

Statement of His Holiness the Dalai Lama 10th March 1994

Today, as we observe the 35th anniversary of our National Uprising Day, I wish to take stock of our 14 years' effort to find a peaceful and realistic solution to the Tibetan issue through honest negotiations with the Chinese government. In my endeavour to restore freedom, peace and dignity to our country and people, I have always sought to be guided by realism, patience and vision.

For the past 14 years, I have not only declared my willingness to enter into negotiations but have also made maximum concessions in a series of initiatives and proposals which clearly lie within the framework for negotiations as stated by Deng Xiaoping in 1979, that "except for the independence of Tibet, all other questions can be negotiated". The ideas put forward in Five Point Peace Plan for Tibet in 1987 and the Strasbourg Proposal 1988 envisage a solution which does not ask for the complete independence of Tibet. However, the Chinese government has even refused to enter into negotiations of any kind. It has also avoided discussing any question of substance, insisting that the only issues to be resolved are those pertaining to my personal return to Tibet. The issue is not about my return to Tibet. I have stated this time and again. The issue is the survival of the six million Tibetan people along with the protection of our distinct culture, identity and civilization.

I have made it clear that the negotiations must centre around ways to end China's population transfer policy, which threatens the very survival of the Tibetan people, respect for Tibetans' fundamental human rights and entitlement to democratic freedom, the de-militarisation and de-nuclearisation of Tibet, the restoration of the Tibetan people's control over all matters affecting their own affairs, and the protection of Tibet's natural environment. Moreover, I have always emphasized that any negotiation must comprise the whole of Tibet, not just the area which China calls the "Tibet Autonomous Region". I have maintained this approach for the last 14 years in spite of the disappointment and criticism expressed by many Tibetans to my moderate stand. I have not forgotten that 1.2 million Tibetans have died and that Tibet has suffered immeasurably since the occupation of our country by Communist China. I also know that every Tibetan hopes and prays for the full restoration of our nation's independence.

Nevertheless, I had hoped that my middle-way approach would eventually create an atmosphere of mutual trust conducive to fruitful negotiations and exert a restraining influence on the repressive Chinese policies in Tibet. Here I appreciate the many Tibetans who have supported my initiatives and felt they were a practical necessity.

The Chinese government has rejected my overtures one after another and has consistently attempted to confuse the real issue. Meanwhile, the magnitude and gravity of the situation inside Tibet has dramatically escalated. Developments in Tibet have been marked by an intensification of the Chinese policy of suppression, the marginalization of the Tibetan people in our own country, the gradual extermination of our unique culture and religion, and the destruction and exploitation of Tibet's environment.

I must now recognize that my approach has failed to produce any progress either for substantive negotiations or in contributing to the overall improvement of the situation in Tibet. Moreover, I am conscious of the fact that a growing number of Tibetans, both inside as well as outside Tibet, have been disheartened by my conciliatory stand not to demand complete independence for Tibet. Because of my statements, some Tibetans have come to believe that there is no hope at all of the Tibetan people regaining their basic rights and freedoms. This and the lack of any concrete results from my conciliatory approach towards Chinese government over the past 14 years have caused disillusionment and undermined the resolve of some Tibetans.

Internationally, my initiatives and proposals have been endorsed as realistic and reasonable by many governments, parliaments, and non-governmental organisations. But despite the growing support of the international community, the Chinese government has not responded constructively.

I have left no stone unturned in my attempts to reach an understanding with the Chinese. We have had to place our hopes on international support and help in bringing about meaningful negotiations, to which I still remain committed. If this fails, then I will no longer be able to pursue this policy with a clear conscience. I feel strongly that it would then be my responsibility, as I have stated many times in the past, to consult my people on the future course of our freedom struggle. Just as the late Indian Prime Minister, Jawaharlal Nehru, stated in the Indian parliament on December 7, 1950, I too have always maintained that the final voice with regard to Tibet should be the voice of the Tibetan people.¹ Whatever the outcome of such a consultation, it will serve as a guideline for our future dealings with China and the re-orientation of the course of our freedom struggle.

I continue to remain committed to finding a peaceful and negotiated resolution to the issue of Tibet with the Chinese government directly. But the Chinese are merely paying lip service to this approach. It is evident that only increased international political and economic pressure can bring a sense of urgency to bear on the Chinese leadership not merely to pay lip service but to resolve the problem of Tibet peacefully and amicably. The tragedy of Tibet can be relieved through the determined and concerted efforts of various governments and NGOs championing human rights, liberty and democracy the world over.

If the Tibetan issue can be resolved peacefully, through mutual openness and understanding, I am convinced that it will help alleviate the anxiety felt in the minds of the six million residents of Hong Kong. It will also have a positive effect on China's relationship with Taiwan and enhance its international image.

Today, we remember those brave Tibetans who fought and died for the cause of our nation and those who are languishing in Chinese prisons. We also pay our respects to our courageous brothers and sisters in Tibet who are continuing the struggle for the freedom of our people under extremely adverse conditions. The course of history and the present world atmosphere are favourable to the aspirations of our nation. Our cause is gathering

momentum. Fearful of these developments, China has now formulated policies to undermine our Administration-in-Exile as well as to create discord and division in our community. Therefore, every one of us must be alert and renew our commitment to the just cause of our country.

I firmly believe that the day is close when our beloved Land of Snow will no longer be politically subjugated, culturally ravaged, and economically and environmentally exploited and devastated. Our dedication, sacrifice and hard work will eventually lead our captive nation to freedom and peace in dignity. However, it is important that our struggle must be based on non-violence.

On behalf of all the Tibetan people, I want to take this opportunity to express our deep appreciation and gratitude to our many friends throughout the world for their support of our cause. I must also thank the many parliaments and governments that have started to take a serious look at the Tibetan problem. Another positive development of recent years is support for our cause even amongst the Chinese people. For example, a long letter written on October 5, 1992, by the well-known Chinese dissident Wei Jingsheng, to Deng Xiaoping, speaking out against his government's unjust claims over Tibet and their misguided policies there, has just become public. These expressions are the manifestations of genuine human respect for truth and justice. I take this opportunity especially to thank our Chinese brothers and sisters the world over for their support and encouragement. Finally, I wish to reiterate our immense gratitude and appreciation to all the countries where Tibetan exiles have been given asylum, particularly to the people and government of this country, which has become a second home for the majority of the Tibetans in exile.

My prayers for the peace and welfare of all sentient beings.

The Dalai Lama
10th March 1994