

Tibet Brief

A monthly report of the International Campaign for Tibet



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“Just as China is essential to successful implementation of global climate change solutions, Tibet is indispensable to China’s ability to implement them successfully.”

– Open Letter to COP15

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International parliamentarians call for debate on Tibetan environment at COP15

An international group of parliamentarians has written an open letter calling for discussion of the Tibetan environment at the upcoming UN Climate Change Conference in Copenhagen, also known as COP15.

Tibet, the world’s largest and highest plateau, is the ‘world’s third pole’ because it contains the biggest ice fields outside of the Arctic and Antarctic. The Tibetan plateau is warming twice as fast as the rest of the world and the impact of melting glaciers could be catastrophic. No other area in the world is a water repository of such size, serving as a lifeline for much of a continent and for millions of people. The sustainable management of Tibet has become a serious security issue in the region.

Thirty-five parliamentarians representing 16 parliaments around the world and including twelve parliamentary groupings for Tibet signed the open letter, which urged negotiators at the

conference to consider initiatives and policies that take into account the following:

1. Independent, international scientific assessments of the changes in the Tibetan plateau’s ecosystems, water resources and land use policies, including the participation of scientists and relevant stakeholders from Tibet and from those nations that depend on Tibet’s water.
2. Integrated participation of Tibetans, especially Tibetan nomads, in the decision-making and management of the plateau’s natural resources.
3. Encourage trans-boundary collaborative decision-making and governance of the Tibetan plateau’s water resources, including all regional and local stakeholders.

In a statement to COP15, the signatories urged collaborative action:

“Just as China is essential to successful implementation of global climate change solutions, Tibet is indispensable to China’s ability to implement them successfully. We urge negotiators to ensure that strategies to address climate change include stakeholders in Tibet, particularly nomads. This inclusion is essential to understanding, mitigating and adapting to changes in the Tibetan plateau’s water, forest, and grassland resources and ecosystems, critical to millions of people downstream and for the stability and security of Asia.”

World leaders will attend COP15 between 7-18 December in Copenhagen, Denmark in an effort to establish a new global agreement on combating climate change beyond the Kyoto Protocol, which expires in 2012. ■



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The Dalai Lama addresses a press conference in Rome during the WPCT

Concerted parliamentary action as outcome of Rome WPCT

The 5th World Parliamentarians Convention on Tibet ended in Rome on 19 November with the adoption of the Rome Declaration on Tibet. The convention, held at the Italian Parliament, was attended by 133 Parliamentarians and associates from 30 Parliaments around the world and included an address by the Dalai Lama at the Chamber of Deputies of the Italian Parliament.

Welcoming his arrival in Rome and visit to the Italian Chamber of Deputies, 114 Italian parliamentarians signed a letter to the Dalai Lama praising his decision "to assure through dialogue, a true political, cultural, social and religious autonomy for the Tibetan population, that represents a forward-looking choice of great value and political wisdom, not only for the issues regarding Tibet, but for the entire world."

At the conclusion of the two-day Convention, the participating parliamentarians adopted the WPCT Rome Declaration¹, within which they:

- Called on governments to urge the Peoples Republic of China to fully respect the Tibetan peoples fundamental human rights and freedoms and to acknowledge their right to authentically participate in all issues regarding their present and future well-being;
- Stated that the WPCT was 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.
- Agreed to identify members of an international parliamentarians network for Tibet, which will facilitate greater coordination between parliamentary groups, share best practices, and work for the international advancement of a near-term action plan

The WPCT was hosted by the Tibet Parliamentary Group of the Italian Parliament and co-organised with the Tibetan Parliament in Exile and the International Campaign for Tibet. ■

If you are a policymaker and want to learn more about participating in the International Parliamentarians Network, write to eupolicy@savetibet.nl

¹ Read the full Rome Declaration, visit www.tibetpolicy.eu/news, 19.11.2009.

EU-China Human Rights Dialogue



On 20 November the EU and China held the 28th round of the bi-annual EU-China Dialogue on Human Rights in Beijing. In an official statement², the Swedish Presidency of the EU called the discussions a 'frank exchange of views' and this round of the dialogue is believed to have been tense, given the seriousness of the issues raised by the EU. The Presidency statement noted that:

"Key issues for the EU were the death penalty, situation in Tibet and Xinjiang, rule of law, freedom of expression, including freedom of the press, torture, and the ratification by China of the ICCPR. The EU and China also discussed a number of specific items concerning the rule of law. On these issues, the EU voiced its concerns on a number of recent developments and stressed the need to ensure fully the independence of the judiciary and to allow lawyers to exercise their professional duties without interference."

The EU-China Human Rights Dialogue has taken place since 1995, with the next round to be held in the first half of 2010, under the Spanish EU Presidency. ■

² Read the full statement of the Swedish EU Presidency at www.tibetpolicy.eu/news, 24.11.2009.



China hearing at EP Human Rights Sub-Committee

Human rights in China, including minority rights, the usefulness of the EU-China Human Rights Dialogue and recommendations for future actions in EU-China relations were debated at a public hearing held by the European Parliament's Human Rights Sub-Committee on 1 December.

China's discriminatory treatment of Falun Gong practitioners and ethnic and religious minorities in Tibet, and the Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region (XUAR) of western China were severely criticised by MEPs, who also called for an unconditional moratorium on the death penalty.

A key issue at the hearing was the usefulness of the EU-China Human Rights Dialogue. Some participants argued that the dialogue had failed to produce results, but MEPs were against withdrawing from it, and argued that it should be evaluated, as it provides a mechanism for forcefully raising all human rights issues.

ICT delivered a statement at the hearing, calling for a more unified and coherent EU position on the issue of Tibet. ICT also expressed concern that Chinese intransigence on Tibet at EU-China dialogues was not reflected in public and official statements of the EU, giving an overly optimistic impression of the exchanges with the Chinese government on Tibet.

MEPs stressed that "criticism from outside helps to address the problems of Chinese citizens in the public sphere" and that "the international community is giving China a free pass on Human rights, mostly because many governments want to preserve their own investments and interest."

As an outcome of the hearing, MEPs made a number of recommendations:

- That the EU should use a more balanced combination of "quiet and public diplomacy" and the creation of a special unit within the EU delegation in China which should monitor the human rights situation on the ground.
- The creation of a capacity within the European Commission or ICC (International Criminal Court) to receive information on human rights breaches worldwide.
- That the European Parliament should use its power to veto the conclusion of Partnership Agreements as a lever to ensure that they include human rights clauses and that the EU will conclude such agreements only with countries that have ratified the International Covenant on Civil And Political Rights (ICCPR).

European Parliament passes resolution on minority rights & death penalty

On the 26 November, the European Parliament passed a resolution³ calling for an end to the death penalty in China and expressing concern over the way in which ethnic minorities are treated before the law in China.

The resolution strongly condemned the execution of two Tibetans, Lobsang Gyaltzen and Loyak, in September and called for the commutation of all other death sentences related to protests in Tibet during 2008, citing concern over whether the convicted have received a fair trial.

The resolution also called for "the reopening of sincere and results-orientated dialogue between the Chinese Government and the Dalai Lama's representatives, based on the 'Memorandum on Genuine Autonomy for the Tibetan People' and leading towards a positive, substantial and meaningful change in Tibet consistent with the principles outlined in the Constitution and laws of the People's Republic of China."

On 1 December, the EP's Sub-Committee on Human Rights also held a hearing on China, where ICT delivered a statement on the current situation in Tibet. ■

³ Read the full EP resolution text at www.tibetpolicy.eu/news, 26.11.2009.