

Statement by Lhundup Dorjee
Capital Area Tibetan Association (CATA)
Before CECC
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My name is Lhundup Dorjee and I speak here today on behalf the Capital Area Tibetan Association. Before I begin, I would like to thank the Commission and the staff for providing us this opportunity to speak here.

As I speak here right now, members of the Tibetan community here, joined by our American friends and supporters, will be gathered in front of the Chinese Embassy to mark the anniversary of a very a tragic event that took place in Lhasa, the capital city of Tibet, forty four years ago. On this day in 1959, Chinese Communist troops massacred thousands and thousands of Tibetans - men, women and children – monks, nuns and lay – who had gathered together in spontaneous demonstrations to protest the Chinese occupation of their country and to protect the life of their young leader, The Dalai Lama. Finding indiscriminate fire insufficient, Chinese troops rained artillery shells into the crowds of innocent people to kill the maximum. The Chinese soldiers spent days turning over the dead bodies of monks in the hope that the Dalai Lama's body could be found among them. Yet for us the events of that day 44 years ago resonate with meaning and significance far greater than the tragedy, for it was a day on which the heroism, courage and bravery of our people found expression as never before, in the face of China's brutal might, and stirred the collective consciousness of a new Tibetan identity, one that united all Tibetans - from Kham and Amdo regions as well as Central Tibet. The Chinese government describes March 10, 1959 as the quelling of a rebellion. We Tibetans call it the Tibetan National Uprising day and we proudly commemorate it every year in the free world remembering our common sacrifices and rededicating ourselves to the cause.

Many waters have flowed through the river Tsangpo in Lhasa since then. Or maybe, tears would be more apt, instead of water, for the suffering of our people under Chinese occupation was unprecedented and immeasurable. Or maybe it should be blood, for more than a million Tibetans have died as a result of their rule. Sadly, the situation in Tibet is not getting any better today, the veneer of economic development taking place there notwithstanding; a veneer that many well-meaning observers seem to take as a sign of progress. I would urge the members of the Commission to look beyond this veneer in assessing the situation in Tibet for it masks issues of far greater and critical importance for Tibetans. These are the transfer of Chinese settlers to Tibet reducing Tibetans to a minority in their own homeland, economic and educational marginalization of ethnic Tibetans, gross violation of human rights, severe political repression, systematic efforts to undermine Tibetan culture and language, and environmental degradation.

While the fact of economic development taking place must be accepted by us Tibetans, it should be pointed out that since the Chinese government is implementing economic development as part of a strategy to consolidate their colonial rule in Tibet, and not for the sake of improving the lives of ordinary Tibetans, the results of economic development, in fact, tend to exacerbate the negative impacts of many of the issues mentioned earlier and will worsen the situation further in the long run.

His Holiness the Dalai Lama, the leader of all Tibetan people, has long advocated and pursued a path of peaceful, negotiated solution by working with the Chinese. However, Chinese government has spurned his efforts and vilifies him repeatedly. It is said that China is banking on a strategy of waiting for him to die to solve the Tibetan problem for good. It will be tempting for China to think this will be a smart option since the Dalai Lama is a powerful symbol of the Tibetan freedom struggle and unifies all the Tibetans. In spite of the visit of a delegation of exiled representatives to Tibet in the past year, it is not

clear if China really has had a genuine change of heart and reviewed this strategy. If not, this would be a very serious mistake. In my opinion, if the Tibetan problem is not resolved during the lifetime of the 14th Dalai Lama, China can be assured of long-term instability in the region. We hope that the new generation of leaders in Beijing will shed aside their arrogance and suspicions, and find the wisdom to realize that the only path that can be good for both the Tibetan and the Chinese people is one that involves working with His Holiness the Dalai Lama.

Thank you.