



INTERNATIONAL CAMPAIGN FOR TIBET

ICT statement at 14th UN Forum on Minority Issues

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December 6, 2021

BRUSSELS—The International Campaign for Tibet on Dec. 2, 2021 delivered a statement at the 14th Session of the UN Forum on Minority Issues, calling for an end to Chinese policies of “Sinicization” in Tibet and for a resumption of the Sino-Tibetan dialogue.

The forum took place in a hybrid format (online and in-person in Geneva) on Dec. 2-3 and focused on “Conflict prevention and the protection of the Human Rights of the Minorities.” It followed four regional forums on the same issues convened throughout the year by the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Minority Issues Fernand de Varennes—including one on Asia-Pacific to which the International Campaign for Tibet also contributed an oral statement.

Special Rapporteur de Varennes reiterated his remarks that in recent decades the number of conflicts in the world has increased and that most of them are internal conflicts involving minorities or indigenous groups who feel excluded and marginalized.

The participants from civil society organizations provided information and recommendations from their respective regions, which will feed the annual report of the special rapporteur to be presented at the 49th UN Human Rights Council Session in March 2022. Next year will mark the 30th anniversary of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities.

ICT’s EU policy director, Vincent Metten, suggested concrete recommendations for the Chinese government, including with regard to resumption of the Sino-Tibetan dialogue and a call not to interfere in the process of the succession of Tibetan Buddhist leaders.

Metten stated: *“Given the deep reverence for the exiled Dalai Lama in Tibet and the publicized plans by the Chinese Communist Party to appoint a successor to the Dalai Lama, we fear that Tibetans will certainly express their grievances through protests. Such protests would most probably be met with repression and force by the authorities, potentially leading to grave human rights violations and violent conflict.”*

ICT’s full statement is below.

ICT statement

*Dear Ms Chair,
Ladies and Gentlemen,*

For more than seven decades now, the civil and political rights of Tibetans, as well as their social, economic and cultural rights have been violated. The control and surveillance of Tibetans have expanded under President Xi Jinping. The Tibetan culture is seen as a threat to the Chinese Communist Party, which in turn implements wide-ranging policies to sinicize Tibetan culture. We are convinced that such policies are not only in breach of international human rights standards, but also exacerbate existing tensions and create new conflict.

As Tibetans do not resort to violence, the situation in Tibet remains a silent crisis as illustrated by the self-immolations of more than 150 Tibetans since 2009, many of whom have called for a return of the Dalai Lama to Tibet.

Given the deep reverence of the exiled Dalai Lama in Tibet and the publicised plans by the Chinese Communist Party to appoint a successor to the Dalai Lama, we fear that Tibetans will certainly express their grievances through protests. Such protests would most probably be met with repression and force by the authorities, potentially leading to grave human rights violations and violent conflict.

In order to prevent such a conflict, we urge the Chinese leadership to resume the Sino-Tibetan dialogue. The newly elected head of the Central Tibetan Administration, Mr Penpa Tsering, has reaffirmed the willingness of the Tibetan side to resume this dialogue process. We consider this as a concrete step to conflict resolution, which, if taken by the Chinese government, could have a tremendously positive impact on the entire region and beyond.

Secondly, we call on the Chinese government to ensure the right of Tibetan Buddhists to determine their religious leaders in accordance with their own religious traditions and practices. Policies of “sinicization” must be abolished, as they aim to undermine the cultural identity of the Tibetan people.

Finally, we support and advocate for the specific recommendation made by 50 Special Procedures for the creation of a special mechanism to monitor and report on the human rights situation in China, including in Tibet, Xinjiang, and Hong Kong. It is important that the Chinese government faces scrutiny for human rights violations, despite their efforts to set a norm of impunity.

Thank you for your attention

Vincent Metten



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