

Declaration of the 5th World Parliamentarians' Convention on Tibet
18 - 19 November 2009, Rome, Italy

The 5th World Parliamentarians' Convention on Tibet (WPCT) was held in Rome on 18 and 19 November at the Chamber of Deputies of the Italian Parliament.

200 participants from 29 countries including Italian Parliamentarians met to discuss, share information, and review current developments and strategies, in order to devise a plan of action towards seeking a resolution of the Tibet issue that guarantees meaningful autonomy for the Tibetan people within the framework of the Constitution of the People's Republic of China (see email of 19 November for further information on the WPCT).

The 5th WPCT Declaration is copied below for your information:

DECLARATION
Rome, 19 November 2009

I. PREAMBLE

The Fifth World Parliamentarians' Convention on Tibet, meeting in Rome on the 18th and 19th of November 2009 –

Defends the right of the Tibetan people to their own identity, culture and way of life;

Reaffirms its strong commitment to the people of Tibet and to the non-violent path they have chosen, under the leadership of His Holiness the Dalai Lama;

Reaffirms the critical role played by parliaments and parliamentary bodies in raising awareness of the difficult situation in Tibet within governments and international institutions and in formulating policies for the benefit of the Tibetan people;

Recalls the four previous meetings of the World Parliamentarians' Convention on Tibet, the resolutions and action programmes they have generated, and the impact of the resultant activities and initiatives;

Seeks a resolution for Tibet that guarantees genuine autonomy for the Tibetan people within the framework of the Constitution of the People's Republic of China; and

Proclaims that the message of the World Parliamentarians' Conference on Tibet is resolutely not anti-Chinese but a statement of support for justice and truth with a sincere conviction that the Tibetan and Chinese peoples can find a way to coexist with mutual respect.

II. FINDINGS

The Fifth World Parliamentarians' Convention on Tibet,

FINDING that since the last meeting of the World Parliamentarians' Convention on Tibet in 2005 the situation in Tibet has deteriorated due to the government of the People's Republic of China's imposition of harsh measures on Tibetans and its harder line taken toward the Dalai Lama and his pursuit of autonomy;

MOTIVATED by the political protests that began in March 2008 in which Tibetans across the Tibetan plateau expressed their anguish in an unprecedented and overwhelmingly peaceful manner in response to the continuing repressive policies of Chinese authorities;

CONCERNED that Chinese authorities responded to the protests with a security crackdown across the Tibetan plateau that includes the documented detention of 735 Tibetans for exercising rights such as freedom of speech, religion, assembly and association;

OUTRAGED at the execution of Tibetans without following international standards of due process of law;

RECOGNIZING that the People's Republic of China, as it seeks to be a responsible member of the international community, should acknowledge that with such status come duties and responsibilities to protect and respect those peoples under its control pursuant to international standards of justice and human rights as enshrined in the United Nations Charter and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights;

RECOGNIZING that the People's Republic of China has a moral responsibility to address the legitimate grievances of the Tibetan people through fair administration of rule of law under international standards of justice, respect for freedom of religion and expression, protection of the Tibetan people's right to express their cultural identity and way of life, and implementation of genuine autonomy;

ACKNOWLEDGING the recent documentation by United Nations bodies, including the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, the Human Rights Council and the Committee Against Torture, national governments and non-governmental organizations, of the systemic violations of the human rights of the Tibetan people by Chinese authorities;

ACKNOWLEDGING that the People's Republic of China has signed and ratified the U.N. Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, but regrets serious gaps in its implementation, which is a root cause of Tibetan discontent;

RECOGNIZING the need for continuing support for both long-staying and newly-arriving refugees from Tibet, many of whom are young children, including in the areas of humanitarian assistance, education, health, and revitalization of settlements;

CONCERNED by the environmental degradation on the Tibetan plateau, the so-called "Third Pole," as a result of climate change caused by greenhouse gas emissions, the mismanagement of natural resources by Chinese governmental and commercial interests, and the resettlement of Tibetan nomads into fixed communities, which separates them from their traditional livelihood and stewardship of Tibetan grasslands;

RECOGNIZING that Chinese policies to mitigate and adapt to the effects of climate change on the Tibetan plateau affect billions of people in Asia, and that the involvement and experience of Tibetans is integral to the successful implementation of climate change policies;

RECOGNIZING the invaluable contributions, financially and in other forms of support, by governments and citizens toward the well being of the Tibetan people and their effort to sustain their identity, particularly the host nation support by the government and people of India;

RECOGNIZING that international and governmental statements in support for dialogue in the wake of the protests that began in March 2008 were critical in setting the stage for the rounds of dialogue that occurred later in that year;

RECOGNIZING that in order for the negotiations between the Chinese government and the representatives of the Dalai Lama to be effective it is essential that the format of the negotiations be transparent and with the involvement of appropriate international supervision;

CONCLUDING that His Holiness the Dalai Lama, despite the continuing occupation of Tibet, is sincere in seeking a "middle path" solution for Tibet, not independence;

CONCLUDING that the Memorandum on Genuine Autonomy for the Tibetan People proposed by the representatives of the Dalai Lama embodies his vision for genuine autonomy within the constitutional framework of the People's Republic of China;

CONSIDERING the experiences of the many autonomous regions around the world, for instance Trentino-South Tyrol in Italy, which have shown that conflicts can be overcome by respecting the fundamental rights of distinct peoples and ethnic and linguistic minorities and enabling them to exercise the right to self-government while respecting territorial integrity of the state;

AFFIRMING the value of non-violence in mitigating conflict and misunderstanding and the potential of non-violent leadership as embodied by His Holiness the Dalai Lama for peace and stability in the People's Republic of China; and

REAFFIRMING the resolutions and declarations made at all previous World Parliamentarians' Conferences on Tibet, including the recognition of His Holiness the Dalai Lama and the Tibetan Government in exile as the legitimate representatives of the Tibetan people.

III. ACTIONS

THEREFORE, the Convention is resolved to:

EXPRESS SUPPORT for substantive negotiations between the Chinese government and the representatives of the Dalai Lama toward a meaningful resolution of the Tibet issue, with the Memorandum on Genuine Autonomy as a realistic and constructive basis for such negotiations;

CALL ON governments to urge the People's Republic of China to fully respect the Tibetan people's fundamental human rights and freedoms and to acknowledge their right to authentically participate in all issues regarding their present and future well-being;

URGE national governments to acknowledge that third-party facilitation is essential for the resumption of the dialogue and to guarantee its transparency;

CALL ON the People's Republic of China to ratify the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights;

ENCOURAGE governments to explore multinational mechanisms to work collaboratively on the challenges of climate change in Tibet, including with the direct participation of Tibetan stakeholders. To this end, participants of this convention will draft and publish an open letter expressing the key importance of Tibet as the "Third Pole" prior to the U.N. Climate Change Conference in Copenhagen;

COMMIT to engage relevant governments and institutions to ensure that His Holiness the Dalai Lama is welcomed appropriately when meeting with various government leaders and officials;

COMMIT to building capacity within national governments for dissemination of information and the implementation of policies on Tibet, such as the identification or establishment of an office within the Executive Branch of government to handle Tibet affairs;

COMMIT to identify members of an international parliamentarians network for Tibet. The network, in consultation with the Tibetan Parliament-in-exile, will identify a secretariat. The network will facilitate greater coordination between parliamentary groups, share best practices, and be sufficiently supported in the international advancement of a near-term action plan to include:

(1) introducing a resolution or motion in parliaments reflecting the principal elements of the World Parliamentarians' Conference on Tibet Declaration;

(2) requesting a full briefing on the Tibetan policy advanced by their governments, including in multilateral fora, in the areas of human rights, environment, security, development and other economic assistance and geopolitics;

(3) seeking tangible national and local governmental and private support for programmes that provide assistance to Tibetan communities, including inside Tibet and to long-staying and new refugees from Tibet;

(4) engaging in parliamentary exchanges with Chinese legislators and in outreach to Chinese constituents;

(5) visiting Tibet as part of a multi-national parliamentary delegation with the intent of determining the situation on the ground, including the status of Tibetan nomads and political prisoners;

(6) organizing parliamentary hearings before the foreign affairs and/or human rights committees with Tibetan representatives and, if they accept, Chinese government representatives to discuss the political and humanitarian situation in Tibet;

(7) promoting a campaign to gather the support for, endorsement of, and signature on this declaration by parliamentarians of democratic national and local governments, political parties, community leaders, religious organizations, Nobel Peace Laureates, opinion makers and all citizens of goodwill in the world.

ENDS

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(The Office of Tibet, London, is the official agency of His Holiness the Dalai Lama for Northern Europe, Poland & the Baltic States)