



INTERNATIONAL CAMPAIGN FOR TIBET

Dalai Lama COP26 message: set timetable for change

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As world leaders meet for a critical UN global climate summit in Glasgow, Scotland, the Dalai Lama has a message for them: the future is in our hands.

In a statement released the day the conference began, Oct. 31, 2021, the Tibetan spiritual leader writes, “I hope and pray that our leaders will gather the strength to take collective action to address this emergency, and set a timetable for change.”

In a separate video released a few days earlier, the Dalai Lama says, “We have no ability to change the past, but the future is still in our hands.”

The conference, known as COP26, brings together more than 130 world leaders to discuss progress on combating climate change and to lay out new commitments.

Tibet climate crisis

In his COP26 messages, the Dalai Lama highlights the global environmental impact of his homeland of Tibet, which the Chinese government forced him to flee in 1959 after invading and occupying the historically independent country.

With the largest reservoirs of snow and ice outside the North and South Poles, Tibet is known as the world’s “Third Pole.”

It is also the source of several of the planet’s major rivers, providing water to nearly 2 billion people across Asia.

However, Tibet is now warming two-to-four times faster than the global average, thanks in part to the Chinese government’s reckless policies.

A study last year also found that China used its dams on the Dzachu River in Tibet (known elsewhere as the Mekong) to prevent the flow of water downstream in 2019, contributing to a devastating drought in Southeast Asia.

“The melting of Tibet’s numerous glaciers, the damming and diversion of rivers, and widespread deforestation, exemplify how ecological neglect in one area can have consequences almost everywhere,” the Dalai Lama writes in his statement.

He adds in the video: “We should pay more attention to preservation of Tibetan ecology. This is not only in the interest of 6-7 million Tibetans, but whole people in this area.”

Hope for the future

The Dalai Lama has become a respected figure around the globe in part because of his commitment to environmentalism.

When he received the Nobel Peace Prize in 1989, he became the first Nobel laureate to earn the award specifically for environmental efforts—in addition to his advocacy for a peaceful end to China’s oppression in Tibet.

Although climate change is causing immense devastation already, the Dalai Lama says he still finds reasons for hope.

“I am encouraged to see that our younger generations are demanding concrete action on climate change. This gives some hope for the future,” he writes in his statement. “The efforts of young activists such as Greta Thunberg to raise awareness of the need to listen to the science and act accordingly is crucial. Since their stance is realistic, we must encourage them.”

The Dalai Lama’s video points out that positive change is possible: Damage to the ozone layer diminished because of modifications in human behavior.

“With help of technology we can go ... to Mars and some other planet. But it is almost certain, impossible to settle there,” the Dalai Lama says in the clip. “So this planet is the only home.”

ICT at COP26

The International Campaign for Tibet, an advocacy group that promotes the Dalai Lama’s vision, will be present in Glasgow for COP26.

ICT has released a briefing paper for the conference and called for a strong, rights-based approach in the fight against climate change.

Palmo Tenzin of ICT Germany will also moderate a panel discussion at COP26 on “Tibet’s Climate Crisis: Critical Lessons for Global Climate Policy.”

That event will take place Nov. 4. It will follow one of ICT’s “Tibet Talks” live webcasts with Michael Buckley, editor of the new book, “This Fragile Planet,” which features 80 inspiring quotes from the Dalai Lama about the environment, along with 120 eye-catching photos and visuals.

The Tibet Talk will stream live Nov. 4 at 12 noon EDT/9 am PDT on ICT’s Facebook page and at www.savetibet.org/live.



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