2003, the Chinese government is in the advanced stages of relocating between 50% and 80% of the 2.25 million nomads on the Tibetan plateau, British newspaper The Guardian reported in September this year.

In Amdo (Ch: Qinghai), the most Tibetan and pastoral prefectures are Golog and Yushu. In these two regions, according to a report published by the Environment and Development Desk of the Central Tibetan Administration's Department of Information & International Relations in 2009, Tibetan nomads are now altogether excluded from 40 per cent of the grassland. They have been forced to shift to remote new towns, completely losing their stock, livelihoods

and the land that had been leased to them. At the 2006 International Conference on Poverty Reduction and the Important Role for International Cooperation in Sichuan, international development agencies reported that nomads have been coercively removed, excluded from their rangelands and made to settle in rows of houses in rigid lines from the watershed, with no livelihoods, little compensation and nothing to do but watch television.

The Tibetan areas incorporated into China's Qinghai Province are dotted with resettlement centres, many on the way to becoming “ghettos”. Nomads are paid an annual allowance – of 3,000 yuan (about £300) to 8,000 yuan per household – to give up herding for 10 years and be provided with housing. As in some native American reservations in the US and Canada, they have trouble finding jobs. Many end up either unemployed or recycling rubbish or collecting dung, The Guardian's report said.

“If I could go back to herding, I would. But the land has been taken by the state and the livestock has been sold off so we are stuck here. It's hopeless,” said Shang Lashi, a resident at a resettlement centre in Yushu. “We were promised jobs. But there is no work. We live on the 3,000 yuan a year allowance, but the officials deduct money from that for the housing, which was supposed to be free.”

“...Not only are these policies threatening one of the world's last systems of sustainable pastoralism, but scientific evidence shows that these policies are threatening the survival of the rangelands and Tibet's biodiversity. Chinese, Tibetan and Western scholars concerned about the impacts of these policies have pointed out that settling nomads runs counter to the latest scientific evidence on lessening the impact of grasslands degradation, which points to the need for livestock mobility in ensuring the health of the rangelands and mitigating negative warming impacts,” said International Campaign for Tibet (ICT), a human rights group based in Washington DC.

“There is an increasing consensus among Chinese, Tibetan and Western scholars that the traditional ecosystem knowledge of nomadic pastoralists protects the land and livelihoods and helps restore areas already degraded. The involvement of Tibetans - and nomads in particular - is essential to sustaining the long-term health of the ecosystems and water resources that China and Asia depend upon,” ICT said. ■



Participants and some of the resource persons of the workshop

First Tibetan Youth Workshop held in Australia

January, 2011

TIBET INFORMATION OFFICE based in Canberra organized the first ever Tibetan Youth Workshop from 7 to 9 January 2011 in Sydney. 20 Tibetan youths from all over Australia and New Zealand participated in the workshop. The topics covered in the workshop were Introduction to Buddhism, Tibetan language and culture, festivals, Tibetan performing arts and the history of Tibet. It also dealt with the human rights and environmental situation in Tibet, the democratic set up of the Tibetan administration in exile and Tibetan settlements, Middle Way Approach

and Sino-Tibetan dialogue process, Outreach to the Chinese and World Tibet movement. Ama Sonam Chodon, a former political prisoner in Tibet, gave a moving account of her torture experience in a Chinese prison. Some of the participants shared their experiences of their visit to Tibet. The participants were also given workshops on youth leadership and mentoring. The resource persons were both Australian and Tibetan experts on the topics. The participants appreciated the workshop and requested for such workshops to be held from time to time in the future. ■

His Holiness the Dalai Lama offers prayers to Australians during QLD floods

Tuesday, 11 January 2011

DHARAMSHALA: IN HIS CONDOLENCE message to Queensland Premier Anna Bligh, His Holiness said: "I was saddened by the unprecedented flood in your state which has brought severe destruction and suffering to the property and general public. But I admire the Australian government's preparedness in tackling the flood disaster in terms of its relief efforts."

"I am praying for no further loss of lives of those affected by the flood, speedy reconstruction of destroyed homes and an early end to the disaster," His Holiness said. The devastating flood triggered by incessant rainfall around Christmas has inundated thousands of homes, leaving 8 people dead and over 70 missing so far.

The Australian authorities fear for a dramatic rise in death toll as rising waters and continuing heavy rain continues to hamper rescue efforts.

The raging flood waters has started moving towards the state capital Brisbane.

The flooding of such destructive magnitude has never occurred in Queensland in the last many decades. ■

Chinese-Tibetan Friendship Association Established in New Zealand

CANBERRA: A CHINESE-TIBETAN FRIENDSHIP Association has been established in New Zealand to promote friendship and better understanding between the two communities towards resolving the issue of Tibet.

The friendship association, formed voluntarily by a group of educated Chinese and Tibetans living in Auckland, was launched at a function on 6 February. Around 30 people, consisting of members of the local Chinese and Tibetan communities, Tibet supporters, Chinese liaison officer of the Office of Tibet in Australia, editor of a Chinese newspaper in Auckland and journalists, attended the function.

Addressing the function, Ms Dadon,

the Chinese liaison officer at the Office of Tibet in Canberra, said: "The newly formed association would help to strengthen efforts to bring a mutually beneficial solution to the issue of Tibet through the Middle-Way policy, and to clear doubts and misunderstandings between the Chinese and Tibetan peoples."

"The formation of this association can be considered as an important step towards helping the Chinese people to understand the reality of the issue of Tibet and the visions of His Holiness the Dalai Lama," Ms Dadon added.

Members of the newly formed Chinese-Tibetan Friendship Association in Auckland, New Zealand

She presented traditional Tibetan

scarves (Khata) to the executive members of the Chinese-Tibetan Friendship Association as a gesture of appreciation for their initiative.

Mr Rinchen, president of the association, addressed the gathering on the association's objectives and its future plan of action. "The Chinese government is making different deceitful schemes and propaganda to sow discord and obstacles between the Chinese and Tibetan peoples. We need to make efforts to clear our doubts and misunderstandings through the Middle-Way policy envisioned and endorsed by His Holiness the Dalai Lama and the Tibetan people respectively."

Mr Rinchen said efforts would be made to bring together Tibetans and

Chinese to commemorate important occasions such as His Holiness the Dalai Lama's birthday celebration on 6 July, Tibetan National Uprising Day on 10 March, and the Chinese democracy movement of 6 June. There would be cultural exchange between the two communities during the Tibetan New Year to know each other better and deepen mutual trust, he added.

In his address, Mr Chen Weijian, the association's vice-president and a long time Chinese supporter of Tibet, said: "The Chinese-Tibetan Friendship Association in New Zealand has been instituted in accordance to His Holiness the Dalai Lama's advice on the need for such an association to foster friendship and trust between the two communities. The association would make efforts to facilitate better understanding amongst



the Chinese people about the issue of Tibet and His Holiness the Dalai Lama's visions."

Similar friendship associations were

established in Australia and Japan as part of the Tibetan people's efforts to reach out to the Chinese people. ■

Tibet festival celebrated in Brisbane; Proceeds of concert towards flood relief

Monday 7 February, 2011

DHARAMSHALA: THE ANNUAL 'FESTIVAL OF TIBET', held in Brisbane from 3 – 5 February, showcased Tibet's cultural heritage and highlighted pressing issues of political and environmental conditions inside Tibet.

The event featured photo exhibition, films, panel discussions and talks, meditation and concerts. The proceeds from the "Tibet: Awakened Heart Concert", featuring Tenzin Choegyal, Taro Terahara, Female Tibetan singer Jamyang Dolma, will go to towards the flood relief in Queensland, the organisers said.

The organisers of the festival, led by Mr Tenzin Choegyal, brought together at the event noted personalities such as diplomats, educationalist, environmentalist, musicians, artists and journalists.

Kalon Tempa Tsering, Representative of His Holiness the Dalai Lama and Kasur Jetsun Pema, famously known as "Mother of Tibet" for her commitment to Tibetan children's education were the honorary guest speakers at the festival.

Kalon Tempa Tsering spoke on the topic "Why Tibet Matters?". He gave a brief, yet detail accounts on the various issues related to the basic human right violations, Chinese population transfers, environmental concerns and developmental activities inside Tibet.

Ama Jetsun Pema mainly talked about how the education has evolved and developed in the Tibetan Children's Village Schools, starting from 51 students in early 1960s to the current enrolment of more than 12,000 students.

The festival featured a panel discussion ongoing dialogue process between envoys of His Holiness the Dalai Lama and the Chinese leadership towards resolving the issue of Tibet. The panel discussion was chaired by Ms Kaye Hanschen, Chair of the Australian Tibet Council and Mr Sonam Norbu Dagpo, Representative of His Holiness the Dalai Lama and Mr Tenzin Norbu, head of the Environment and Development Desk of the Central Tibetan Administration were the panellists.

In another panel discussion on 'The Art of Healing', Geshe



Representative Sonam N Dagpo (3rd R) with Mr Tenzin Norbu, Head of Environment and Development Desk of the Department of Information and International Relations (4th R) at a panel discussion during the festival in Brisbane, Australia.

Lobsang Jamyang blessed the audience about the essence of Buddhism and his personal experience during his visit to Tibet.

"The Visi theatre was packed with enthusiastic audience during both the panel discussions," Mr Tenzin Norbu told TibetNet in a e-mail message.

"Starting from this 'Festival of Tibet' at Brisbane, the Tibet Information Office in Canberra and the Australia Tibet Council would jointly organise a series of talks and presentations related to Tibet's environment in major cities in Australia. This talk series was part of the programme to commemorate the 75th Birth Anniversary of His Holiness the Dalai Lama," Mr Norbu said. Other highlights of the festival include workshops on Tibetan Thangka painting and meditation, photo exhibitions and documentary films on His Holiness the Dalai Lama among others. ■

Central Tibetan Administration (CTA) Official Briefs Australian Parliamentarians on Tibet's Environment



Members of the Australian All-Party Parliamentary Group for Tibet attend a briefing on Tibet's environmental issues in Canberra, Australia, on 10 February 2011

Monday, 14 February, 2011

CANBERRA: MR TENZIN NORBU, head of Environment and Development Desk at Department of Information and International Relations of the Central Tibetan Administration (CTA), met with members of the Australian All-Party Parliamentary Group for Tibet (AAPGT) and briefed two Australian parliamentary committees on Tibet's environmental issues in Canberra on 10 February.

This was the first time in Australian parliament to discuss Tibetan environmental issues. The meetings were organised by Australia Tibet Council, which works closely with the AAPGT in political lobbying in the Australian parliament. Mr Norbu's visit to Australia was organised by Tibetan Information Office in Canberra as a part of His Holiness the Dalai Lama's 75th birthday celebration.

The Australian All-Party Parliamentary

Group for Tibet has currently 28 members out of the 226 parliamentarians from both houses of the parliament, and has grown in size and activity in the last few years. During his meeting with seven members of the AAPGT, Mr Norbu raised environmental concerns on the Tibetan plateau such as forced removal of nomads from their grasslands and exploitation of natural resources by the Chinese government. He also discussed the importance of Tibet as the third pole and as the water tower of Asia. He was able to offer suggestions on how the Australian government can help to protect the Tibetan environment including providing guidance to the Chinese policy makers in making the right choice of policies to help restore the grasslands and the nomadic communities.

Members of the Australian All-Party Parliamentary Group for Tibet attend a briefing on Tibet's environmental issues in

Canberra, Australia, on 10 February 2011.

He later briefed on the same issues with members of the Human Rights Subcommittee of the Joint Standing Committee of Foreign Affairs, Defense and Trade and House Committee of Climate Change, Environment and the Arts. Apart from these three formal meetings, he met privately with a Greens senator and the international adviser to the leader of the Greens Party.

During his visit to Canberra, Mr Norbu also met with a social scientist who has done extensive research on the Tibetan environment for the last six years.

Mr Tenzin Norbu also travelled to Melbourne for a presentation organised by the Australia Tibet Council under the auspices of Victoria Naturally Alliance. Mr Norbu provided a powerpoint briefing on the many environmental problems facing Tibet, focusing particularly on nomad displacement, hydropower dams and melting glaciers. The audience of 95 people, mostly members of environmental NGOs, were shocked at the many difficulties Tibet faces, and asked what they could do. Many of those attending the presentation left their e-mail addresses for follow up. Several expressed the wish that there be more such briefings and visits, since the environment movement in Australia is quite well developed, but not well aware of Tibet.

Mr Norbu also was interviewed by the editor of the bimonthly magazine *Habitat*, the flagship of the Australian Conservation Foundation, due to feature EDD and its work in its May 2011 issue. ■

Tibet's Rich Cultural Heritage Showcased at Australia's Multicultural Festival

Thursday, 17 February, 2011

DHARAMSHALA: THE CULTURAL CENTRE of the Office of Tibet in Canberra had showcased Tibet's rich and vibrant cultural heritage at the annual national multicultural festival of Australia, winning accolades from thousands of performers and visitors from across the nation and globe.

During the weekend of 11-13 February, Australia's capital Canberra celebrated the country's rich and vibrant cultural diversity. The nationalities of

different countries living in Australia exhibit their rich culture, food and folk dances during the festival. The embassies also participate in the event to highlight their exhibits.

This year the visitors got a glimpse of Tibet's rich cultural heritage at the Tibetan stalls.

A wide array of traditional artifacts kept in the Tibetan homes such as altar with idols of Buddha and items used in religious offerings made of silver were put on display in a specially made tent

house. Inside the tent, the wall was adorned with exquisite Tibetan scroll paintings (Thangka) on brocade, and religious and household culinary items like cups and teapots arranged on the table as customary in the Tibetan households.

The collection of traditional dances and songs from the Tibetan Institute of Performing Arts were screened to exhibit the dresses of Tibet.

Moreover, the visitors who have keen interest to learn about Tibet were

apprised with nuggets of information such as books authored by His Holiness the Dalai Lama, websites on Tibet, info on Tibetan Institute of Performing Arts and scholarships and educational programme of the Department of Education among others.

Visitors through a Tibetan stall at the annual National Multicultural Festival in Canberra, Australia, on 11-13 February 2011.

Other Tibet related information like His Holiness the Dalai Lama's visits around the world and cultural activities of the Office of Tibet were widely disseminated to the visitors.

The members of Tibetan community in Canberra put up stalls to showcase Tibetan cuisines. Tenzin Choegyal, a Tibetan artiste in Brisbane, sang folk songs on Tibetan lute and he was

joined by a performer from Japan. A group of young dance troupes from the Tibetan community in Sydney presented a folk dance on the beats of lute.

In a message to TibetNet, Representative Sonam Norbu Dagpo said: "The visitors took great delight and interest in the Tibetan aspect of the festival. The organising committee of the Canberra multicultural festival awarded the first prize to our office for its excellence in display category."

The rich flavor of the Tibetan cuisines and the melodious Tibetan folk songs and dances were also very much admired by the visitors, Mr Dagpo said. ■



A Tibetan stall at the annual National Multicultural Festival in Canberra, Australia, on 11-13 February 2011. Photo by OoT/Australia

INTERNATIONAL

President Obama asks President Hu Jintao to have "further dialogue" with Dalai Lama's Envoys on Tibet

Thursday, 20 January, 2011

WASHINGTON, DC: US PRESIDENT BARACK OBAMA took the opportunity of a joint press conference with Chinese President Hu Jintao on 19 January 2011 to say that the United States supports "further dialogue between the government of China and the representatives of the Dalai Lama to resolve concerns and differences, including the preservation of the religious and cultural identity of the Tibetan people."

The press conference, held in the White House, saw President Obama sending a strong message to China on how it dealt with issues.

President Obama said, "I reaffirmed America's fundamental commitment to the universal rights of all people. That includes basic human rights like freedom of speech, of the press, of assembly, of association and demonstration, and of religion -- rights that are recognized in the Chinese constitution.

As I've said before, the United States speaks up for these freedoms and the dignity of every human being, not only because it is part of who we are as Americans, but we do so because we believe that by upholding these universal rights, all nations, including China, will ultimately be more prosperous and successful."

The Tibet reference came in the opening

remarks after President Obama revealed that the United States and China have agreed to resume formal dialogue on human rights and to new exchanges to advance the rule of law. President Obama said, "And even as we, the United States, recognize that Tibet is part of the People's Republic of China, the United States continues to support further dialogue between the government of China and the representatives of the Dalai Lama to resolve concerns and differences, including the preservation of the religious and cultural identity of the Tibetan people."

This is the eighth meeting between the two presidents. Following President Obama's meeting with His Holiness the Dalai Lama in February 2010, the White House had released a statement, which said, "The President stated his strong support for the preservation of Tibet's unique religious, cultural and linguistic identity and the protection of human rights for Tibetans in the People's Republic of China. The President commended the Dalai Lama's "Middle Way" approach, his commitment to nonviolence and his pursuit of dialogue with the Chinese government."

President Hu Jintao did not make any reference to Tibet at the press conference.

The full text of the statements are available on the White House website. ■

His Holiness the Dalai Lama expresses sadness over recent Earthquake in Christchurch, New Zealand

Wednesday, 23 February 2011

DHARAMSHALA: IN A LETTER SENT ON 22 FEBRUARY to H.E. John Key, the Prime Minister of New Zealand, His Holiness the Dalai Lama expressed his shock and sadness on hearing the news of a powerful earthquake that had once again struck Christchurch which he had fond memories of visiting in 1996.

His Holiness expressed his deeply felt condolences to the families of the deceased and prayed for the well-being of those who have been injured or lost their homes, with the hope that normal life is restored soon. ■

INTERNATIONAL

international bodies, including parliamentarians. If they were to find that Tibetans in Tibet are happy, we would readily accept it.

The spirit of realism that prevailed under Mao's leadership in the early 1950s led China to sign the 17-point agreement with Tibet. A similar spirit of realism prevailed once more during Hu Yaobang's time in the early 1980s. If there had been a continuation of such realism the Tibetan issue, as well as several other problems, could easily have been solved. Unfortunately, conservative views derailed these policies. The result is that after more than six decades, the problem has become more intractable.

The Tibetan Plateau is the source of the major rivers of Asia. Because it has the largest concentration of glaciers apart from the two Poles, it is considered to be the Third Pole. Environmental degradation in Tibet will have a detrimental impact on large parts of Asia, particularly on China and the Indian subcontinent. Both the central and local governments, as well as the Chinese public, should realise the degradation of the Tibetan environment and develop sustainable measures to safeguard it. I appeal to China to take into account the survival of people affected by what happens environmentally on the Tibetan Plateau.

In our efforts to solve the issue of Tibet, we have consistently pursued the mutually beneficial Middle-Way Approach, which seeks genuine autonomy for the Tibetan people within the PRC. In our talks with officials of the Chinese government's United Front Work Department we have clearly explained in detail the Tibetan people's hopes and aspirations. The lack of any positive response to our reasonable proposals makes

us wonder whether these were fully and accurately conveyed to the higher authorities.

Since ancient times, Tibetan and Chinese peoples have lived as neighbours. It would be a mistake if our unresolved differences were to affect this age-old friendship. Special efforts are being made to promote good relations between Tibetans and Chinese living abroad and I am happy that this has contributed to better understanding and friendship between us. Tibetans inside Tibet should also cultivate good relations with our Chinese brothers and sisters.

In recent weeks we have witnessed remarkable non-violent struggles for freedom and democracy in various parts of North Africa and elsewhere. I am a firm believer in non-violence and people-power and these events have shown once again that determined non-violent action can indeed bring about positive change. We must all hope that these inspiring changes lead to genuine freedom, happiness and prosperity for the peoples in these countries.

One of the aspirations I have cherished since childhood is the reform of Tibet's political and social structure, and in the few years when I held effective power in Tibet, I managed to make some fundamental changes. Although I was unable to take this further in Tibet, I have made every effort to do so since we came into exile. Today, within the framework of the Charter for Tibetans in Exile, the Kalon Tripa, the political leadership, and the people's representatives are directly elected by the people. We have been able to implement democracy in exile that is in keeping with the standards of an open society.

As early as the 1960s, I have repeatedly stressed that Tibetans need a leader, elected

freely by the Tibetan people, to whom I can devolve power. Now, we have clearly reached the time to put this into effect. During the forthcoming eleventh session of the fourteenth Tibetan Parliament in Exile, which begins on 14th March, I will formally propose that the necessary amendments be made to the Charter for Tibetans in Exile, reflecting my decision to devolve my formal authority to the elected leader.

Since I made my intention clear I have received repeated and earnest requests both from within Tibet and outside, to continue to provide political leadership. My desire to devolve authority has nothing to do with a wish to shirk responsibility. It is to benefit Tibetans in the long run. It is not because I feel disheartened. Tibetans have placed such faith and trust in me that as one among them

I am committed to playing my part in the just cause of Tibet. I trust that gradually people will come to understand my intention, will support my decision and accordingly let it take effect.

I would like to take this opportunity to remember the kindness of the leaders of various nations that cherish justice, members of parliaments, intellectuals and Tibet Support Groups, who have been steadfast in their support for the Tibetan people. In particular, we will always remember the kindness and consistent support of the people and Government of India and State Governments for generously helping Tibetans preserve and promote their religion and culture and ensuring the welfare of Tibetans in exile. To all of them I offer my heartfelt gratitude. With my prayers for the welfare and happiness of all sentient beings.

The Dalai Lama,
10 March 2011 ■

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