



INTERNATIONAL CAMPAIGN FOR TIBET

Remarks by ICT President Matteo Mecacci at the “Thank You, America” event

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**Remarks by Matteo Mecacci
President of the International Campaign for Tibet
“Thank You, America” event
Capitol Hill, Washington, DC, Feb. 12, 2019**

On behalf of the International Campaign for Tibet, let me also welcome you to the US Capitol for this event.

As we have heard from Speaker Pelosi and other members, the US Congress and administration continue to support the Tibetan people and their just aspirations for a better future, free from fear and oppression.

The International Campaign for Tibet has been privileged to work with many of you over the last few years, and we thank you for your genuine and heartfelt support for the people of Tibet.

By siding with the Tibetan people, the United States has decided not just to support them; what is more important is that the United States has decided to stand for truth and justice, values that go beyond Tibet and that are important for all of us and for the way we live. It is therefore very unfortunate that the Chinese government has decided not to trust the Tibetan people to run their affairs in freedom, but to continue to rely on deception, oppression and injustice to rule Tibet.

At the end of last year, the United States sent an important message to the world. By creating the Reciprocal Access to Tibet Act, it has shown clearly that the American people have a strong interest in the welfare of the Tibetan people, in their culture of compassion—which we desperately need in our societies—and in what Tibet represents for the world, with its unique environment and beautiful natural resources situated on the “roof of the world.”

Demanding access to Tibet for American citizens, as Chinese citizens have to the United States, has now become part of America’s national interests, and every US Administration will continue to be concerned about that. And Beijing, I am sure, has taken note.

Although we in the West have been privileged to experience firsthand the beauty of Tibetans’ culture of compassion and tolerance, thanks to the leadership of His Holiness the Dalai Lama and to an ever growing and vibrant Tibetan diaspora, it is tragic to see that Tibetan culture is being stifled in Tibet.

Moreover, the fragile environment in Tibet is now threatened by both global climate change and misguided Chinese policies that exclude Tibetans from the management of their land. Economic

development in Tibet cannot happen without the direct involvement of local communities, as it will not be sustainable and beneficial to them.

This environmental crisis matters to the world, not just to Beijing or the Tibetans. More than a billion people in Asia depend on water coming from the Tibetan plateau. More access to Tibet would bring more transparency on how China is planning to manage water—which is a global security interest—and should be promoted by many other countries, not just the United States.

Although we saw great progress last year, we need to continue to work hard to make sure that Beijing reverses its dangerous policies. From the managing of Tibetan monasteries by the Chinese Communist Party to the plan to select and install reincarnated Lamas, the violation of religious freedom in Tibet is rampant and cannot be allowed to go on in silence. For a government to try to control the conscience and spirituality of a people is not a recipe for coexistence, it is a recipe for confrontation not just with Tibetans, but also with the world.

As said by His Holiness the Dalai Lama: “Brute force, no matter how strongly applied, can never subdue the basic desire for freedom and dignity.” Let’s continue to work to defeat violence and intolerance, and let freedom ring not just in the United States but also in Tibet.

Thank you.