



As His Holiness the Dalai Lama said: *“This blue planet is our only home and Tibet is its roof.”* Tibet, known as the *“Roof of the World”*, is an environmentally strategic area and is critical to the health of the planet. As the world focuses on climate action at *COP21*, Tibet must be central to any discussion on climate change. An environmental catastrophe can be avoided and this *10-Point Call to Action* points the way.

## United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)

### 1. Strong Climate Change Agreement at COP21:

The Central Tibetan Administration (CTA) wants to see a strong climate change agreement for the health and sustainability of the entire world. The CTA urges world leaders gathering in Paris to recognize Tibet’s importance to the environmental health of the planet and to make Tibet central to global climate change discussions. The urgency for such an agreement must be recognized, and sincere efforts to reach an agreement should be made by all parties involved.

### 2. Recognition of the Global Significance of the Tibetan Plateau:

The UNFCCC should recognize the global significance of the Tibetan Plateau and world leaders gathering in Paris must make Tibet central to global climate change discussions. The Tibetan Plateau, because of its environmental importance, is often referred to as the *“Roof of the World”*, the *“Third Pole”*, the *“Water Tower of Asia”* and the *“Rain Maker”*. This important and fragile ecosystem must be protected.

Tibet is not only the largest and highest plateau in the world; it is home to the third-largest store of ice and the largest source of accessible fresh water on the planet. It is also the head source of Asia’s six largest rivers, flowing into the 10 most-densely populated nations and supporting almost one-third of world’s population.

The timing and intensity of the Indian and East Asian monsoons are greatly influenced by climate change on the Tibetan Plateau. A comprehensive understanding of global climate change is impossible without taking into consideration what is happening on the Tibetan Plateau.

### 3. Climate Change Research on the Tibetan Plateau:

The UNFCCC should launch scientific research studies to better understand both the impact of climate change on the Tibetan Plateau and the Plateau’s critical role in reversing the effects of global climate change. Such studies would inform and enable Tibetans, the Chinese government and the international community to protect, mitigate and adapt to climate change on the Tibetan Plateau.

To avoid a socio-environmental catastrophe, the UNFCCC must act now to protect the Tibetan Plateau’s fragile ecosystem.

## The People’s Republic of China

### 4. China’s Environmental Protection Law:

China’s recently adopted Environmental Protection Law should be fairly and rigorously implemented in Tibetan areas. Although there is skepticism about whether or not the Law will be rigorously enforced, it is a legal framework that can be used to hold the Chinese government to account. The Law includes mention of *“autonomous regions”* and the rights of people and organizations to establish local environmental quality standards and to

“participate [in] and supervise the activities of environment protection”. The Law also promotes “strict protection on key ecological functional zones and areas of sensitive and fragile ecological environment”.

### **5. Environmentally Sustainable and Socially Responsible Mining:**

The Chinese government must respect and protect the rights of the Tibetan peoples’ cultural belief in the sanctity of the sacred mountains, lakes and rivers of the Tibetan Plateau. The Chinese government must set firm, uncompromising and transparent license procedures for mining permits in Tibetan areas. The issuing of such permits should be based on competitive and reliable Environmental Impact Assessments and Social Impact Assessment reports. The Chinese government should also strictly monitor and prohibit mining companies from dumping hazardous mine waste in the surrounding areas and rivers.

### **6. Traditional Knowledge and Way of Life:**

Tibetan pastoral nomads are the expert custodians of the alpine pastures and their knowledge and experience must be incorporated into climate mitigation and adaptation practices. Decision-making mechanisms should be transparent and inclusive of all regional stakeholders, especially Tibetan nomads. There should be an immediate halt to the forceful removal of Tibetan nomads from their lands and those already re-settled should be allowed to return to their pastures if they so wish.

The Chinese government must also promptly address the poorly-planned re-settlement programs of Tibetan nomads. Having lost their traditional, self-reliant way of life, the Chinese Central Government must provide the newly-resettled nomads with jobs, education, healthcare services, and business opportunities so as to restore their dignity.

### **7. Strictly Regulate Urbanization and Tourism:**

The rapid expansion of towns and cities places a severe ecological burden on Tibet’s fragile ecosystem. Clear urban planning guidelines must be established and rigorously adhered to by the Chinese government. The mistakes made by the Chinese government in urbanizing inland China must not be repeated on the Tibetan Plateau. The Chinese government must involve the local Tibetan population in decision-making processes for major development projects in Tibetan areas.

The influx of tourists into Tibetan areas must be regulated with clear guidelines to protect the Plateau’s fragile ecosystem. Existing conservation zones across the Tibetan Plateau must be respected and strictly managed.

## **International Community and Governments**

### **8. Inter-Governmental Engagement:**

Governments around the world should urge the Chinese government to protect the Tibetan Plateau from excessive mining and damming. The destruction of Tibet’s environment will only exacerbate climate change on the Plateau.

### **9. Neighbouring Downstream Countries and Protecting Water Source:**

Asia’s six largest rivers (names in English/*Tibetan*: Yangtze/*Dri Chu*, Yellow/*Mach u*, Mekong/*Zach u*, Salween/*Gyalmo Ngulchu*, Indus/*Senge Khabab*, Brahmaputra/*Yarlung Tsangpo*) flow from the Tibetan Plateau to downstream neighbouring countries (India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Burma, Thailand, Laos, Vietnam, Cambodia, Nepal and Bhutan). In order to safeguard their water/food security, these countries must actively engage in the protection of Tibetan rivers from excessive damming and contamination.

### **10. Global Citizen Action for Tibet’s Environment:**

As His Holiness the Dalai Lama has said: “This blue planet is our only home and Tibet is its roof.” The Tibetan Plateau needs to be protected, not just for Tibetans but for the health and sustainability of the entire world. Global citizens must lobby their governments to help protect Tibetan Plateau. Environmental non-governmental organizations also have a role to play by ensuring that Tibet is on the global climate change and environment agenda.

## **FOR FURTHER INFORMATION:**

**See:** [tibet.net/COP21](http://tibet.net/COP21)

**Tibet—Climate Action for the Roof of the World:**  
*Facts and Figures, Q&A and COP21 Backgrounder.*

The *Tibet—Climate Action for the Roof of the World* campaign is an initiative of the Environment & Development Desk (Department of Information and International Relations) of the Central Tibetan Administration.