

# **Statement of Tibetan Parliament in Exile on the commemoration of 62nd anniversary of Tibetan democracy**

We are marking a momentous occasion today, for it is the 6th day of the 7th month of the Water-Tiger Year in the 17th sexantry of the Tibetan Royal Year 2149, which corresponds to the 2nd day of September in the universal year 2022. It was on this day in 1960 that His Holiness the Dalai Lama, the irreplaceable leader of the Tibetan people, began the process to implement His long-desired aim to democratise the Tibetan governance system. It was the day on which a gathering of delegates from all the three provinces of Tibet and the different religious sects of the Tibetan people submitted a solemn oath on a sworn statement on the sacred Bodh Gaya ground, vowing to be unwavering in straight forwardly following His Holiness the Dalai Lama on whatever plans and wishes he may espouse for the Tibetan people. And it was on that occasion that he decreed a provisional arrangement for the nomination of representatives by all the three provinces and religious sects of Tibet for the purpose of constituting the first Tibetan Parliaments in Exile. It is thus that 62 years have passed since these first members of the Tibetan Parliament in Exile received their letters of appointment from His Holiness the Dalai Lama and took their oath of office before Him on the 2nd day of September in 1960.

Among all the communities of people living as refugees in exile, the Tibetan community stands out as one that is run under a democratic system. This is the basis on which the Tibetan people are able to carry out the struggle for our just cause and to preserve our traditional religious, cultural and linguistic heritage, with the ultimate aim being to achieve our national aspiration. The governance system of the Central Tibetan Administration is one that is fully democratic in all facets of its functioning. It is one that has all the characteristics of being able to stand shoulder-to-shoulder with any other genuine democratic system in this world. Our debts of gratitude for this wondrous achievement are owed to the long-term vision set out by His Holiness the Dalai Lama and the guidance He has provided us from time to time whenever that was required. This is, indeed, a matter of joy as well as pride to the Tibetan people. Hence, in being mindful of the immense debts of gratitude impossible to repay that we owe to Him for all His acts of kindness and generosity, we on behalf of the entire people of Tibet offer our solemn, immeasurable depth of gratitude to His Holiness the Dalai Lama.

Over the last more than six decades, manifest and highly appreciable progress has been seen in the framework of the democratic system of the Tibetan people in exile in keeping with the evolving developments and circumstances. And it all began on the 2nd day of September in 1960, when the members of the first Tibetan Parliament in Exile took their oath of office with the establishment, for the first time, of the democratic governance system of the Tibetan people in exile. At that time, His Holiness the Dalai Lama, with great concern for the current as well as future long-term wellbeing of the Tibetan people, provided profound guidance of invaluable importance, by which He made it clear that the political character of the Tibetan government in exile should be based on the ideology of non-violence. And this was the premise on which our noble democratic path defined by the ideas of freedom, justice, and equality, has emerged. Then in 1961, a document outlining the salient features of a constitution for a future free Tibet was brought out. This was followed, in 1963, by the promulgation of a democratic constitution for the governance of the Central Tibetan Administration. Later, on the 21st of November in 1974, rules for the election of members of the Tibetan Parliament in Exile were adopted and announced for implementation. And, in

1991, His Holiness the Dalai Lama took another major step towards democratising the Central Tibetan Administration by turning the Tibetan Parliament in Exile into a full-fledged lawmaking body to become the legislative branch of the Tibetan democratic setup. Pursuant to this measure, His Holiness, on the 28th of June in 1991, gave his assent to the Charter of Tibetans in Exile after it was duly adopted by the Tibetan Parliament in Exile. He thereby ensured that the Tibetan democracy became a fully modern system based on the foundation of a written constitution. In yet another major step, the Kalon Tripa, the executive head of the Central Tibetan Administration, began to be directly elected by the Tibetan people in the year 2001. This was followed, in the year 2011, by the adoption of the 25th amendment of the Charter of Tibetans in Exile, whereby His Holiness the Dalai Lama relinquished all his political and administrative powers in favour of the leadership elected by the Tibetan people. Since then, the Central Tibetan Administration has continued to function and move forward in a democratic manner, with the leadership elected by the Tibetan people assuming full responsibility in their designated fields.

The democratic system of governance is based on the postulation that there be no discriminatory distinctions made on the basis of a person's social status defined by the question of whether he or she is powerful or weak, or rich or poor; whether that person is male or female; or on the basis of his or her ancestry. Rather, it is a system which views society in totality or in a general way, envisaging everyone as equal, with the primary consideration being given to acting on the basis of the will of the general public. For the purpose of realizing the institutionalization of such a great system, countries across the world have undergone immense tribulations that have included wars, uprisings, and struggles. The outcomes have been determined by victory or defeat in such turbulences. The realization of a governance system by the assertion of the power of popular will through such various means is a continuing trend even today. But that was not the case with the development of our democracy. Rather, it took place without the occurrence of any such turbulence, for it was gifted to us by His Holiness the Dalai Lama with delight and on account of His great affection for the Tibetan people. This is all too evident from the courses of the development of the democratic system of the Tibetan people in exile.

Of the list of 195 independent countries in this world today, around 167 are characterized as democratic. However, they differ in various ways on how fully democratic they all are, or how in different ways they fail to meet the criteria of being truly democratic. Essentially, this depends on the question of to what extent the ideology of popular democracy could be implemented in the functioning of the governance system and the ways in which the leaders assume their responsibility. Likewise, while it is only to be expected that in a democratic society there is tolerance for a plurality of ideologies and diversity of points of view, the important consideration to bear in mind is that the fundamental basis of the existence of the Central Tibetan Administration is the cause underlying our freedom struggle. To ensure its effectiveness and success, we should ensure that there is no weakening of the unity of the Tibetan people. This is one of the most important considerations for the success of the Central Tibetan Administration, for it is something like the very existential essence of our democratic system.

Such then is the democratic system of the Central Tibetan Administration which has become an object of praise by a great many democratic governments and their peoples, governmental and non-governmental bodies, their prominent leaders, as well as private individuals. And these various entities have been continuously extending strong support to the issue of Tibet at all times and in every possible manner. This is the basis on which they have introduced a good number of legislative bills as well as motions and resolutions in their respective national

parliaments. These include, for example, the Reciprocal Access to Tibet Act of 2018 and the Tibetan Policy and Support Act of 2020, passed into law by the United States Congress. Likewise, on the 13th of July this year, two members of the House of Representatives of the United States Congress, namely, Rep. Jim McGovern and Rep. Michael McCaul, were able to introduce a bill titled “Promoting a Resolution to the Tibet-China Conflict Act”. Most recently, on the 3rd of August this year, members of the All-Party Indian Parliamentary Forum for Tibet raised and held discussions on a number of Tibet-related issues in the Indian parliament with great success.

Likewise, over two days – on the 22nd and 23rd of June this year – the 8th World Parliamentarians’ Convention on Tibet was held in the United States Capital Washington, DC. Its inauguration was graced by the presence of the United States House of Representative Speaker Nancy Pelosi who addressed the gathering. Those who personally attended the meeting this time included members of parliament from 28 countries, while a section of others took part in the meeting by means of an online presence. Besides, at a hearing on the historical status of Tibet under the theme of “Tibet: Barriers to Settling an Unresolved Conflict” held by the United States Congressional-Executive Commission on China in Capitol Hill, scholars with expertise in history presented testimonies by which it was proved that the country was historically never a part of China. Likewise, the 8th World Parliamentarians’ Convention on Tibet saw the revival of the International Network of Parliamentarians for Tibet (INPaT) and the adoption by unanimous decisions of the meeting’s “Washington Declaration” and “Washington Action Plan”. There is no doubt that these actions conveyed a clear and unambiguous message to the government of China. And it would have become clear to the government of China that the issue of Tibet is undoubtedly international, not just a matter of China’s internal affairs.

It does not bear mentioning that we the Tibetan people living in exile have been fortunate to be enjoying freedom and democracy under the leadership and guidance of His Holiness the Dalai Lama. Nevertheless, we remain intensely mindful of the fact that to our fellow Tibetans living in Tibet, life under the rule of the Communist Party of China is still defined by continuous deprivation of basic human rights and freedoms, and total absence of democracy and so forth. As a result, they continue to remain subject to arbitrary arrest, detention, persecution and imprisonment, violent repression and torture, and so forth. And this is compounded today by new clampdowns being carried out by the government of China in the name of implementing a “zero Covid” policy for eliminating the Covid-19 pandemic, which first broke out in late 2019 in the central Chinese city of Wuhan. In the name of the implementation of this policy, the Tibetan people are being subjected to immense hardship in terms of their freedom of movement, their ability to ensure their daily food and other essential supplies, and so forth. But in substantive terms, there was no real prevention and security against the spread of the Covid-19 pandemic in Tibet. Rather, as if to deliberately cause the spread of the pandemic disease, the Chinese government forces the Tibetan people to attend public gatherings for the purpose of subjecting them to political propaganda and education. Thus, the government of China has been abusing its opportunities and powers without showing any concern for the life of the Tibetan people, which is, of course, an utterly wrong thing to do.

Apart from that, the government of China has issued coercive orders by which it has imposed a ban on Tibetans from making any sort of contact with people outside the People’s Republic of China. Apart from that, irrespective of the question of whether or not it was actually implementing the law, there still exists what is called the “Law of the People’s Republic of China on Regional National Autonomy” and other related legal provisions available for

everyone to see with utmost clarity. Nevertheless, the government of China has gradually been undermining this law over the years, with the result that today its aim is to obliterate the relevance of these legal provisions. In fact, its policy has now shifted to emphasize a campaign to assimilate the different ethnic groups in the People's Republic of China for the purpose of developing a common national identity with the claim that the Chinese nation is a community of all ethnic groups. Under it, China is vigorously enforcing campaigns to promote what it calls the common national language and comprehensive implementation of its policy to Sinicize all religions existing in the country, for which purposes it has been issuing orders and directions on successive occasions. A new policy is especially being implemented for ethnic minorities in an attempted move to create the impression that China is now an ethnically homogenous country. With moves such as these, the government of China has, to put it in a nutshell, embarked on implementing a diabolical policy to obliterate the very ethnic and cultural identity of the Tibetan people. Fraternal Tibetans who have been enduring the Chinese occupation rule in Tibet have made clear their total rejection of these policies by carrying out endless series of peaceful protests, which continues to this day. And we the Tibetan people living in exile should never forget that it is our primary duty to publicize the issue of Tibet and to strive to win support for it from the international community.

The Tibetan Parliament in Exile has been continuous in establishing rapports with members of parliaments in countries across the world from time to time and as and when opportunities arose and this remains an ongoing programme. Also, the Tibetan Parliament in Exile has ongoing scheduled programmes to maintain the standards of democratic processes in the Tibetan community in exile. For this purpose, it has been imparting workshop training on the conduct of the proceedings of the Local Tibetan Assemblies and the discharge of their functions to the Settlement Representatives and Welfare Officers, members of the Local Tibetan Assemblies, and members of the regional Tibetan Freedom Movement offices in the different Tibetan settlements and cluster communities. And so, this year, such training was conducted for the Phuntsokling Tibetan Settlement in Odisha state, the Phendeling Tibetan Settlement in Mainpat, and the Norgyeling Tibetan Settlement in Bhandara. For all these settlements, the training was held in the month of July in the Odisha Tibetan settlement. Likewise, for the settlements in Ladakh, including the Jangthang region, the training for the members of the Local Tibetan Assemblies and the members of the regional Tibetan Freedom Movement offices was held at the Ladakh Sonamling Tibetan Settlement in the month of August. In the near future, the plan is to hold such training for the members of the Local Tibetan Assemblies and the members of the regional Tibetan Freedom Movement offices in the Tibetan settlements in Kalimpong, Darjeeling, Gangtok, Sonada, and Rawangla in the month of October this year. Meanwhile, it has been decided that after the conclusion of the session of the Tibetan Parliament in Exile this September, the members will travel to New Delhi to hold a five-day strategy meeting. Likewise, the programme for members of the current Tibetan Parliament in Exile for the first two and half years of its term to undertake visits to meet with the members of the Tibetan public in the settlements assigned to them has already been underway. And it is important that the members of the Tibetan public take a keen interest and participate actively in meetings with the members during the visits. Besides, a fair number of programmes have already been finalized for members of the Tibetan Parliament in Exile to undertake visits to countries in Europe for the purpose of lobbying support for the issue of Tibet.

Over the last more than six decades, governments and people across the world, including especially of India, have routinely provided support, guidance and facilities, and extended the hand of friendship to the Tibetan people with regard to our exile situation, our political cause,

for the preservation of our religious and cultural heritage, and for our just cause. To all of them, we take the opportunity provided by this occasion to express our heartfelt gratitude.

Finally, we pray that His Holiness the Dalai Lama, the irreplaceable leader of the Tibetan people and the ultimate reservoir of protective power and refuge to the sentient beings in the Three World Realms, but especially to our people of the Snowland of Tibet, may live for a hundred aeons and on this basis see all his plans and wishes seen fulfilled without any obstacle and with spontaneity, and that the just cause of Tibet may prevail on the basis of the sustenance and progress of the Tibetan democratic system.

The Tibetan Parliament in Exile

2 September 2022

*\* In case of any discrepancy between this English translation and its Tibetan original, the latter should be considered authoritative and final for all purposes.*