

Statement of His Holiness the Dalai Lama

10 March 2006

Today, as we commemorate the 47th anniversary of the Tibetan National Uprising Day, I extend my warm greetings to my fellow Tibetans in Tibet and in exile, as well as to our friends around the world. I also pay homage to the brave men and women of Tibet who have sacrificed their lives, and who continue to suffer, for the cause of Tibetan people.

From around 1949, Tibet had witnessed a series of unprecedented events, marking the beginning of a new era in its history. As stated in the documents, the issue of Tibet was purportedly decided in 1951 through an agreement between the central and local governments, taking into consideration the special status of Tibet and the prevailing reality. Since then, I have made every possible effort to secure implementation of the policy to allow self-rule and genuine autonomy to Tibetans within the framework of the People's Republic of China, thus helping to create conditions for our people to coexist in harmony and unity as a member of the big family of the Chinese nation.

In 1954-55, I visited Beijing as a representative of the Tibetan people. I took the opportunity of that visit to discuss the future of the Tibetan people with Chairman Mao Zedong and senior leaders of the party, government and military. These discussions gave me a lot of hope and reassurances. So I returned to Tibet with optimism and confidence. However, from late 1955 ultra-leftist excesses began to assail parts of Tibet. By 1959, the whole of Tibet was plunged in deep crisis. As a result, I and over a hundred thousand Tibetans were compelled to go into exile. We have been in exile for forty-six years now.

Sometime in 1974, we formulated the basic principles of our Middle-Way Approach for resolving the issue of Tibet, trusting that a time must surely come when we would have the opportunity to engage in talks with the Chinese leadership. In 1979, we were able to interact directly with the leadership in Beijing. At that time, Deng Xiaoping said that "except for independence, all issues could be resolved through negotiations". Since then, I have pursued the Middle-Way Approach with consistency and sincerity.

I have of course made criticisms whenever I saw unbearably sad developments in China, Tibet and the world over. But my criticisms were confined to addressing the reality of each individual case. I have never departed from my commitment to the Middle-Way Approach at any time and in any given circumstances. This is clear to the world. Unfortunately, Beijing still seems unable to overcome doubts and suspicions regarding my intention; it continues to criticise me of nursing a hidden agenda of separatism and engaging in conspiracy to achieve this.

Since the re-establishment of direct contact between us and the People's Republic of China in 2002, my envoys and the Chinese counterparts were able to engage in a series of frank and extensive discussions during which they were able to explain each other's position. This kind of discussion, I hope, will help to clear the doubts and suspicions of the People's Republic of China so that we can move on to settle the differences in our views and positions, and thereby find a mutually-acceptable solution to the issue of Tibet.

More particularly, in the fifth round of talks held a few weeks ago, the two sides were able to clearly identify the areas of major differences and the reasons thereof. They were also able to get a sense of the conditions necessary for resolving the differences. In addition, my envoys reiterated my wish to visit China on a pilgrimage. As a country with a long history of Buddhism, China has many sacred pilgrim sites. As well as visiting the pilgrim sites, I hope to be able to see for myself the changes and developments in the People's Republic of China.

Over the past decades, China has seen spectacular economic and social development. This is commendable. The Tibetan areas have likewise seen some infrastructural development, which I have always considered positive.

Looking back at the past five decades of China's history, one sees that the country saw a great many movements based on the principles of Marxism-Leninism. That was during Mao's era. Then Deng Xiaoping, through seeking truth from facts, introduced socialist market economy and brought huge economic progress. Following this, based on his theory of the "Three Represents", Jiang Zemin expanded the scope of the Communist Party of China to include not just the peasants and workers, but also three other elements, namely the advanced productive forces, the progressive course of China's advanced culture, and the fundamental interests of the majority. Today, President Hu Jintao's theory of "Three Harmonies" envisages peaceful coexistence and harmony within China, as well as with her neighbours and the international community. All these initiatives were undertaken in accordance with the changing times. As a result, the transition of political power and the development of the country have continued unabated. And today China is emerging as one of the major powers in the world, which she deserves considering her long history and huge population.

However, the fundamental issue that must be addressed is that in tandem with the political power and economic development, China must also follow the modern trend in terms of developing a more open society, free press and policy transparency. This, as every sensible person can see, is the foundation of genuine peace, harmony and stability. Tibetans-as one of the larger groups of China's 55 minority nationalities-are distinct in terms of their land, history, language, culture, religion, customs and traditions. This distinctiveness is not only clear to the world, but was also recognised by a number of senior Chinese leaders in the past. I have only one demand: self-rule and genuine autonomy for all Tibetans, i.e., the Tibetan nationality in its entirety. This demand is in keeping with the provisions of the Chinese constitution, which means it can be met. It is a legitimate, just and reasonable demand that reflects the aspirations of Tibetans, both in and outside Tibet. This demand is based on the logic of seeing future as more important than the past; it is based on the ground realities of the present and the interests of the future.

The long history of the past does not lend itself to a simple black and white interpretation. As such, it is not easy to derive a solution from the past history. This being the case, I have stated time and again that I do not wish to seek Tibet's separation from China, but that I will seek its future within the framework of the Chinese constitution. Anyone who

has heard this statement would realise, unless his or her view of reality is clouded by suspicion, that my demand for genuine self-rule does not amount to a demand for separation. The convergence of this fact with a gradual progress in freedom, openness and media will create conditions, I hope, for resolving Sino-Tibetan problem through negotiations. Therefore, I am making every effort to perpetuate the present contacts and thus create a conducive atmosphere.

The Kashag of the Central Tibetan Administration has made a number of appeals to Tibetans and our international supporters to work toward the creation of a conducive environment for negotiations. Today, I would like to emphasise that we leave no stone unturned to help the present process of dialogue for the resolution of the Sino-Tibetan problem. I urge all Tibetans to take note of this on the basis of the Kashag's appeal. I make the same request to Tibet supporters and those sympathetic to the Tibetan people. By the same token, I would like to tell the People's Republic of China that if it sees benefit in sincerely pursuing dialogue through the present contact, it must make clear gesture to this effect. I urge the Chinese leadership to give a serious thought to this. A positive atmosphere cannot be created by one side alone. As an ancient Tibetan saying goes, one hand is not enough to create the sound of a clap.

Finally, I would like to take this opportunity to express my appreciation and gratitude to the international community for their consistent support to us. I would also like to express once again the Tibetan people's appreciation and immense gratitude to the people and the Government of India for their unwavering and unparalleled generosity and support to us. With my thoughts on the situation and feelings of the Tibetans inside Tibet, I pray for all of them. I also pray for the wellbeing of all sentient beings.

The Dalai Lama
March 10, 2006