

Statement of His Holiness the Dalai Lama 10th March 1993

Today, as we commemorate the thirty-fourth anniversary of the Tibetan people's National Uprising of 1959, we find the world around us in a uniquely promising moment of change. I believe that many of the recent changes work in favour of the aspirations of the Tibetans and of oppressed people elsewhere in the world. Millions who live under the repressive yoke of communism and other forms of dictatorship are now free and democratic aspirations are on the rise in all the continents.

The Tibetan people continue to resist subjugation and colonisation with courage and determination. No amount of repression and propaganda has lessened their yearning for a life of freedom, peace and dignity.

On this anniversary, I pay homage to the brave men and women of Tibet who laid down their lives for the freedom of our country, and I call upon every Tibetan to renew our dedication until we have regained our rights and freedom.

As we adjust to the changing global scene, we need to focus our efforts on four fronts. Firstly, we must continue to engage the Chinese government in a dialogue that is mutually beneficial and will eventually lead to earnest negotiations to peacefully resolve the question of Tibet. Secondly, we need to intensify our effort to further educate the world community of the problems of Tibet. International concern and pressure are conducive to bringing about a change in the Chinese government's position on negotiation and respects for human rights. Thirdly, because the new economic policies in Tibet will have a profound impact on the very survival of the cultural identity of the Tibetan nation, we must carefully study and monitor these developments. Fourthly, the democratisation of the Tibetan administration in exile and the implementation of democracy at the grassroots level must be further encouraged.

Last June direct contact with Beijing was again established. The Chinese ambassador in New Delhi informed us that in the past the Chinese attitude towards the Tibetans had been "conservative" and that if Tibetans were to adopt a "realistic" stand, the Chinese government could be "flexible". Responding positively to this rapprochement, and an invitation for a Tibetan representative to visit Beijing, Kalon Gyalo Thondup was sent to Beijing. The Chinese government conveyed to Kalon Gyalo Thondup their inflexible, hard-line position with strong pre-conditions for negotiations.

I have responded to the Chinese government expressing my disappointment with their position. Nevertheless, I stated my wish to send three representatives to deliver a detailed note from me, explaining my views and efforts through the year to promote negotiations for the mutual benefit of the Tibetan and Chinese people. I believe it is now time for the Chinese government to make a genuine meaningful proposal on how they wish to see Tibet and China live in peace. We on our part have gone to the fullest extent to facilitate a sincere, meaningful and substantial dialogue.

For centuries Tibet and China have lived as neighbours and I am convinced that we can find a way to live in peace and friendship in the future too. I have always believed that this is possible and worthy of our efforts. In this spirit I have, over the years, personally met with Chinese brothers and sisters throughout the world. I have encouraged my fellow Tibetans to engage in friendly discussions with members of the Chinese communities abroad. I am also greatly pleased with the increasing contacts and friendly dialogue between the exiled Tibetans and the members of the Chinese democracy movement. As a result, there is a growing understanding of the just aspirations of the Tibetan people, and therefore a sympathy and support for Tibet among our Chinese brothers and sisters.

Last year we have also been able to establish direct official contact with Taiwan. In the past, there has been considerable misunderstanding between Dharamsala and Taipei which resulted in mistrust and absence of formal relations. Today, with Taiwan on its way to becoming a genuine democracy, it is my hope that the establishment of direct ties will pave the way for a mutually beneficial relationship.

Recently there have been a number of international conferences discussing not only the violation of human rights in Tibet, but also the question of the legal status of Tibet and the right of self-determination of the Tibetan people. Furthermore, a number of governments and parliaments have sent fact-finding delegations to Tibet; have adopted resolutions expressing grave concern about the continuing human rights abuses in Tibet; and have urged for direct negotiations between the Chinese and Tibetans. These are clear indications that the issue of Tibet has moved from the political fringe and is gaining greater international attention.

Many people throughout the world, who believe in compassion, justice, non-violence and in the ultimate triumph of freedom and democracy, support our cause. On behalf of my suffering people, I express our deep gratitude for this support and solidarity. We are especially indebted to the government and people of India for their continuing hospitality and kindness.

Despite these encouraging and hopeful developments, the situation in Tibet continues to remain bleak. Merciless repression of the slightest political dissent is the order. The demographic aggression of Tibet through a policy of population transfer continues unabated, escalating the marginalisation of the Tibetan people and the assimilation of the Tibetan way of life into the Chinese mainstream. Cultural genocide is being committed, intentionally or unintentionally. Tibet, an ancient country on the roof of the world, is fast becoming a Chinese colony.

China's recent announcement of turning the so-called Tibet Autonomous Region into a special economic zone is, in principle, welcome. However, there are reasons to fear the long-term impact of the new Chinese policy on the survival of the cultural identity of the Tibetan people and on the environment of Tibet. If the best interests of the Tibetan people are not kept in the forefront, there is a real danger that this policy will only promote and intensify the transfer of more Chinese into Tibet. This will further reduce the Tibetans

into an insignificant minority in their own country, thus completing the thorough colonisation of Tibet which will have serious consequences to its fragile environment.

It is against such a background that I appeal to Tibetans and friends of Tibet everywhere, and to international agencies eager to undertake projects in Tibet, to always bear in mind the need to protect and to safeguard the well-being of the Tibetan people and our unique culture and identity.

To those of you who intend to involve yourselves in the development of Tibet, I must emphasise the special attention needed in the fields of education, health and development in the rural areas. You must also discourage the indiscriminate exploitation of Tibet's natural resources and, above all, ensure the full involvement of the Tibetan people if your efforts are meant to benefit the Tibetans.

Since the dramatic events of 1959, we in exile have always aspired for freedom and democracy. In spite of our limitations, we have made significant progress in the practice of democracy. I am very keen and committed to the idea that genuine democracy must prevail in a free Tibet.

I have publicly declared that in the future I will not hold any official position in the government of a free Tibet. I have made such a decision in order to facilitate the development of a healthy democracy. The promulgation of my *Guidelines for Future Tibet's Polity and the Basic Features of Its Constitution* is a reaffirmation of my vision of a free Tibet as a peaceful and truly democratic country, dedicated to demilitarisation and non-violence.

Throughout human history, dictators and totalitarian governments have learned that there is nothing more powerful than a people's yearning for freedom and dignity. While bodies may be enslaved or imprisoned, the human spirit can never be subjugated or defeated. As long as we uphold this human spirit and determination, our inspirations and beliefs have the power to ultimately prevail. The sweeping global changes in recent years reaffirm my beliefs and I am more optimistic than ever before that freedom and peace for the Tibetan people is now within our reach.

With my prayers for the well-being of all sentient beings.

The Dalai Lama
March 10, 1993