

14th Session of UN Forum on Minority

Oral Statement by the International Campaign for Tibet - Vincent Metten

Session/Panel 1: Root causes of conflicts involving minorities

Ladies and Gentlemen,

For more than seven decades now, the civil and political rights of Tibetans, as well as their social, economic and cultural rights have been violated. The control and surveillance of Tibetans have expanded under President Xi Jinping. The Tibetan culture is seen as a threat to the Chinese Communist Party, which in turn implements wide-ranging policies to sinicize Tibetan culture. We are convinced that such policies are not only in breach of international human rights standards, but also exacerbate existing tensions and create new conflict.

As Tibetans do not resort to violence, the situation in Tibet remains a silent crisis as illustrated by the self-immolations of more than 150 Tibetans since 2009, many of whom have called for a return of the Dalai Lama to Tibet.

Given the deep reverence of the exiled Dalai Lama in Tibet and the publicised plans by the Chinese Communist Party to appoint a successor to the Dalai Lama, we fear that Tibetans will certainly express their grievances through protests. Such protests would most probably be met with repression and force by the authorities, potentially leading to grave human rights violations and violent conflict.

In order to prevent such a conflict, we urge the Chinese leadership to resume the Sino-Tibetan dialogue. The newly elected head of the Central Tibetan Administration, Mr Penpa Tsering, has reaffirmed the willingness of the Tibetan side to resume this dialogue process. We consider this as a concrete step to conflict resolution, which, if taken

by the Chinese government, could have a tremendously positive impact on the entire region and beyond.

Secondly, we call on the Chinese government to ensure the right of Tibetan Buddhists to determine their religious leaders in accordance with their own religious traditions and practices. Policies of “sinicization” must be abolished, as they aim to undermine the cultural identity of the Tibetan people.

Finally, we support and advocate for the specific recommendation made by 50 Special Procedures for the creation of a special mechanism to monitor and report on the human rights situation in China, including in Tibet, Xinjiang, and Hong Kong. It is important that the Chinese government faces scrutiny for human rights violations, despite their efforts to set a norm of impunity.

Thank you for your attention

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