

Congressional-Executive Commission on China Issues Roundtable
The China-Dalai Lama Dialogue: Prospects for Progress
Statement of Kasur Tashi Wangdi
March 13, 2006

Mr. Chairman, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would first of all like to thank the Congressional-Executive Commission on China for inviting me to this Roundtable with my two other colleagues to address the issue of “The China-Dalai Lama Dialogue: Prospects for Progress”.

The first direct contact between the Tibetan leadership in exile and the new Chinese leadership in Beijing was established in 1979 after a gap of nearly twenty years when the Chinese government contacted Mr. Gyalo Thondup, the elder brother of His Holiness the

Dalai Lama who normally lives in Hong Kong. This was soon after the fall of the Gang of Four and gradual opening up of China to the outside world. Mr. Gyalo Thondup went to Beijing with the permission of His Holiness and met with all the top Chinese leaders including Mr. Deng Xiaoping who said to him among other things that all issues concerning Tibet, except the question of independence, can be discussed and resolved.

This stand was very much in line with the policy decision of seeking genuine autonomy and not independence taken by the Tibetan leadership in exile some years before. His Holiness the Dalai Lama had therefore responded to it immediately as he had stated in his March 10th Statement this year. I would like to place on record this Statement along with the Statement of the Kashag (Cabinet) on this occasion as well as the press statement issued by Mr. Lodi Gyari, head of the delegation for contact and dialogue with the Chinese government on his return from the 5th round of meeting middle of last month.

To highlight the point I would also like to quote the relevant part of His Holiness’s statement:

“ 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”.

There was, therefore, a broad convergence of views and a window of opportunity for finding a mutually acceptable and beneficial solution.

Unfortunately these high hopes and expectations lasted only for a brief period. The relations went from bad to worse and through many twists and turns as the Chinese side had described it. It came to a total break down towards the end of the eighties. However, I believe no useful purpose will be served by going into the reasons why this had happened at this point of time. Each side will have its own explanations and this blame game will not lead us any further. Future historians will be able the best judge when all facts are known.

However it will not be unreasonable to assume that if the policies stated by Mr. Deng Xiaoping and implemented by Mr. Hu Yaobang before his own down fall were carried through earnestly the problem of Tibet would have been resolved. But this was not to be. The relations turned for the worse with the hardening of Chinese government’s policies and eventual imposition of Martial Law in Tibet.

Despite this reversal His Holiness the Dalai Lama continued to seek a peaceful resolution to the problem through dialogue on the basis of what Mr. Deng Xiaoping said and his own Middle Way Approach . His

Holiness made this position clear to the Chinese leadership through communications directly addressed to them and also through well intentioned mutual friends. He also expressed his willingness to meet with Chinese leaders at any place and time of their convenience to move the process forward.

It took nearly ten years for direct relations to be resumed when the Chinese government agreed to receive His Holiness's two envoys charged with the responsibilities of renewing contact and dialogue with the Chinese leadership.

In September 2002 the two envoys with two senior assistants were able to visit Beijing. Their two tasks were firstly, to reestablish direct contact with the leadership in Beijing and create a conducive atmosphere for direct face-to-face talks and secondly to explain His Holiness the Dalai Lama's Middle Way Approach to assuage distrust and suspicions in the minds of the Chinese leaders.

Since this resumption of direct contact and dialogue there have been five meetings between the representatives of His Holiness and their Chinese counterparts. In fact the fifth round of meeting took place recently from February 15 to 23.

Although the progress has been frustratingly slow and basically one sided I believe the two envoys were able to achieve some progress in the tasks given to them.

Direct contact was not only established but it has been sustained and stabilized as stated by Vice minister Zhu in the fourth round of meeting last June. He said that the direct contact had become stable and an "established practice". Recently high Chinese and Tibetan officials in Tibet have publicly acknowledged for the first time that these contacts are taking place. We have also noted marked changes in the atmosphere of these meetings and the frankness and depth of exchange of views which we feel are very important for better understanding of each other's position and thus better trust and confidence in each other which is very essential if we are to make any head way in substantive negotiations.

There has also been some change in the format, content and frequency of meetings. The fourth meeting was held outside of China for the first time in the Chinese Embassy in Switzerland. The time gap between the fourth and fifth meetings is the shortest so far.

The discussions from the third round onward shifted from restatement of broad principles and allegations to more specific concerns of the Chinese government concerning His Holiness's policies and stand. In the fifth round of meetings both sides were able to clearly identify reasons for the present lack real progress towards actual negotiations.

His Holiness's representatives found such candid discussions and exchange of views very helpful. It gave them the opportunity to respond in full to the points raised. More specific are the concerns expressed by the Chinese side, easier it is for us to try to remove their misconceptions, misunderstandings and unfounded fears.

We have taken very serious note of all their concerns and made sincere efforts to give explanations and clarifications fully and truthfully in writing. We strongly believe that this is the only way to remove all the distrusting and suspicions which seem to plague our present relationship and hinder efforts to enter into serious and meaningful negotiations.

Despite the frustrating and at times disappointing experiences at the lack of reciprocal goodwill gestures from the Chinese government's side we are still very steadfast in our commitment and effort to convince the Chinese leadership about His Holiness the Dalai Lama's sincerity in wanting to find a mutually acceptable solution within the framework of the constitution of the People's Republic of China ensuring the unity, stability and territorial integrity of the People's Republic of China.

As the representatives of His Holiness had stated in their recent press statement on their return from the latest round of meetings major differences including some very fundamental still continue to exist. Nevertheless the encouraging thing is that both the sides have reiterated their willingness and commitment to continue the process of contact and dialogue. As Churchill once said jaw jaw is better than war war.

It is our hope that the Chinese government will agree to our suggestions to increase the frequency of meetings for more vigorous and intensive exchange of views to narrow down the differences which in our view are not totally insurmountable. The basic concern of the Chinese government like any other government is the unity, territorial integrity and economic health of the country. The Middle Way Approach adopted by His Holiness will in fact reinforce and strengthen all this. It will not in any way weaken or undermine them if it is understood in its proper context unobscured by unfounded distrust, suspicion and fear.

A truly fruitful and substantive negotiation can take place only in an atmosphere of genuine mutual trust and confidence. When we reach such a stage in our contact I believe that the harsh and unreasonable preconditions set by the Chinese government for the start of real negotiations will become both unnecessary and irrelevant.

One of the most effective ways of creating the right atmosphere is through personal contact and face to face meetings. It is with this in mind His Holiness the Dalai Lama had conveyed to the Chinese government through his envoys his wish to visit some of the holy Buddhist pilgrimage sites in China. It is our hope that the present Chinese leaders representing a new generation will have the necessary vision, courage and self-confidence to welcome the visit.

One can empathize with the Chinese leaders on the need to have caution when dealing with the problems of such a huge country undergoing many changes but the proposed visit by His Holiness is a win win situation. The Chinese leaders should have no fear as to what might happen if such a visit is allowed. His Holiness will use the visit to bring about better understanding, harmony and friendship. It will have a calming effect on the situation inside Tibet. We have no doubt the whole world will welcome such a move and China will win many friends all over the world.

In conclusion I would like to say that we are still hopeful of a break through and of finding a mutually acceptable and beneficial solution.

Additional Materials Submitted for the Record

Statement of His Holiness the Dalai Lama on the Forty-Seventh Anniversary of the Tibetan National Uprising Day, 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

Statement of the Kashag on the 47th Anniversary of the Tibetan People's Uprising Day, 10 March 2006

Today is the 47th anniversary of the Tibetan people's peaceful uprising for freedom in Lhasa, the capital of Tibet. On this momentous occasion, the Kashag of the Central Tibetan Administration pays tribute to the heroic men and women of Tibet who have sacrificed their lives for our spiritual, political and people's cause. The Kashag also expresses its solidarity with the Tibetans who continue to suffer oppression in Tibet.

In the past 10 March statements of the 12th Kashag since it assumed office in 2001, we have taken stock of and reviewed the positive and negative aspects of past developments. In these statements we explained our policy on the implementation of His Holiness the Dalai Lama's Middle-Way Approach for resolving the issue of Tibet through negotiations, empowering the Tibetan people, and the recent re-establishment of Sino-Tibetan contacts and the creation of a conducive environment by the exiled Tibetan community for negotiations. Apart from these, we have also explained the Middle-Way Approach, which was specifically meant for the leadership of the People's Republic of China. Moreover, we have made necessary clarifications on the past visits to China by the envoys of His Holiness the Dalai Lama. In these statements we have also articulated the aspirations of the Tibetan people.

This is the last 10 March statement of the present Kashag. Therefore, we will not repeat here what has already been said in the past statements. We will, instead, present a brief account of the status of the process of Sino-Tibetan dialogue concerning the future of the Tibetan people in and outside Tibet, and our future plans.

Under the wise guidance of His Holiness the Dalai Lama, we have been making every possible effort to find a negotiated solution to the Tibetan problem. This process was formulated under the guidance of His Holiness the Dalai Lama in accordance with the inspiration of the Tibetans in and outside Tibet and was unanimously supported through a democratic process by Assembly of Tibetan People's Deputies. In the process, the envoys of His Holiness the Dalai Lama have already conducted five rounds of serious talks with the leaders of the People's Republic of China. They have also reiterated His Holiness the Dalai Lama's desire to visit sacred pilgrim sites in China. The Kashag, therefore, considers that the time has come when we need to work more than ever before on the Sino-Tibetan contacts and the current dialogue process.

Recently the envoys of His Holiness the Dalai Lama returned from their fourth visit to China between 15-23 February 2006 and the fifth round of talks. In the latest round of talks, both sides were able to further identify the differences in their views and thinking and the reasons for these differences and the means to resolve them.

His Holiness the Dalai Lama has adopted and pursued the Middle-Way policy in which he does not seek independence for Tibet. This is in accordance with Deng Xiaoping's assurance that except for independence all issues could be resolved through negotiations. Therefore, we believe that the fundamental differences between the two sides have already been resolved. Thus the present differences in views and perspectives are not fundamental issues. They are rather details regarding how to implement and carry forward our efforts. If the People's Republic of China still sees any differences in the fundamental issue and implementation, it is contrary to reality. The People's Republic of China must review this.

The Middle-Way Approach is a flexible and mutually beneficial policy and the two sides can discuss this based on the situation and the needs of the people. As mentioned in last year's statement, we reiterate that the essence of the Middle-Way Approach should be understood and grasped. One side remaining rigid by attaching too much importance to a few words in background documents is similar to holding on to branches and offshoots rather than the root and is a means of finding excuse.

In essence, we have always said that the need to have genuine autonomy for the three provinces of Tibet or the entire Tibetan people is the basic principle. We cannot compromise on this principle. This has also been

clearly understood by the leaders of the People's Republic of China. Therefore, it is important to make sure that both sides are not deceived by a few who try to distort things for their personal gain.

According to Marxism and Leninism, the nationality issue is the foundation of strength and stability. It is also regarded as an important principle for the progress of socialism. Therefore, Marx and Lenin formulated a new ideology that calls for the equality and unity of nationalities. This should be achieved, according to them, by completely eradicating the chauvinism of the majority nationality and local nationalism so that the system of suppressing nationalities practised under imperialism could be prevented. Based on this ideology, the constitution of the People's Republic of China has inserted a provision that grants to all minority nationalities the status of national regional autonomy. The only aim of this provision is to protect the unique characteristics of the minority nationalities, including their language and culture. Tibetans are also one of China's 55 minority nationalities. Moreover, before 1951 they all lived together in small, compact groups in a contiguous chain throughout Tibet. As a result, today they are either scattered or live in these areas with a majority nationality. Therefore, should they be reduced to minority in their own areas, it is not possible to protect their unique characteristics. Moreover, the complete eradication of chauvinism of the majority nationality and local nationalism will not be possible under such circumstances. Therefore, if things go in this direction it would be nothing but similar to the system of "divide and rule" practised under imperialism. Because of these reasons, we have proposed the need to have unification of all the Tibetans, with the status of genuine autonomy. This demand is in accordance with Marxist and Leninist principles and the provisions of the Chinese constitution. Therefore, this demand can be met. Moreover this has the possibility to establish a strong base on which genuine equality and unity of nationalities can be achieved, proving it the best way to prevent separatism.

We have been able to sustain Sino-Tibetan relations for the past four years. The continuing round of talks has given us the opportunity to clear up a lot of issues and gradually identify the differences that exist between the two sides. Needless to say these are the results of contacts and discussions held between the two sides.

At present it is extremely important for both sides to put more efforts to resolve the Sino-Tibetan problem as soon as possible by strengthening and improving the present contacts. This is also necessary to realise the wish of His Holiness the Dalai Lama to visit China for pilgrimage in the near future. Therefore, in order to achieve this, the Kashag once again urges Tibetans in and outside Tibet and Tibet supporters not to undermine the atmosphere.

This is well known to all that as long as we are committed to the Middle-Way policy there is no other way by which we can achieve our future goals, except through the dialogue process.

It is but natural that contacts and discussions can take place only through co-operation and harmony and not in an atmosphere of enmity and confrontation, and we would like to emphasise once again that this must be understood by all.

Finally, we pray for the long life of His Holiness the Dalai Lama and the fulfilment of all his wishes. We also pray that the truth of the Tibetan issue prevails soon.

The Kashag
10 March 2006

Statement by Special Envoy Lodi Gyari, Head of the Delegation Sent by His Holiness the Dalai Lama to China

Saturday, 25 February 2006, 4:00 PM

Contact: Mr. Thubten Samphel

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Special Envoy Kasur Lodi Gyari, Envoy Kelsang Gyaltzen and senior assistant Sonam N. Dagpo meeting Executive Vice Minister Zhu Weiqun of the United Front Work Department of the Chinese Communist Party, Sithar, head of the Second Bureau in the United Front, and others.

Dharamshala (TibetNet):

1. In continuation of the process started with the re-establishment of direct contact with the Chinese leadership in September 2002, my colleague envoy Kelsang Gyaltzen and I, accompanied by two members of the Task Force, Sonam N. Dagpo and Bhuchung K. Tsering, visited China from February 15 to 23, 2006.
2. We had a day-long meeting with the Executive Vice Minister of the United Front Work Department, Zhu Weiqun, on February 22, 2006, in Guilin City during which we dealt with substantive issues.
3. As a result, today there is a better and deeper understanding of each other's position and the fundamental differences that continue to exist in the position held by the two parties.
4. This round of discussion also made it clear that there is a major difference even in the approach in addressing the issue. However, we remain committed to the dialogue process and are hopeful that progress will be possible by continuing the engagement. Our Chinese counterparts made clear their interest in continuing the present process and their firm belief that the obstacles can be overcome through more discussions and engagements.
5. As we had expressed an interest in looking at the situation of the different autonomous regions during our previous meetings, considering the time and the season, a trip was arranged this time to the Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region. We found the visit useful. We have reported to His Holiness the Dalai Lama today on our discussion along with Kalon Tripa Samdhong Rinpoche.
6. Our host for this visit was the United Front Work Department of the Chinese Communist Party. Many other authorities, including the government of Guangdong and Guangxi, particularly Guilin City, have been involved in organizing our visit. We wish to express our sincere appreciation to the officials at various levels for their hospitality and assistance.

Dharamshala, February 25, 2006