



## INTERNATIONAL CAMPAIGN FOR TIBET

### **China's new ethnic unity law Exchange of views with the European Parliament's Subcommittee on Human Rights**

**Statement by the President of the International Campaign for Tibet  
Ms. Tencho Gyatso  
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Mr. Chair, Honorable Members of the European Parliament,

Thank you for inviting me to speak today.

I would first like to commend this Parliament for adopting last week a strong resolution on China's new Law on Promoting Ethnic Unity and Progress, sending a clear and timely signal to Beijing about Europe's concern.

This law, which will enter into force on July 1, represents a significant turning point and solidifies a more precarious and harsher future for the Tibetan people.

It reflects the codifying of forced assimilation policies under President Xi Jinping.

What is new today is the scale, the systematisation, and the legal codification of these policies.

#### **Codification of cultural erasure**

Several provisions of this law are particularly concerning. Article 15 says the state shall promote written and spoken Chinese and, even if a non-Chinese language is to be used, the state should "give priority to the national standard spoken and written Chinese language and script." Thus, Tibetan is placed in a subordinate position.

This has real consequences. Language is not only a medium of communication. It is the foundation of cultural identity. When a language is marginalised, the culture it carries is also at risk.

Today, over one million Tibetan children are enrolled in a system of boarding schools designed to assimilate Tibetan children and indoctrinate them in Chinese Communist Party ideology.

This law provides a blueprint for the Chinese government to pursue the erasure of the Tibetan language, culture and identity.

## **Transnational repression**

Another deeply troubling provision is Article 63, which allows Chinese authorities to target individuals and organisations outside China for acts deemed to “undermine ethnic unity” or “create ethnic division”.

These terms create a legal basis for transnational repression, not only against Tibetans, but also against Uyghurs, Southern Mongolians, Hong Kongers, and Chinese dissidents and human rights defenders living outside China.

There are around 150,000 Tibetans living in exile worldwide, including several thousands living within the European Union, including in several Member States such as Belgium.

The freedoms enjoyed by such European citizens of Tibetan ethnicity could now be exposed to risks of arrest, arbitrary detention or ill-treatment if they travel to China or Tibet.

My speaking here before you today could certainly be seen as contravening the Ethnic Unity Law, as could the presence of all of you in this room today.

This raises serious questions under international law, and also raises concerns about the sovereignty of European states.

Reports led by Members of this Parliament have already highlighted how authoritarian governments seek to silence critics beyond their borders.

This law must also be seen alongside other policies affecting Tibetans, including large-scale forcible relocation of Tibetan nomadic communities, increasing restrictions on freedom of religion, including in matters related to succession of Tibetan Buddhism leaders and in particular the succession of the Dalai Lama institution including the current 14<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama.

Since 2009, more than 150 Tibetans have committed self-immolation in a desperate form of protest against restrictions on their fundamental freedoms and calling for the return of His Holiness the Dalai Lama.

## **Numerous violations of China’s international and national human rights commitments**

In April of this year, eight independent UN human rights experts clearly expose and unmask the CCP’s intentions, and emphasize the systematic way in which this law violates China’s own legal framework and its international obligations.

## **Tibet used as Testing Ground for the new Law**

Tibet has been the testing ground for this new law. In 2010 and in 2020, model regulations were enacted in parts of Tibet – that include many provisions found in this new law.

## **Conclusion and Recommendations**

This law is not about governance. It is about reshaping identity and reducing space for pluralism and diversity.

The European Union knows well the value of cultural and linguistic diversity, and is founded on the principle of “unity in diversity”, where such diversity is seen not as threats, but as a strength.

From this perspective, the trajectory we see in China is deeply concerning.

Honorable Members, allow me to conclude with a few recommendations for consideration.

**First**, we encourage the EU to adopt a clear and unified public statement denouncing this law and its implications for human rights on behalf of all 27 Member States.

**Second**, this issue should be placed on the agenda of all upcoming high-level engagements with China, including the EU-China Human Rights Dialogue, the High-Level Strategic Dialogue, and the EU-China Summit.

**Third**, we recommend appointing an EU Special Representative for Tibet, critical to effective coordination and coherence of EU policies on Tibet.

**Fourth**, the EU should strengthen its response to transnational repression, building on the European Parliament’s recent work and recommendations in this area.

**Fifth**, we call on the EU to urge China to resume the Sino-Tibetan dialogue without preconditions. This dialogue remains essential to achieving a peaceful solution based on genuine autonomy for Tibetans. As His Holiness the Dalai Lama has now reached the age of 90, it is more important than ever to seize this opportunity for dialogue.

In conclusion, this law goes far beyond a simple domestic policy shift. It reflects a broader direction with profound implications for human rights, cultural diversity, and international norms.

It is essential that these concerns are addressed clearly, consistently, and collectively by the European Union and its Member States.

Thank you for your attention.

**Tencho Gyatso**