



INTERNATIONAL CAMPAIGN FOR TIBET

As elections near, Belgian political parties pledge support for Tibet in response to ICT questions

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As Belgians prepare for federal and regional elections on May 26, Belgian political parties have committed to supporting the Tibetan cause in response to questions from the International Campaign for Tibet (ICT).

Seven parties contacted by ICT's Brussels office replied to written queries about their positions on the Dalai Lama, Tibet's environment and human rights in Tibet, as well as their plans to address the Tibetan issue on national and international levels if they are elected to power.

The Christian Democratic and Flemish Party (CD&V); the Democratic, Federalist and Independent party (Défi); Ecolo; Groen (Greens); the Reformist Movement (MR); the New Flemish Alliance (N-VA); and the Socialist Party Differently (sp.a) all replied to ICT's 10 questions. The Socialist Party (PS); Humanist Democratic Centre (cdH); Workers' Party of Belgium (PTB); and Open Flemish Liberals and Democrats party (Open VLD) were also contacted but did not respond to the questionnaire.

ICT does not endorse candidates for office or take part in election campaigns. But as an advocacy organization, ICT works with governments around the world to build support for the Tibetan people and advance their peaceful struggle for human rights and democratic freedoms.

The parties that filled out ICT's questionnaire expressed concern at the worsening human rights situation in Tibet and pledged to make Tibet an agenda item in their bilateral exchanges with the Chinese government. They said they would also raise Tibet in international forums like the United Nations Human Rights Council.

The seven parties pledged to advocate for unhindered access to Tibetan areas for journalists and diplomats. In December 2018, the US passed the Reciprocal Access to Tibet Act (RATA), which takes direct aim at China's isolation of Tibet from the outside world and denies access to the US for the Chinese officials responsible for keeping American journalists, diplomats and ordinary citizens out of Tibet.

Since RATA was approved, several other countries have expressed a desire to pass their own versions of the law.

The Belgian parties also reaffirmed their support for the resumption of direct dialogue between the Chinese government and representatives of the Dalai Lama, who was forced into exile from Tibet 60 years ago.

The parties' responses will help inform ICT members and the large Tibetan exile community in Belgium about where the parties stand on these vital issues.

Quote

Vincent Metten, ICT EU policy director:

“For the Tibetan people to regain their freedoms and once again live with dignity after 60 years of Chinese occupation, they will need the active support of the international community. The answers that Belgium’s political parties gave to our questionnaire are a sign that Tibet will be an issue of concern for the Belgian government in its relations with China and with international forums. We would like to thank these parties for taking part in a discussion with us and, more importantly, for committing to advocacy for the people of Tibet.”