

**Prepared Remarks by
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**Tibet at a Crossroads
The Current Status of Discussions Between
His Holiness the Dalai Lama and
the Government of the People's Republic of China**

I would like to thank the Institute of Politics of the Kennedy School of Government for providing this opportunity to discuss the current status of discussions between envoys of His Holiness the Dalai Lama and the Chinese government. I also want to thank the Harvard University Asia Center, The Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs, and The Fairbank Center for Chinese Studies for co-sponsoring this event.

In my capacity as Special Envoy of His Holiness the Dalai Lama, I have been entrusted by him to serve as the lead interlocutor to engage the Chinese leadership in finding a mutually satisfactory solution to the issue of Tibet.

Current Status of our Dialogue Process

Since 2002, my delegation has held seven rounds of meetings with our Chinese counterparts, the latest one in July this year. Our two sides have agreed to meet later this month for the eighth round. Through these talks, for the first time after decades of being in and out of contact, we have been able to convey to the Chinese leadership in an unambiguous manner the position of His Holiness and the steps that need to be taken in order for the Tibetan problem to be resolved. Our talks have enabled us to understand better the Chinese government's position and concerns regarding the future of Tibet.

As I speak to you, we are preparing for the next round of talks in earnest as we want to see some forward movement to the Tibetan issue, which is certainly at a crossroads. In the course of our discussions during the sixth (held in June/July 2007) and the seventh (held in July 2008) rounds we candidly conveyed to the Chinese leadership that in the absence of serious and sincere commitment on their part the continuation of the present dialogue process would serve no purpose. If during this upcoming round there is no perceptible change in the attitude of the Chinese leadership, then, as I have already made it clear to my counterparts, we may be compelled to conclude that this is a confirmation of their lack of seriousness and sincerity in the dialogue process.

After the fourth round in 2005 we believed our talks reached a critical stage when our discussions touched real, substantive points. However, around and during the sixth round in June-July 2007 the Chinese position changed and became hardened. We felt the Chinese authorities trying to change the very framework of our discussions by saying there was no Tibet issue and that the only issue was that of the personal welfare of the Dalai Lama. The Dalai Lama had categorically said that there was nothing to discuss about his personal matters and that we were there to talk about the problems that the Tibetan people were facing. The issue at hand is the welfare of the Tibetan people and is not about the personal status and affairs of His Holiness the Dalai Lama or that of the Tibetans in exile. Around the same time the Chinese officials also began clamping down on the Tibetan people in Tibet and increasing their negative rhetoric against the Dalai Lama.

Thus, following the sixth round in 2007 we had basically made it clear that we would not go forward on the process unless the Chinese side showed a readiness to talk about the Tibetan issue.

However, the political climate altered drastically following the widespread Tibetan demonstrations in March this year throughout the Tibetan plateau, the area that we call Tibet. These protests clearly demonstrated the Tibetan people's genuine and deep-rooted discontentment with the People's Republic of China's policies. China resorted to repression and persecution to respond to this situation. The urgent need for serious and sincere efforts to address this issue with courage and vision in the interest of stability, unity and harmony of all nationalities of the PRC became obvious. The Chinese leadership's shortsighted policy of resorting to fueling nationalistic sentiments among ethnic Chinese against Tibetans, as part of their effort to clamp down on the Tibetans, vitiated the atmosphere. It appeared as if the Chinese leadership was treating the Tibetan people as a community outside the family of the People's Republic of China. His Holiness thus felt that we needed to do something to calm the situation. Accordingly, we sought an emergency informal meeting with my Chinese counterparts and my colleague Envoy Kelsang Gyaltzen and I met them in Shenzhen in May.

Our main purpose of seeking this urgent informal meeting was to discuss the critical situation in Tibet. We rejected categorically the accusation made against His Holiness the Dalai Lama of instigating the demonstrations and unrest in Tibet. Instead we made it clear that the events in Tibet are the inescapable consequences of wrong policies of the authorities towards the Tibetans, which goes back several decades. The recent crisis in Tibet is a clear symptom of deeply felt grievances and resentment of the Tibetans with these policies. We said the task at hand is to address the legitimate concerns of the Tibetan people in a realistic and constructive way.

We urged the Chinese leadership to end repression throughout Tibet. We also called for the release of prisoners, to allow those injured to be given proper medical treatment and give unfettered access to visitors, including the media.

I felt that despite major differences on important issues both sides demonstrated a willingness to seek common approaches in addressing the issues at hand. As a result both sides reached an understanding in Shenzhen to continue the formal round of discussions. We thus ended up meeting in July in Beijing for our seventh round of talks.

Given the developments we had hoped that the Chinese leadership would reciprocate our efforts by taking tangible steps during this seventh round. We had suggested some possible initiatives, including the issuance of a joint statement confirming the commitment of both sides to the dialogue process. May be influenced by their excessive concern about legitimacy the Chinese side even failed to agree to our proposal of issuing a joint statement. Similarly, they also resorted to raising issues relating to Tibetan history. As we have repeatedly conveyed, revisiting history will not serve any useful purpose, as the Tibetans and Chinese sides have different viewpoints of their past relations. We have therefore chosen to base our approach on Tibet's future, not on the past. Debates over Tibet's history, before we have reached mutual trust and confidence, are counter productive, making it more difficult for the Tibetans and Chinese alone to untangle this issue.

While the Chinese side seems to have realized that their allegations against His Holiness for instigating the recent events in Tibet have become untenable, during the seventh round, they wanted His Holiness not to support violence, terrorism, and sabotaging the Olympics. They specifically identified the Tibetan Youth Congress, an organization of Tibetans in exile, as being a terrorist organization. We stated in the strongest possible terms that no one needs to urge us on this as His Holiness and the Tibetan struggle are universally acknowledged and appreciated for consistently rejecting and opposing violence. As for the Tibetan Youth Congress, while it was a fact that it stood for independence of Tibet we rejected the Chinese Government's charge of it being a terrorist or indulging in violence.

Since we have been consistently calling for the full implementation of all autonomous provisions for the Tibetan people, one constructive outcome during our seventh round was the willingness of the Chinese Central Government to receive suggestions from us on matters relating to the stability and development of Tibet and specific ideas on all aspects of regional autonomy within the framework of the Constitution of the People's Republic of China. We are taking this up seriously and have been working on formulating our suggestions, based on the provisions of the Chinese Constitution and the relevant statutes, on the principal issues concerning the Tibetan people. While we have had the opportunity to convey our views to the Chinese leadership on such matters in the past, too, we feel that the coming round will certainly be a test to see how serious they are on this.

The Dalai Lama is the most patient of a leader, but he, too, is beginning to feel concerned that his efforts are leading nowhere. Over the years the Dalai Lama has encouraged the democratization of the Tibetan leadership in exile and must function within this democratic system. In September, the Dalai Lama suggested to the Tibetan Parliament in Exile that a Special Meeting of the Tibetan community be convened to discuss the status

of the Tibetan issue, the situation inside Tibet and the Tibet movement internationally. This meeting is now being convened in November and already a public discussion has begun on the possible outcome of this meeting and its impact on our dialogue process.

The Tibetan issue is, indeed at a crossroads.

In 1979 Chinese leader Deng Xiaoping reached out to the personal emissary of the Dalai Lama and laid down the framework for resolving the issue of Tibet by stating that other than the issue of Tibetan independence anything else could be discussed and resolved.

¹The Dalai Lama on his part had, since the 1970's, taken the difficult but courageous position to find a mutually beneficial solution for the future of Tibet within the People's Republic of China. This approach came to be known subsequently as his Middle Way approach. He thus responded positively to Deng Xiaoping.

The Dalai Lama's Middle Way approach also embodies his deep concern for the survival of the Tibetan identity, culture, religion, and way of life. It was adopted by His Holiness after deliberating at length with Tibetan leaders in exile over many years. It is now fully endorsed by the democratically established institutions in exile, including the Assembly of Tibetan People's Deputies and the popularly elected Chairman of the Cabinet, Professor Samdhong Rinpoche. Rinpoche's role in this effort has been crucial. Because of prevailing conditions His Holiness is not in a position to openly seek the endorsement of the Tibetans inside Tibet. Nevertheless, he has used every opportunity to explain his approach and has received favorable reactions from all levels of Tibetan society. He has also been encouraged by the strong support expressed by a number of Chinese intellectuals and scholars.

The Middle Way approach represents the Dalai Lama's commitment to look to the future, instead of the past, to find a solution that will provide maximum autonomy for the Tibetan people and bring peace and stability to the People's Republic of China and the entire region.

Single Administration for the Tibetan People

Allow me to share with you briefly our position on the Tibetan issue.

Since His Holiness the Dalai Lama has addressed the fundamental concern of the Chinese government about the status of Tibet, it is our expectation that they should reciprocate by acknowledging the legitimate needs of the Tibetan people.

Today, less than half of the Tibetan people reside in the Tibet Autonomous Region. The rest reside in Tibetan autonomous counties and prefectures in Qinghai, Gansu, Sichuan and Yunnan provinces. All Tibetans residing in these Tibetan areas share the same

¹ This assurance was conveyed by Deng Xiaoping to Gyalo Thondup, the brother of H.H. the Dalai Lama, in 1979. It was reiterated by Li Xianian to the first fact-finding delegation sent by His Holiness the Dalai Lama to China and Tibet in 1979. It was restated to Gyalo Thondup by Ding Guangen, head of the United Front Work Department of the Chinese Communist Party, during their meeting in Beijing on June 22, 1992. It was further confirmed by a Chinese Foreign Ministry statement on August 25, 1993.

language, ethnicity, culture, and tradition.² Furthermore, just as the Chinese nation has sought to unify many different regions into one nation, the Tibetan people, too, yearn to be under one administrative entity so that their way of life, tradition, and religion can be more effectively and peacefully maintained.

Historically the division of a nationality area into many administrative units contributed to the weakening and erosion of that nationality's unique characteristics, as well as its ability to grow and develop. This can also hinder or even undermine the nation's peace, stability and development. Such a situation is in contradiction to the founding goals of the People's Republic of China, namely the recognition of the equality of all nationalities. Thus in order to thrive, the Tibetan people cannot remain divided, but must be accorded the equality and respect befitting a distinct people.

The Chinese side makes the argument that the present-day Tibet Autonomous Region parallels the area under the former Tibetan government. Thus, their argument continues, our position that the entire Tibetan people need to live under a single administrative entity is unreasonable. This question will lead us inevitably to the examination of Tibet's historical legal status under the Tibetan government and will not help in reaching a common ground on which to build a common future. The Chinese Government has redrawn internal boundaries when it has suited its needs³ and could do so again in the case of Tibet to foster stability and to help ensure Tibet's characteristics remain intact. The point here is not about territorial division, but how to best promote Tibet's culture and way of life.

The Chinese side is also characterizing our position as a demand for the separation of one-fourth the territory of the People's Republic of China. First of all, since the Tibetans are not asking for the separation of Tibet from China, there should be no concern on this front. More importantly, it is a reality that the landmass inhabited by Tibetans constitutes roughly one-fourth the territory of the People's Republic of China. Actually, the Chinese government has already designated almost all Tibetan areas as Tibet autonomous entities: the Tibet Autonomous Region, Tibet Autonomous Prefectures or Tibet Autonomous Counties.⁴ Thus, our positions on what constitutes Tibet are really not so divergent. Having the Tibetan people under a single administrative entity should not be seen as an effort to create a "greater" Tibet, nor is it a cover for a separatist plot. It is a question of recognizing, restoring and respecting the integrity of the Tibetans as a people and distinct nationality within the People's Republic of China. Furthermore, this is not a new or revolutionary idea. From the beginning, the Tibetans have raised this issue and representatives of the Chinese government have recognized it as one that must be addressed. In fact during the signing of the 17 Point Agreement in 1951, Premier Zhou

² *White Paper on Tibetan Culture*. Information Office of the State Council of the People's Republic of China. June 22, 2000

³ In 1954 Baicheng city was moved from Heilongjiang Province to Jilin Province. In 1955 Xikang Province (a Tibetan area) was divided into two and merged with the Tibet Autonomous Region and Sichuan Province. In 1988 Hainan Province was created after separating it from Guangdong Province and in 1997 Chongqing Municipality was created out of Chongqing City and surrounding areas in Sichuan Province.

⁴ *Administrative Division of Tibetan Areas*. Website of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People's Republic of China. www.fmprc.gov.cn.

Enlai acknowledged that the idea of unification of the Tibetan nationalities was appropriate.⁵ Similarly, in 1956 Vice Premier Chen Yi was in Lhasa and said that it would be good for Tibet's development as well as for the friendship of Tibetans and Chinese if in the future the Tibet Autonomous Region included all ethnic Tibetan areas, including those now in other provinces.⁶

The Tibetan people are striving for the right of a distinct people to be able to preserve that very distinctiveness through a single administrative entity. This would give the Tibetans a genuine sense of having benefited by being part of the People's Republic of China and would embody the respect for the integrity of the Tibetans as a distinct people. The Chinese leadership is clearly aware that this aspiration of the Tibetan people is voiced not just by His Holiness the Dalai Lama and the Tibetans in exile, but by Tibetans inside Tibet, including prominent members of the Communist Party. This was clearly demonstrated earlier this year when there was the spontaneous public display by Tibetans throughout the Tibetan plateau of their common feeling of resentment against Chinese policies. This development was also an indication of the need to find a comprehensive solution to the issue that encompasses all Tibetans.

Meaningful Autonomy for the Tibetan People

According to the Chinese Constitution, the law on Regional Ethnic Autonomy⁷ as well as the White Paper on Regional Ethnic Autonomy in Tibet,⁸ the Tibetan people are entitled to the following rights: full political right of autonomy; full decision-making power in economic and social development undertakings; freedom to inherit and develop their traditional culture and to practice their religious belief; and freedom to administer, protect and be the first to utilize their natural resources, to independently develop their educational and cultural undertakings.

Similarly, the Chinese Constitution says:

“All nationalities in the People's Republic of China are equal. The state protects the lawful rights and interests of the minority nationalities and upholds and develops the relationship of equality, unity and mutual assistance among all of China's nationalities... Regional autonomy is practiced in areas where people of minority nationalities live in compact communities, in these areas organs of self-government are established for the exercise of the right of autonomy.”⁹

⁵ Ngapo Ngawang Jigme's conversation with Chinese leader Zhou Enlai in May 1951. This was confirmed by China's leader Ulan Fu to Tibetan official Phuntsok Tashi Takla during their meeting in Beijing on May 29, 1982.

⁶ Goldstein, Sherap, Siebenschuh. *A Tibetan Revolutionary, The Political Life and Times of Bapa Phuntso Wangye*, University of California Press, 2004. p 206. Chen Yi was leading the Central government's delegation to launch the Preparatory Committee for the establishment of the Tibet Autonomous Region.

⁷ *People's Republic of China Regional Ethnic Autonomy Law*. Issued by the Second Session of the Sixth National People's Congress on May 31, 1984 (effective October 1, 1984) and amended at the 12th Meeting of the Standing Committee of the Ninth National People's Congress on February 28, 2001.

⁸ *Regional Ethnic Autonomy in Tibet* issued by the Information Office of the State Council of the People's Republic of China on May 23, 2004, Beijing.

⁹ Article 4, Constitution of the People's Republic of China, adopted on December 4, 1982.

In treating the Tibetan people with respect and dignity through genuine autonomy, the Chinese leadership has the opportunity to create a truly multi-ethnic, harmonious nation without a tremendous cost in human suffering. As Hu Yaobang, then General Secretary of the Chinese Communist Party, said:

"It is not possible to achieve a genuine unity amongst the nationalities of the country as long as complete autonomy is not implemented in the areas of the minority nationalities..."¹⁰

Some detractors in the Chinese Government allege that our proposal for a single administrative entity for the Tibetan people and the implementation of genuine regional autonomy as provided in the Constitution is really an effort to restore Tibet's former system of government in Tibet today, or an effort by His Holiness the Dalai Lama to personally regain power over all of Tibet. Nothing is farther from the truth. In his March 10, 2005 statement His Holiness reiterated his position saying,

"My involvement in the affairs of Tibet is not for the purpose of claiming certain personal rights or political position for myself nor attempting to stake claims for the Tibetan administration in exile. In 1992 in a formal announcement I stated clearly that when we return to Tibet with a certain degree of freedom I will not hold any office in the Tibetan government or any other political position and that the present Tibetan administration in exile will be dissolved. Moreover, the Tibetans working in Tibet should carry on the main responsibility of administering Tibet."¹¹

The task at hand is to develop a system that would grant the kind of autonomy required for the Tibetans to be able to survive as a distinct and prosperous people within the People's Republic of China. So far in our discussions with our Chinese counterparts we have not proposed specific labels for how Tibetan areas would be designated, such as a special administrative region, although it should be noted that the Chinese-authored 17 Point Agreement¹² does propose a similar arrangement for Tibet. Nor have we specifically proposed formulas that ask for higher or lower levels of autonomy than Hong Kong and Macao. Each of these areas has its unique characteristics, and in order to succeed, their solutions must reflect the needs and qualities of the region. We have specifically conveyed to our counterparts that we place more importance on discussing the substance than on the label.

The Tibetans have the legitimate right to seek special status, as can be seen in the following quote by Ngapo Ngawang Jigme. He is the most senior Tibetan in China's

¹⁰ Speech by visiting General Secretary of the Chinese Communist Party, Hu Yaobang, in Lhasa on May 29, 1980.

¹¹ *The Statement of His Holiness the Dalai Lama on the 46th Anniversary of the Tibetan National Uprising Day, March 10, 2005*, Department of information & International Relations, Central Tibetan Administration, Dharamsala.

¹² The 17-point Agreement was signed on May 23, 1951 by representatives of the Tibetan and Chinese Governments. In the agreement, the suzerainty of China was accepted but it also stated that Tibet would be able to continue full self-governance, including the continuation of the government system under the Dalai Lama. From 1951 to 1959 the Dalai Lama did his best to abide by this Chinese-authored agreement, but the Chinese Government breached the agreement, forcing him to seek asylum in India.

hierarchy who, by virtue of his position, has endorsed many of China's views on Tibet. In 1988 he said,

“It is because of the special situation in Tibet that in 1951 the Seventeen Point Agreement on the Peaceful Liberation of Tibet, between the central people's government and the local Tibetan government, came about. Such an agreement has never existed between the central government and any other minority regions. We have to consider the special situation in Tibetan history while drafting policies for Tibet in order to realize its long-term stability. We must give Tibet more autonomous power than other minority regions. In my view, at present, Tibetan Autonomous Region has relatively less power of autonomy compared with other autonomous regions, let alone compared with provinces. Therefore Tibet must have some special treatment and have more autonomy like those special economic zones. We must employ special policies to resolve the special characteristics which have pertained throughout history.”¹³

Other important Tibetan leaders, including the late Panchen Lama¹⁴ and Bapa Phuntsok Wangyal,¹⁵ have strongly advocated the legitimacy of Tibet's special status. Similarly, the former General Secretary of the Chinese Communist Party, Hu Yaobang, had acknowledged that Tibet is unique from other autonomous regions and provinces and has argued that the validity of Tibet's special status must not be contested.

Other Issues Needing Clarity

There are some issues, which are based on misperceptions of His Holiness's views by detractors in the Chinese side, including the allegation that His Holiness the Dalai Lama is asking for all Tibetan areas to be populated solely by Tibetans and to be rid of the People's Liberation Army. The detractors in the Chinese government have deliberately misinterpreted His Holiness' concerns in these areas, just as they denounce any effort to manifest the Tibetan identity as separatist. His Holiness has very honestly expressed the need for the Tibetan people to maintain their distinctive way of life and protect Tibet's fragile environment. He has had this in mind when he raises concerns about the large influx of people from other parts of the People's Republic of China and the extensive militarization of Tibetan areas. We are fully aware that these are issues of concern to the Chinese government as these matters have been extensively discussed during our meetings. I am confident that through the negotiations process we will be able to dispel these concerns.

Benefits of Resolving the Tibet Issue Now

Providing genuine autonomy to the Tibetan people is in China's interest as it makes efforts to create a peaceful, stable and harmonious society. But resolving the Tibetan

¹³ Apei Awang Jinmei (Ngapo Ngawang Jigme). “When did Tibet come Within the Sovereignty of China”, *Bulletin of the History of the Tibet Communist Party*, Volume 3, 1988 (General Series No. 21) , published in translation in *Background Papers on Tibet*, Tibet Information Network, London; 1992.

¹⁴ 70,000-character petition by the Panchen Lama to the Chinese Government, May 1962.

¹⁵ Goldstein, Sherap, Siebenschuh. *A Tibetan Revolutionary, The Political Life and Times of Bapa Phuntsok Wangye*, University of California Press, 2004.

issue is also important to the international community, particularly to our region. The historically volatile Central Asian region has revived and has already become an area of conflict. Here Tibet can play a stabilizing role, which is important to the countries in the region such as India, China, and Russia, as well as to the United States and other countries. Tibet, which for centuries played the vital role as a buffer in the region, can help create a more cohesive and stable region by serving as a valuable bridge. A number of political observers from the region also acknowledge that resolving the Tibet issue is an important factor in the normalization of India-China relations.¹⁶ Understanding the great mutual benefit for all concerned, His Holiness has consistently supported closer India-China relations.

There is also increased awareness of the vital importance of the Tibetan plateau from the environmental perspective. Just on the issue of water alone, it is an undeniable fact that over the next few decades water may become as scarce a commodity as oil. Tibet is literally the life-source of the region, serving as the source of most of Asia's major rivers. Therefore, protecting Tibet's fragile environment should be accorded the highest priority.

The Dalai Lama is widely recognized and admired for his honesty and integrity. He has been pragmatic and flexible in wanting to negotiate with the leadership in Beijing on the kind of status Tibet should enjoy in the future and has held steadfast to his commitment to non-violence and dialogue as the only logical means of resolving the issue of Tibet.

Every Tibetan, including communist cadres as well as independence advocates, reveres His Holiness. It is a reality today that in spite of their tremendous suffering resulting from some of China's policies, the Tibetans have not resorted to non-peaceful means to respond to this injustice. This is largely because of the unwavering insistence on peace and reconciliation by the Dalai Lama and the hope he provides to his people.

Some detractors in the Chinese Government seem to believe that the aspirations of the Tibetan people will fizzle out once the Dalai Lama passes away. This is a most dangerous and myopic approach. Certainly, the absence of the Dalai Lama would be devastating for the Tibetan people. But more importantly his absence would mean that China would be left to handle the problem without the presence of a leader who enjoys the loyalty of the entire community and who remains firmly committed to non-violence. It is certain that the Tibetan position would become more intractable in his absence, and that having had their beloved leader pass away in exile would create deep and irreparable wounds in the hearts of the Tibetan people.

In the absence of the Dalai Lama, there is no way that the entire population would be able to contain their resentment and anger. If we go by some of the reports that came out of Tibet in the aftermath of the Spring uprisings one of them quoted a Tibetan from Amdo as saying that if the issue remains unresolved and the Dalai Lama passes away, there

¹⁶ Rabgye, Sharlho. *Sino-Tibetan Dialogue in the Post-Mao Era: Lessons and Prospects*. Policy Studies No. 12, East-West Center, USA; 2004. p.29. It refers to Beijing University academics' presentation at the Fourth Work Forum on Tibet in 2001 "that rapprochement with the Dalai Lama would reduce China's strategic risks in the volatile region of the Indian subcontinent."

would be a volcano-type eruption of the sentiments in Tibet. And it only takes a few desperate individuals or groups to create major instability. This is not a threat, but a statement of fact.

The Dalai Lama's world view, his special bond with the Tibetan people and the respect he enjoys in the international community all make the person of the Dalai Lama key both to achieving a negotiated solution to the Tibetan issue and to peacefully implementing any agreement that is reached. This is why we have consistently conveyed to our Chinese counterparts that far from being the problem, His Holiness the Dalai Lama is the solution.

To date, the Chinese authorities have resorted to political and military pressure, and intimidation to stifle the Tibetan people. This is clearly demonstrated by their action against the Tibetan demonstrators early this year, including the encouragement of nationalistic feelings against Tibetans, and their subsequent clampdown in all Tibetan areas. These actions can not only harm the sincere efforts by both sides for a mutually beneficial reconciliation, but also create embarrassment and difficulty to the Chinese leadership; they will do substantial damage to China's efforts to be a peaceful and responsible power internationally and the creation of a harmonious society at home.

As my colleague, Envoy Kelsang Gyaltzen, and I have conveyed to our Chinese counterparts during our meetings, the task before us is not impossible. The seemingly insurmountable gaps between us can be diminished through honest discourse and hard work. With His Holiness' unambiguous commitment to the integrity and sovereignty of the People's Republic of China, China's leaders must recognize the aspirations of the Tibetans to survive as a distinct people, a commitment that is already enshrined in China's laws.

Today's Chinese leadership under President Hu Jintao calls for a "harmonious society" within China and "peaceful rise" internationally. President Hu himself is perceived by many as being a hardliner, particularly on account of developments in Tibet Autonomous Region during his tenure there as the Party Secretary in the mid 1980s, and he has not taken any visible steps to alter this perception. However, if his public statement in May this year about wanting a positive outcome in our dialogue process on Tibet was not motivated by other considerations, it is our belief that President Hu could take a courageous stand on resolving the Tibetan issue. Philosophically, His Holiness the Dalai Lama's forward-looking approach to Tibet's future shares a common vision with his call for harmonious society and peaceful development. Similarly, Premier Wen Jiabao has also made some references to the Tibetan issue, the most recent one during an interview to CNN in September. In addition to the usual rhetoric he seems to acknowledge an understanding of the importance of the institution of the Dalai Lama.

I hope the Chinese leadership seizes this opportunity. His Holiness is widely recognized and admired for his honesty and integrity. He has been pragmatic and flexible in wanting to negotiate with the leadership in Beijing on the kind of status Tibet should enjoy in the

future, and has held steadfast to his commitment to non-violence and dialogue as the only means of resolving the issue of Tibet.

Before I conclude, I want to mention that the present dialogue process was initiated during the time of President Jiang Zemin. He even intervened personally a number of times to ensure that our dialogue process was not hampered.

We have no illusions that coming to a negotiated solution will be easy. Having identified each others' position and differences, it is now our sincere hope that both sides can start making serious efforts to find a common ground and to build trust. As I have our two sides have agreed to meet later this month during which the Chinese side has agreed to receive suggestions from us on matters relating to the stability and development of Tibet and specific ideas on all aspects of regional autonomy within the framework of the Constitution of the People's Republic of China. We will be presenting them with our suggestions during this upcoming round and feel that this will certainly be a test to see how serious the Chinese leadership is in resolving the Tibetan issue.

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