

“I urge all Tibetans in and outside Tibet to work unitedly for a secure future based on equality and harmony of nationalities.”



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DALAI LAMA: STRUGGLE “SACRED DUTY” OF ALL TIBETANS

The Dalai Lama has called on all Tibetans to fulfill their “sacred duty” and to continue their struggle for “genuine, unified autonomy”. In his annual statement to mark the 48th anniversary of the Tibetan National Uprising, he said that only such a meaningful autonomy will provide real benefits “for both the majority and the minority nationalities as well as the central and local governments”.

Mary Beth Markey, Vice President of ICT, said: “The 1959 March Uprising was an expression by the Tibetans of their loyalty to the Dalai Lama and their feelings about their relationship to China. Forty-eight years later the relationship between China and Tibet is still unresolved, but the Tibetan people’s feelings about the Dalai Lama are stronger than ever, as is his determination to reach a peaceful solution with China.”

Referring to the ongoing dialogue process with China, the Dalai Lama said that the Tibetan delegation “stands ready to continue the dialogue.” The last round of meetings was held in February 2006 in China. In his last March 10 statement, the Dalai Lama positioned himself directly in the discussions that have been ongoing between his envoys and Chinese officials, and expressed a wish to make a pilgrimage to China. This year, he additionally said that “there are many who express their wish that I....give teachings there [in China].” He drew attention to the increasing awareness among Chinese people that “material development alone is not sufficient and that there is a need to create a more meaningful society based on spiritual values.”

The Dalai Lama also said that he had transformed the Tibetan exile administration into a democratic system, thus setting up a ‘deeply-rooted, vibrant social and political institution that will carry forward our struggle from generation to generation.” He paid tribute to the courage of Tibetans working in Tibet, including Communist Party members, leaders, officials and professionals “who have held onto the Tibetan spirit by continuing their efforts to work for the genuine interest of the Tibetan people.” He said: “I urge all Tibetans in and outside Tibet to work unitedly for a secure future based on equality and harmony of nationalities.”



The Dalai Lama’s Special Envoy Lodi Gyari testified at a hearing at the House of Representatives’ Committee on Foreign Affairs in Washington on 13 March on the status of the Sino-Tibetan dialogue. Referring to Congress’ decision to award the Dalai Lama the Congressional Gold Medal later this year, Gyari said, “As a Tibetan, I am also deeply touched by this Congress bestowing the Congressional Gold Medal, its highest honor, on His Holiness the Dalai Lama. It is a tremendous expression of support for him, and recognition of his leadership on behalf of peace and nonviolence.”

The full text of the Dalai Lama’s statement and testimony of the Special Envoy is available at www.savetibet.org ■

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EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT WANTS GREATER EU ROLE IN DIALOGUE

The European Parliament [EP] has passed a detailed resolution on the status of the dialogue between representatives of His Holiness the Dalai Lama and the Chinese government, which calls upon the two parties to resume their dialogue “without preconditions and in a forward-looking manner that allows for pragmatic solutions that respects the territorial integrity of China and fulfils the aspirations of the Tibetan people for a unified and genuinely devolved autonomous Tibet” [RE\P6_B(2007)0066_EN.doc: 72 votes for, 1 abstention; 15 February 2007].

The dialogue process began in 2002 and there have since been a further four rounds of meetings. However, since the 5th Round in February 2006, there has been no further invitation to the Tibetan side for a 6th Round, raising concerns at the EP that the Chinese government has unilaterally closed the discussions.

Delivering a key speech on the status of the dialogue at the Brookings Institution in Washington last November, Special Envoy to the Dalai Lama, Lodi Gyari, said that “China’s lack of trust in His Holiness the Dalai Lama and the Tibetan people is one of the most critical obstacles we currently face in our dialogue... we have consistently conveyed to our Chinese counterparts that far from being the problem, His Holiness the Dalai Lama is the solution.”

The EP resolution also called on the Commission, the Council and Member States to “actively support the strengthening of the dialogue and, in the absence of tangible results on substantive issues and in consultation with both parties, assess what further role the European Union can play to facilitate a negotiated solution for Tibet.” Recommendations from the EP included:

- The appointment of an EU Special Representative for Tibet
- Inclusion of the question of Tibet and the Dialogue during negotiation of the new the EU-China Partnership and Cooperation Framework Agreement
- Greater EU-US cooperation on Tibet policy

Speaking from ICT’s Brussels office, EU Policy Director Vincent Metten said “this resolution, with its support from all the major political groupings in the Parliament, reflects a balanced approach to the complexities of the dialogue process. Nonetheless, the EP has underlined its expectation that these discussions begin to show visible progress and that the Commission has a role to play.”

The EP resolution comes as numerous national parliaments raised concerns about the current deadlock in the Dialogue process, with parliamentary actions in the United States, Canada, Austria, Switzerland, Poland and Scotland.

The EP resolution text can be found online at: www.savetibet.org/ep15febo7 ■

RAIL ACCESS TO NATURAL RESOURCES SPARKS “GOLD-RUSH MENTALITY”

On 1 July 2006 China opened the controversial new Qinghai-Tibet railway. Tibet groups, including the International Campaign for Tibet, argued that the railway would increase Han Chinese migration to the region and allow the extraction of natural resources from the Tibetan plateau on a massive scale. Chinese government officials countered that the €3 billion construction project was aimed at bringing prosperity and economic development to Tibetan society.

Less than one year on, China’s Ministry of Land and Resources has acknowledged the discovery of enormous new resource deposits all across Tibet, the culmination of a secret seven-year survey project that preceded the railway construction. According to the government-run website of the China Tibet Information Center, the survey uncovered 16 major new deposits of copper, iron, lead, zinc and other minerals worth an estimated €96 billion.

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RAIL ACCESS...

The findings indicate that Tibet now holds as much as 40 million tons of copper - one third of China's total. A 250-mile seam of the metal has been found along Tibet's environmentally cherished Yarlung Tsangpo Gorge. One mine there called Yulong is now estimated to hold as much as 18 million tons according to the government news site Xinhua and could soon become the largest copper mine in China.

Also included in the findings were 40 million tons of lead and zinc, and more than a billion tons of high-grade iron. According to China Geological Survey's vice director Zhang Hongtao, the iron ore finds "may relieve the country's three-decade long dependency on iron imports."

Tibetans are already feeling the impact of the survey, with Fortune magazine reporting that during a recent visit to Lhasa, "a gold-rush mentality pervaded among newly-arrived entrepreneurs". At least ten major Canadian and British mining companies also have stakes in Chinese consortiums set up to operate on the plateau.

"We cannot but be alarmed at the rate of Chinese migrant workers coming to Tibet and China's mining of various minerals on the Tibetan Plateau... local Tibetans displaced by the mine receive almost nothing for their compensation, and the skilled jobs invariably go to non-Tibetan immigrants," said Tempa Tsering of the Department of Information and International Relations of the Tibetan Government in Exile in a statement of 15 March 2007.

"The railway makes possible large-scale extraction, as each deposit is close to the railway, or to its proposed short extensions...The arrival of the railway to Lhasa dramatically changes the economics of mineral exploitation, especially since it is not only the cost of a ticket to Lhasa that is subsidised; a freight subsidy also enables miners to send minerals out of Tibet for as little as US 1.5 cents per ton per kilometer," said Tsering.

Last March China announced an extension of the railway from Lhasa to Tibet's second largest city, Shigatse, to be completed by 2010. According to the Geological Survey's Zhang Hongtao, there are



Existing open-cast mine, Tibet (ICT)

"super-large" crude oil and gas reserves, as well as large quantities of oil shale deposits in areas west of the proposed new train line. ■

NEW REPORT ON ETHNIC GROUPS IN CHINA

The New York and Hong Kong-based Human Rights in China has devoted its quarterly journal, China Rights Forum, to the subject of 'Ethnic Groups in China'. The journal includes contributions by leading voices in the Tibetan, Mongolian and Uyghur communities, who focus on cultural, political and environmental concerns.

In one article, the journal concludes: "Reasonable and fair treatment of a country's minority groups is not only vital to social order and stability, but is often a strong indicator of how a government views and implements human rights for all individuals under its jurisdiction...Individuals HRIC interviewed indicated overwhelmingly that as ethnic minorities they felt alienated from the formulation and implementation of public policy, and as a result felt powerless to influence outcomes that directly affect their livelihood."

The journal precedes a forthcoming report *Exclusion, Marginalization and Tension: Ethnic Minorities in China*, jointly produced by Human Rights in China and Minority Rights Group International and can be downloaded at www.hrichina.org ■



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