

**His Holiness the Dalai Lama's message to the 5th International Tibet Support Group  
conference in Belgium, from 11-14 May 2007**

6 May 2007

I HAD HOPED that I would be able to join you all at this conference to personally express my gratitude and to share my thoughts on the issue of Tibet, which is of concern to all of us. However, the Belgian Government shared with me their predicament on account of pressure from the People's Republic of China in connection with the upcoming visit of Belgian trade delegation led by the Crown Prince. At the same time they made it clear that they are a democratic country and if I chose to come I would be welcomed. They further informed me of the continued widespread interest in Tibet in Belgium. Having considered the situation, I have decided not to visit Brussels this time.

I understand the situation of the Belgian Government. I am aware of the strong support that the people and the Government of Belgium have extended to the Tibetan people in the past. I do not want to cause any inconvenience to the Government. I am aware that my decision will disappoint many of you. I ask for your understanding.

Even though I will not be able to participate this time, Prof. Samdhong Rinpoche, the elected head of the Central Tibetan Administration, will be there to share with you our views. It is important to realize that the issue is not about me or the Dalai Lama institution. It is an issue of six million Tibetans.

As you are all aware, almost immediately after coming into exile I gave the highest priority to establishing a system of governance for the Tibetan people fully based on democratic principles. I am very proud that today in exile we now have a fully functioning democratic institution.

Prof. Samdhong Rinpoche is the democratically elected leader of the Tibetans living in freedom. He also enjoys my full trust and confidence. In a way, I have already delegated much of the administrative and political decisions to the democratically elected leadership and consider myself as semi-retired. However, because of the immense love and trust that the Tibetan people, particularly those inside Tibet, have placed on me, it is my moral responsibility to act as their free spokesperson until a mutually satisfactory solution to the Tibet problem is found.

For the last many years I have done everything within my means to resolve the issue of Tibet through dialogue with the Chinese leadership. The last meeting between the concerned Chinese officials and my envoys took place in February 2006. These discussions have provided us an opportunity to explain to the Chinese authorities the legitimate needs of the Tibetan people and at the same time China's concerns about unity and stability. For the Tibetan people to be able to fully realize their legitimate rights to maintain their distinctive identity it is essential that all the Tibetan areas be provided the opportunity to be governed under a single administrative unit. The Tibetan people should be given genuine regional autonomy.

This aspiration of the Tibetan people is in accordance with the constitution of the People's Republic of China as well as the Law on Regional Ethnic Autonomy. The late Panchen Lama said that the desire for the establishment of an autonomous region for unified Tibetan nationality was appropriate and was in accordance with the legal rules. He also said that this demand was in line with the views of the Tibetan Population.

Meanwhile other issues of concern to us are the continuing trampling upon the human rights of the Tibetan people and degradation of Tibet's delicate environment. The large scale Chinese population transfer on the Tibetan Plateau is leading to the socio-economic marginalization of the Tibetan

people. It is also posing a serious threat to the preservation of our unique ancient Tibetan culture, including our spirituality.

Despite the reestablishment of contact with the Chinese government since 2002, we have seen no improvement inside Tibet. In fact, repression has only increased, naturally leading to growing frustration among many Tibetans, both inside and outside of Tibet, and more criticism of our Middle-Way policy. I hope that this conference will provide an opportunity for the participants to have open and frank discussions leading to constructive suggestions.

I have said this elsewhere and I would like to say it here. The Tibet movement has attracted worldwide support because of the universal principles the Tibetan people have incorporated into their struggle. These principles are non-violence, democracy, dialogue, compromise, respect for the other party's genuine concern, and for our common environment.

In conclusion, I would like to express my appreciation to Friedrich-Naumann Stiftung for its consistent support in empowering the TSG movement and to thank all of you who have gathered here and also for those who are not here, for your support for the just cause of the Tibetan people. Your support remains a source of inspiration and strength for the Tibetans in and outside Tibet.