



INTERNATIONAL CAMPAIGN FOR TIBET

ICT statement on appointment of Special Coordinator for Tibetan Issues

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Secretary of State Michael Pompeo announced today that Assistant Secretary Robert A. Destro of the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor will serve as the United States Special Coordinator for Tibetan Issues.

While we welcome the announcement of a new Special Coordinator and congratulate Assistant Secretary Destro on the position, the appointment of the Special Coordinator below the Under Secretary of State level will not only make it more difficult for the Trump Administration implement longstanding US Tibet policy. Moreover, the appointment of the Special Coordinator at this level will be regarded by the Chinese government as a message that the Administration has downgraded the priority it gives to Tibet.

Since the passage of the Tibetan Policy Act of 2002, the Special Coordinator for Tibetan Issues has been appointed at the Under Secretary level. Lowering the position to Assistant Secretary sends the wrong message to the Chinese government and the Tibetan people at a critical time.

In the dialogue between the Dalai Lama envoys and Chinese leadership between 2002 and 2010, the US Special Coordinator contributed to the dialogue process which sent a powerful message from the American people to the Tibetan people. For Tibetans who have demonstrated a nonviolent approach to their struggle over decades, the Special Coordinator's level of support became a strong source of encouragement. Now, at a time when there is no dialogue between Chinese leadership and their Tibetan counterparts, the designation of the Special Coordinator below Under Secretary level is not the action needed to encourage the Chinese government to resume the dialogue process with the Dalai Lama or his representatives.

The International Campaign for Tibet has advocated for the appointment of a US Special Coordinator as the position is a statutory requirement which concretely demonstrates America's support for Tibet and the Tibetan people.

The Administration should not create a precedent to appoint the Special Coordinator at this lower level in the future.



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