

THE DALAI LAMA: WHAT HE MEANS FOR TIBETANS TODAY

ROUNDTABLE

BEFORE THE

CONGRESSIONAL-EXECUTIVE COMMISSION ON CHINA

ONE HUNDRED TWELFTH CONGRESS

FIRST SESSION

JULY 13, 2011

Printed for the use of the Congressional-Executive Commission on China



Available via the World Wide Web: <http://www.cecc.gov>

U.S. GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE

70-941 PDF

WASHINGTON : 2012

For sale by the Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office
Internet: bookstore.gpo.gov Phone: toll free (866) 512-1800; DC area (202) 512-1800
Fax: (202) 512-2104 Mail: Stop IDCC, Washington, DC 20402-0001

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THE DALAI LAMA: WHAT HE MEANS FOR TIBETANS TODAY

WEDNESDAY, JULY 13, 2011

CONGRESSIONAL-EXECUTIVE
COMMISSION ON CHINA,
Washington, DC.

The roundtable was convened, pursuant to notice, at 9:52 a.m., in Room 418, Russell Senate Office Building, Hon. Sherrod Brown, Cochairman, presiding.

Also present: Representative Tim Walz and Under Secretary of State and Special Coordinator for Tibetan Issues Maria Otero.

OPENING STATEMENT OF HON. SHERROD BROWN, A U.S. SENATOR FROM OHIO; COCHAIRMAN, CONGRESSIONAL-EXECUTIVE COMMISSION ON CHINA

Senator BROWN. The Commission will come to order. Thank you for joining us. A special thanks to the witnesses and people in the audience. Special thanks to Congressman Tim Walz for joining us. He has been a member of this Commission—initially appointed to this Commission in 2007. Unfortunately, he is not a member now, but today we treat him as if he were one in terms of a statement and questions he would like to ask.

Unfortunately, there are still a number of Commission vacancies. I hope they will be filled soon. The House has not yet appointed Republican or Democratic members. And I know Congressman Walz is interested in rejoining this Commission. I am hopeful that he will and I am hopeful that the vacancies, both by Senate Republicans and by House members in both parties, will move forward.

Today's roundtable, the second one in a couple of weeks, is on the Dalai Lama, what he means for Tibetans today. In many ways, this roundtable can mean what he means for all of us who care about basic human rights for everyone.

Thousands of people gathered in Washington this past week to hear His Holiness the Dalai Lama, perform a sacred ritual and share his teachings on world peace. The world knows His Holiness as a Nobel Peace Prize winner, a symbol of compassion, a guardian of the Tibetan people.

Since the 1950s, he has made peaceful overtures to the Chinese Government. As a result, as we know, he was forced into exile into the Indian Himalayas.

The President met with the Dalai Lama last time and I hope he will meet with him again this time. For decades, the Dalai Lama led Tibet's peaceful campaign for legitimate Tibetan political and cultural rights through prayer and speech, traveling across the

world, even as foreign governments worried about Chinese reprisal for welcoming their so-called “separatist.”

But in recent months, he has reduced his political role so he can focus on spiritual matters. Regardless of his personal role, His Holiness the Dalai Lama, remains the best hope for restoring stability to Tibet and guaranteeing the genuine autonomy that is the right of Tibetans, and the genuine autonomy that is the right of other ethnic minority groups in China.

Tibetans in China continue to suffer from human rights abuses and restrictions on their constitutional and universal rights, to their freedom of religion, expression, and association. These abuses are deliberate acts of the Chinese state.

The attack on Tibetan language, on Tibetan culture, on religion, and its rich history is intentional and political. It is harsh and it is brutal. Just as they have done with the Uyghur people, the Chinese Government has attacked every aspect of life and culture of Tibetans. And just as they have done with the leading critics of government policies, like Rebiya Kadeer, the government has done everything it can to discredit and subvert the Dalai Lama.

Last month’s Commission roundtable heard from Chinese legal experts who discussed how the Communist Chinese Government sees lawyers as a threat to the stability of the regime. The roundtable briefly touched on how, in the United States and other democratic nations, lawyers are, in many ways, the foundation of the stability of the state.

In repressing defenders of rights, China suppresses a diversity of cultures. The Beijing government treats legitimate expression of cultural diversity as a threat to sovereignty.

In the United States, our very motto is “E. Pluribus Unum,” out of many, there is one—that our strength as one nation comes from the diversity of its people. Yet, respect and recognition of fundamental rights are essential for the preservation and celebration of China’s minority cultures.

The situation in Tibet remains abysmal since the Chinese Government’s violent crackdown on largely peaceful protests that began some three years ago. According to the Commission’s own political prisoner database, hundreds of political prisoners remain imprisoned.

Far from seeing the Dalai Lama as an indispensable negotiating partner, Chinese officials continue their attempts to discredit him. Negotiations have stalled, with the longest break since formal dialogue resumed in 2002.

At this critical moment, we have gathered an expert group of panelists to discuss what the Dalai Lama means to Tibetans and to our world; what impact might the Dalai Lama’s reduced political role have on negotiations; what role will the Dalai Lama play in Tibetan future; what is the future of Tibetan culture.

At this point, I will call on Congressman Walz. And then Mr. Tsering will go first and will take questions, because he has to leave, I understand. Congressman Walz, welcome.

[The prepared statement of Senator Brown appears in the appendix.]

**STATEMENT OF HON. TIM WALZ, A U.S. REPRESENTATIVE
FROM MINNESOTA**

Representative WALZ. Well, thank you, Senator Brown, for this opportunity to be here at this important roundtable discussion. More importantly, thank you for your leadership on this important topic. We are very grateful.

I would like to say a thank you, also, to this talented staff on the Commission, fabulous work that you do and very proud to be a part of it.

I had the opportunity in May, in Minneapolis, to meet with His Holiness as he was there with our Tibetan community and provided several days of very heartfelt outreach amongst the community there. It was interesting that that meeting came just several weeks after I had had the opportunity to travel with one of my colleagues, John Lewis, down to Birmingham, Alabama to commemorate the civil rights movement down in Birmingham.

And as we were there, it reminded me of the connection that we all have on human and civil rights, the letter from the Birmingham jail. An oppressed people cannot remain oppressed forever. Their yearning for freedom eventually manifests itself. And feeling that connection and watching that struggle that manifested itself here and those leaders who took us to a new level, who brought that sense of humanity to all of us.

So I think today in holding this hearing, the connection between Dr. King and His Holiness is very keen. It's very much in the forefront, and it's something that we keep in mind.

So I am hopeful that our Chinese friends understand that connection, understand why this is a very deeply seeded belief for many of us in this country, and see that connection and work that peaceful recognition so that the Tibetan people can live in peace and freedom, as we so much hoped for here in this country and continue to struggle daily for.

So I thank you all. I am very interested in listening to our experts and folks who understand this situation as we move forward.

And I thank you, Senator Brown, again, for the opportunity. I yield back.

Senator BROWN. Thank you, Congressman Walz.

Bhuchung Tsering is Vice President of the International Campaign for Tibet. He has traveled as a senior aide with the Dalai Lama's envoys to all of the rounds of formal dialogue with Communist Party officials since the dialogue began almost nine years ago.

We are grateful that Bhuchung has taken time out of his busy schedule to be here, and I understand he can be with us only a short time.

So I am asking you to speak first, then a couple of questions, if the other three panelists don't mind, and then we will hear from the other three, with questions.

So please proceed.

**STATEMENT OF BHUCHUNG K. TSERING, VICE PRESIDENT,
INTERNATIONAL CAMPAIGN FOR TIBET**

Mr. TSERING. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you, Congressman Walz, for coming here.

The CECC has taken a positive step by organizing this roundtable discussion at this point of time. This is yet another indication of the U.S. Congress' interest in and support for the Tibetan people, and I thank you for that.

I would like to touch on today's topic by looking at what the devolution of the Dalai Lama's political authority to the Tibetan elected leadership means to Tibet and to the Tibetan people.

First, I would like to mention why the Dalai Lama devolved his authority; second, I would like to touch on what the impact is for the Tibetan people; third, what the impact is to China and the Chinese people; and, last, what, if any, is the impact to the international community.

First of all, I think there are three reasons why the Dalai Lama chose to devolve his authority. First is his long-held belief in the democratic process and the principles of democracy, and, therefore, he has found the situation ripe to hand over authority to the directly elected leadership of the Tibetan people.

Second, by devolving his authority, His Holiness is also using his foresight in planning for the long-term future of the Tibetan struggle, in case it doesn't get resolved in the foreseeable future. This is because he has always believed very strongly that the issue of Tibet is not the issue of the Dalai Lama, but of the six million Tibetan people and he wants it to be seen as such in a very concrete way.

Third, His Holiness has personally believed that in this world, religion and politics should be separate, and he has long held the view that while politicians and those who rule countries should have religious principles, including moral ethics, et cetera, religion itself should not have any involvement in politics.

Therefore, His Holiness has, as recent as during his visit here, spoken publicly saying that while he tells others to separate religion from politics, his continuing to combine these two in his position as the political and religious leader is, in his word, hypocritical. Therefore, he has said that he has taken these steps.

So these are the three reasons why he has devolved his authority.

Now, in terms of its implications to the Tibetan people, first of all, there is this historical bond between the Dalai Lamas and the Tibetan people, right from the first Dalai Lama, and from the fifth Dalai Lama, who assumed both the temporal and the spiritual leadership of the Tibetan people. That historical bond will not undergo any changes, irrespective of the changes that have taken place recently. It will continue, as was most obviously shown during 2008 when there were demonstrations all across the Tibetan Plateau. One of the voices that we heard then was the Tibetan people's reference to His Holiness. That will continue even now and in the future.

But what the devolution of authority will impact is the immediate administration of the Tibetans in exile and the Tibetan movement in exile. The directly elected leadership of the Tibetan people,

particularly the new Kalon Tripa, the Chairman of the Tibetan cabinet, will have more responsibility to see how he interacts with the Tibetan people and the outside world.

So on the positive, this new Kalon Tripa will have more power and responsibilities, but, also, given that now he will be the last word in terms of the Tibetan political leadership, the challenge will be on him, on how he handles issues like the dialogue process with the Chinese leadership, as well as how he handles his role as the political leader, which is something new to the Tibetan people.

So he has to show his decisiveness. He has to see that he doesn't continue to pass on responsibilities to the Dalai Lama or he doesn't show that he has to depend on the Dalai Lama for his political responsibilities. That is something challenging.

Then in terms of challenge to the Chinese people, the Chinese say, and continue to hold, that the dialogue process is on the future of the Dalai Lama, with the personal representatives of the Dalai Lama. Now, since the Dalai Lama has transferred authorities to the political leadership, it is a challenge to them to see how China will handle this new situation.

I'm sorry. My time is up. Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Tsering appears in the appendix.]

Senator BROWN. Thank you very much, Bhuchung.

Welcome, Under Secretary of State and Special Coordinator for Tibetan Issues, Maria Otero, who is joining us. Bhuchung has to leave. So he is going first. Then you may make a statement after the conclusion of our questions with him, if that is okay with you.

Ms. OTERO. Certainly.

Senator BROWN. Bhuchung, talk to us about your thoughts about the initial the Chinese Communist Party's reaction to His Holiness separating himself from the spiritual and the political side of his mission, if you will, and give us some details about how that will impact negotiations with the Chinese Communists.

Mr. TSERING. Initially, when His Holiness announced his decision, the Chinese authorities were caught unprepared, I would say. Even now they are quite unprepared as to how to respond to his decision.

First, they thought that it was a gimmick and they, in fact, said that it was just a gimmick by His Holiness, and that nothing really would come out of it.

When he really implemented it in early this year—when the Tibetans went to the polls and, thereafter, the Parliament amended the Charter devolving authorities—the Chinese authorities did not really have anything to say, other than saying that they have never recognized the Tibetan government-in-exile and they will not do that, and that is what they say.

But I think the main reason why the Chinese are caught unprepared to respond in a positive manner is because to them, holding onto power is the end. The Dalai Lama's devolution of his authority, which is not given to him in this lifetime, but from Tibetan belief, from the first Dalai Lama—which goes back more than 600—I think around 600 years, is something that they cannot imagine, somebody giving up power voluntarily, happily, as His Holiness is.

Second, it thwarted the Chinese plans, because the Chinese had plans to use what they see as the next Dalai Lama for their political control of the Tibetan people. Now that this Dalai Lama says he is devolving authority, not of his own authority in this lifetime, but of all future Dalai Lamas, the Chinese do not really know what to do.

So this is something they are caught up with.

Senator BROWN. So, Bhuchung, do you expect the succeeding Dalai Lamas to sort of eschew a political role and focus only on the spiritual or do you expect each Dalai Lama to sort of start anew in that way?

Mr. TSERING. No. I think this Dalai Lama has been very categorical in saying that all roles of the Dalai Lama, the institution of the Dalai Lama, which we call Gaden Phodrang, will be separated from the politics of Tibet. Therefore, all future Dalai Lamas will not have any political role.

This present Dalai Lama has said that this doesn't mean that he will remain inactive. He says since the Tibetan people believe in him and have faith in him, he will continue to be there to guide them, but that he will also be there to promote his two commitments of promotion of human values and promotion of religious harmony.

So he will continue to be active on these fronts.

Senator BROWN. Bhuchung, thank you for whatever time you have left.

Congressman Walz?

Representative WALZ. Again, thank you for your work and your testimony.

How do you perceive—how would the Chinese Government react now to the political leadership in the Tibetan authority as they move forward and as there is democratic succession and things like that? Will they engage at all with those officials or will they continue to take the stand that this is a ruse and that those elected officials hold no real sway?

Mr. TSERING. Well, the current indication looks like the Chinese authorities either want the Tibetan side to believe that they do not want to deal with the elected leadership or they do not have the political courage to deal with the elected leadership.

But if they are really concerned about the long-term future of the Tibetan people, stability on the Tibetan Plateau, and about the rights of the Tibetan people that are enshrined in the Chinese Constitution, there is no reason why the Chinese Government should not be engaging with the elected Tibetan leadership. After all, both sides say that they are working for the welfare of the Tibetan people.

Today, the majority of the Tibetans live in Tibet and, therefore, the Chinese Government has the responsibility to see that the rights of the Tibetan people are respected, and I see the dialogue process as one way of addressing the rights of the Tibetan people.

Representative WALZ. And building somewhat on the Senator's question. Do you believe that the Tibetan people clearly see that politically elected leadership as speaking for and acting in as their representatives.

Mr. TSERING. They clearly do and, as I mentioned earlier, more recently, in 2008, Tibetans all over the Tibetan Plateau, not just in the Tibet Autonomous Region, but more so in areas outside of the Tibetan Autonomous Region, which are presently in Qinghai, Yunnan, and Sichuan Provinces. They have shown time and again, and as recent as last week or the week before, we have had people in these areas voicing their feelings for the Dalai Lama when his birthday was celebrated on July 6 and before that.

So people continue to have faith in the Dalai Lama as a free spokesman of Tibet.

Representative WALZ. Good. Thank you again for your testimony. I yield back, Senator.

Senator BROWN. Thank you, Congressman Walz.

Ms. Otero, thank you for joining us.

Ms. OTERO. Thank you very much.

Permit me to ask, in line with what we are talking about right now, whether you think that the Dalai Lama's decision to step down from his formal governmental role in the Central Tibetan Administration will change in any way prospects for progress with the Chinese Government toward movement on the dialogue—will prospects improve or not improve? How do you envision this affecting efforts to continue and maintain a dialogue with China?

Mr. TSERING. This new development is certainly a challenge, both to the Tibetan side and to the Chinese Government. Therefore, it depends on how, for example, the new Kalon Tripa, Dr. Lobsang Sangay, deals with the issue in terms of the dialogue process.

On the Chinese side, as I mentioned just now, whether they have the political courage to deal with the elected Tibetan leadership will be an indicator.

But I see no reason why the Chinese Government should not deal with the Tibetan leadership, because after all, the Central Tibetan Administration, which the Kalon Tripa is heading, has a position that they are working for a solution for Tibet within the framework of the Chinese Constitution and they support the Middle Way Approach that His Holiness has propagated. And since both sides do have common ground for resolving the issue, it only is a matter of the Chinese leadership having political courage to do so.

Ms. OTERO. Thank you.

Senator BROWN. Thank you, Ms. Otero.

Bhuchung, thank you very much for joining us. And if you need to leave, that is fine. Thank you very much for being here.

Mr. TSERING. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. May I say how glad we are that Under Secretary Otero has been working for the Tibetan people—I can say that, I think—within the State Department after her appointment as the Special Coordinator on Tibetan Issues, and I thank the Administration for its continued support for Tibet.

Senator BROWN. Thank you. Thank you for saying that.

Ms. Otero, would you like to make an opening statement now?

OPENING STATEMENT OF MARIA OTERO, UNDER SECRETARY FOR DEMOCRACY AND GLOBAL AFFAIRS, AND SPECIAL COORDINATOR FOR TIBETAN ISSUES, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE; MEMBER, CONGRESSIONAL-EXECUTIVE COMMISSION ON CHINA

Ms. OTERO. Yes. Thank you very much, Senator. And my thanks to all the Commission members, those that are here and not. I'm very glad that you have convened this roundtable and I'm very glad to be able to participate as a Commissioner.

I have had the honor, as Special Coordinator for Tibetan Issues, of meeting several times with the Dalai Lama as an internationally recognized religious leader. I have also had the opportunity to speak with Tibetan Buddhists in remote settlements in India and with new arrivals and long-staying Tibetan refugees in Nepal.

To young Tibetans, I have seen that the Dalai Lama is a positive example of how to make the world a better place and a source of wisdom and compassion in their personal lives.

The Dalai Lama's views are widely respected within Tibetan society and command the respect of a wide variety of Tibetans.

The U.S. Government believes that the Dalai Lama can be a constructive partner for China, particularly as it deals with the challenges of resolving continuing tensions in Tibetan areas. His consistent advocacy of nonviolence is an important factor in reaching an eventual lasting solution.

China's engagement with the Dalai Lama, or his representatives, to resolve problems facing Tibetans is in the interests of the Chinese Government and the Tibetan people.

We believe failure to address these problems and reexamine existing counterproductive policies will exacerbate already existing tensions that will, in turn, undermine China's efforts to maintain its current social and economic development.

The Administration's goals on Tibetan issues are twofold. First, to promote a substantive, results-oriented dialogue between the Chinese Government and the Dalai Lama or his representatives, and, second, to sustain Tibet's unique religious, linguistic, and cultural heritage.

The Administration, at all levels, from the President, Secretary, Assistant Secretaries, and myself, has urged the Chinese Government to engage in a dialogue with the representatives of the Dalai Lama.

We remind the Chinese Government that the vast majority of Tibetans advocate nonviolent solutions to Tibetan issues and genuine autonomy—not independence, not sovereignty—in order to preserve Tibet's unique culture, religion, and its fragile environment.

Regrettably, the Chinese Government has not engaged in a substantive dialogue with the Tibetans since January 2010.

I want to take this opportunity to briefly mention some of our concerns and ongoing activities. We are extremely concerned about the deteriorating human rights situation in China and, in particular, in the Tibet Autonomous Region and other ethnic Tibetan areas in neighboring provinces.

Recent regulations restricting Tibetan language education, strict controls over the practice of Tibetan Buddhism, and the arrests of

prominent nonpolitical Tibetans, and the heavy security presence reflects the difficult human rights situation there today.

The forcible removal of monks from Kirti Monastery is also a cause for deep concern.

Despite many challenges, we are committed to continuing our longstanding support for nongovernmental organizations that work in ethnic Tibetan areas and assist Tibetan refugees in South Asia. Both the State Department and the U.S. Agency for International Development [USAID] support cultural and linguistic preservation, sustainable development, and environmental preservation in Tibet and Tibetan majority areas, as well as in Tibetan refugee communities in other countries. We do this through numerous programs.

In addition, the State Department's Bureau of Population, Refugees and Migration continues its longstanding support for Tibetan refugees through ongoing support of nongovernment organizations, as well as the United Nations' High Commission on Refugees.

In fiscal 2010, \$3.5 million was provided to support reception services, education, health care, water, and sanitation for Tibetan refugees in South Asia, including new arrivals from China.

At the end of this month, the USAID's India Mission will issue an award for a new \$2 million, two-year program to support Tibetan settlements in India, Nepal, and Bhutan.

The new program will support the development of organic agriculture for selected Tibetan settlements in India, Nepal, and Bhutan and provide training to Tibetan youth remaining in the settlements.

USAID anticipates that the program will result in increased economic opportunities, which will encourage youth to remain in the settlements, strengthen community ties, and play a role in preserving their cultural and linguistic traditions. Strengthening the Tibetan communities and preserving their extraordinary cultural and religious traditions has been at the center of the Dalai Lama's work, as we know.

The Dalai Lama celebrated his 76th birthday this last week in Washington, joined by thousands of Tibetans. While he is still vigorous and healthy and full of life, it is my great hope that Chinese leaders will seize this opportunity to pursue a substantive dialogue, to resolve remaining differences, and provide the next generation of Tibetans and Chinese with peace, prosperity, and genuine stability.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Otero appears in the appendix.]

Senator BROWN. Thank you, Ms. Otero.

Ms. OTERO. Thank you.

Senator BROWN. And thank you for your service.

Bhuchung, thank you, again, very much for joining us. You certainly have our permission to leave, too. Thanks for the work you are doing and you are continuing to do.

We will hear from the other three members of the panel. I have a vote scheduled around 10:30, a little bit after that I can leave. I will turn the chair over to Ms. Otero at that point.

Congressman Walz, you can continue to join us, and thank you, again, for being here.

We will hear next from Arjia Rinpoche. He is a high-ranking Tibetan Lama of Mongolian descent, who spent 16 years in a Chinese

forced labor camp. Arjia Rinpoche fled China into exile in 1998. He is currently the Director of the Tibetan Mongolian Buddhist Cultural Center.

Thank you for your courage and for joining us.

Our next member of the panel that is here is Professor David Germano. Professor Germano teaches and researches Tibetan and Buddhist studies at the University of Virginia. He directs a library center at UVA to help foster scholarship and exchanges to further our understanding of Tibetan issues.

Professor Germano, thank you for joining us.

And our last panelist is Ms. Ngawang Sangdrol. Ms. Sangdrol spent 11 years as a political prisoner in Chinese prisons and had her sentence extended three times to a total of 20 years for behavior such as refusing to stand up when Communist Party officials entered her work area. She came to the United States in 2003 after her early release in 2002.

Ms. Sangdrol, thank you for your courage and for your outspokenness.

Behind Ms. Sangdrol is Phuntsog Nyidron, one of Ms. Sangdrol's former cellmates. She served more than 14 years in prison, the longest of any female Tibetan political prisoner since the 1980s.

If we could recognize you, also. Thank you for being here.

And I will start with the statement, please, by Arjia Rinpoche. Welcome.

STATEMENT OF ARJIA RINPOCHE, DIRECTOR, TIBETAN MONGOLIAN BUDDHIST CULTURAL CENTER

ARJIA RINPOCHE. Thank you so much, Chairman Brown, Ms. Otero, and Mr. Walz.

For Tibetans, His Holiness the Dalai Lama and the Panchen Lama are very important. They are regarded as the sun and moon. Talking about His Holiness the Dalai Lama's reincarnation, I have full confidence that all will go fine because if we recall our history, 2,500 years ago, Buddha Shakyamuni established Buddhism in India and that set into motion the future reincarnations. However, it is also true that at that time, the Communists were not there.

Then 600 years ago, the first reincarnation was born in the Tibetan Plateau. At that time, also, the Communists were not there.

According to history, this is our own tradition, our religious discussion. However, for the selection of the 10th Panchen Lama, the Chinese Government had to take control and did this by holding a golden urn ceremony. I, myself, was there.

On the one hand, they criticize and denounce the Buddhist tradition as feudalism. On the other hand, they used the authority of the Ming Chinese Emperor and the golden urn ceremony from another century and a different culture to backup their own selection.

However, that doesn't work for the Tibetans. All Tibetans do not recognize the Chinese selection. Today, the Dalai Lama is very healthy and he can make his own decisions for his reincarnation. And, also, just recently, he made a very important decision—Bhuchung mentioned that—now religion and politics are separate. That is really convenient and a good thing for our reincarnation issue.

So even though I think we need a lot of support from the whole world and especially from the U.S. Government, we hope that the Chinese Government makes careful deliberations and allows more freedom in the future. Then I think the Tibetan reincarnation of the Dalai Lama will be wonderful.

Thank you.

Senator BROWN. Thank you, Arjia Rinpoche.

Professor Germano?

STATEMENT OF DAVID GERMANO, PROFESSOR, DEPARTMENT OF RELIGIOUS STUDIES, UNIVERSITY OF VIRGINIA

Mr. GERMANO. His Holiness the Dalai Lama, is renowned amongst all Tibetans, as the 14th embodiment of a saint, who, from the fifth incarnation, headed the most important polity on the Tibetan Plateau since the ninth century disintegration of the Tibetan empire.

He is part of a line of incarnations accepted by Tibetans as being the most important Tibetans ever accepted as the emanation of Avalokitesvara, believed to be the fullest incarnation of compassion, the father, protector, and spiritual inspiration for the Tibetan people.

But if we were to stop there, we will have understood little, indeed, for over the past five decades, the Dalai Lama has come to embody far more in the collective Tibetan heart and mind than a mere Buddhist deity, as omniscient and salvific as that deity might be.

Tibetans find themselves at a crossroads as a people scattered across the vast Tibetan Plateau. Under pressure from the forces of dominant neighbors and globalization, they are unable to pursue their own agendas in spaces and times increasingly defined by external agents, domestically and internationally, limited in their ability to express their own distinctive worlds and constrained in agency on multiple fronts, economic, cultural, linguistic, political.

They seek an uncharted path forward toward the possibility of continued vitality as a people, with their own languages, their spaces, their times, their agencies, their values.

That one path involves two aspects; on the one hand, participation in regional and global economy, physical wellbeing, education, security, legal services, and other basic elements that should be provided by the government in an accountable, participatory, and transparent fashion; but, also, expression, representation, and agency on their own terms, a fully dimensional world where space, time, and values are inherently Tibetan, a world that protrudes out from the global and regional norms. They aspire to engage in their own self-expression and agency in a world that is irreducibly Tibetan in character and, yet, which engages the other worlds that surround them, Chinese, American, Indian.

The alternative to this path is the death of these local Tibetan worlds that are constituted and sustained on the basis of unique languages, ethics, geographies, temporalities, values, architectures, religions, and far more.

On a visit to the University of Virginia, it is said that after a pilgrimage to nearby Monticello, His Holiness expressed his strong sense of affinity with Thomas Jefferson, a political and intellectual

figure, like him, devoted to the transformative power of human knowledge, by saying that he felt like he himself must be Jefferson's contemporary reincarnation.

Thus, it may not be inappropriate if I conclude with a quote of Thomas Jefferson, "The important truths that knowledge is power, that knowledge is safety, that knowledge is happiness." The question that contemporary Tibetans might ask is, "Whose knowledge are we talking about, and, consequently, whose power, whose safety, and whose happiness?"

The Dalai Lama represents, in today's Tibet and for Tibetans living in China, in particular, specifically Tibetan knowledge, traditional and nontraditional, and the power of safety and happiness that such knowledge would bring for Tibetans in specifically Tibetan terms.

The promise that Tibetans could be empowered agents in today's world, fully participating in relevant processes, policies, and allocations to determine their wellbeing, but doing so with their own language, their own religion, their own ethics, their own social norms, their own livelihoods; in short, their own distinctive way of being in this world.

To abandon His Holiness, then, is to not only turn their back on a Buddhist deity understood to be watching them since the dawn of Tibetan time, but, also, to give up this aspiration to embody complex understanding and actions rooted in Tibetan languages, values, and being, but, also, efficacious and knowledgeable in today's increasingly unitary global stage and ushering in the transformative power, security, and happiness on Tibetan grounds to which Tibetans still dare to aspire.

Senator BROWN. Thank you, Professor Germano.

Ms. Sangdrol, welcome. Thank you for joining us.

STATEMENT OF NGAWANG SANGDROL, FORMER TIBETAN POLITICAL PRISONER

Ms. SANGDROL. I would like to first thank you very much for inviting me to speak here today. My name is Ngawang Sangdrol.

When I was 13 years old, I joined a peaceful demonstration. I shouted "free Tibet" and "long live His Holiness the Dalai Lama." Just because of these two slogans, they put me in jail and tortured me.

They sentenced me to 23 years and tortured me. But due to international pressure on China, especially the U.S. congressional support, I was finally released after 11 years.

Now, I live in a free country, but thousands of Tibetans are still suffering in those same prisons today.

His Holiness the Dalai Lama is very important for all Tibetans, especially important for those political prisoners.

Countless Tibetans have died under China's persecution, but those who are still alive, their greatest wish is to see His Holiness the Dalai Lama.

His Holiness the Dalai Lama is our refuge not only in this life, but also in future lives. In my own experiences as a political prisoner, when I was in solitary confinement for six months, the conditions were terrible. For the first 10 days in this small, dark cell,

I would be given only one meal a day of a tiny momo, nothing inside.

There were rats which terrified me, and it was so cold there. The bed was a thin piece of cloth and the blanket was very thin.

But every day, I imagined His Holiness the Dalai Lama, at the top of my head. This gave me peace of mind, although physical conditions were terrible. This was the only thing that gave me some strength to live.

I feel the Dalai Lama should be allowed to go home. Of course, that is not going to solve the whole problem, but this would be so powerful and important for the Tibetan people.

He is not only important for this generation, but for generations to come. China tried to extinguish Tibet, but it is because of the Dalai Lama that the Tibetans' identity and culture is still so strong today.

Finally, Tibet has many problems, but our biggest problem is the political situation. If the political problem is solved, all our other problems can be managed.

Therefore, please do everything you can to bring peace and freedom in Tibet.

I would like also to thank the CECC and Steven Marshall for getting the Tibetan political prisoners list. It is so important that we do not forget those people.

Thank you. Thank you so much.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Sangdrol appears in the appendix.]

Senator BROWN. Thank you, Ms. Sangdrol.

I will start with you and thank you for your very poignant testimony.

With you and others who served time in prison, either—visiting here or living here, living in the West, and talking to people the way you do, and with the Dalai Lama's fairly frequent visits to other countries and the visibility he has, would you tell us—do you think things are better than they were in 1992 when you first went to prison? Do you have more hope for improvement for the Tibetan people than you did 20 years ago?

INTERPRETER. I am so sorry. I was supposed to translate, but I was—

Senator BROWN. That's okay. I asked her because of her involvement and somebody speaking out, including His Holiness, in the West and to media and the place that the criticism that the Chinese Government has been subjected to by many of us here and others, is she more hopeful than—today, is the situation better today than it was in 1992 when you went to prison?

Ms. SANGDROL. Yes. It is very hopeful. And you know that the situation in Tibet is getting worse and worse day by day. But we, like His Holiness the Dalai Lama, what you are saying, and the congressional—and the Dalai Lama, we—how can I say—we express what China is doing is a bad thing is very helpful.

In the meantime, in Tibet, the situation has not become better, but if you are continuing to do something, it is very helpful.

As one example, my own experience, you know they actually made my sentence up to 23 years but because of your support, I

was finally released after 11 years. So that is the one example. It is very helpful. So please continue to support us.

Thank you.

Senator BROWN. Thank you. One more short question, Ms. Sangdrol. How have the views of Tibetans changed toward His Holiness in the last 20 years in terms of the hopefulness and the strength of character? How do people today in Tibet see His Holiness compared to 20 years ago?

Ms. SANGDROL. Within the last 20 years, the Tibetan people, 20 years ago, the Tibetan people—can I say in Tibetan, please. Sorry. [Mr. Germano translates.]

Mr. GERMANO [translating]. Twenty years ago, the Tibetan people believed His Holiness would do everything possible on behalf of their welfare and hopefully the future. And although that hoped for future hasn't come to pass, still, at the end of 20 years, they continue to have strong faith in him as their refuge and as their hope for doing whatever he can possibly do to help salvage a stable future for them.

Ms. SANGDROL. And so what we see now is how Tibetan people love His Holiness the Dalai Lama. Outside of Tibet, we celebrate His Holiness the Dalai Lama's birthday. But inside Tibet, all the Tibetan people wanted to celebrate His Holiness the Dalai Lama's birthday, but China does not allow us to do that.

But Tibetan people take their Wednesdays to celebrate His Holiness the Dalai Lama's birthday. You can see that burning Sang [incense] to celebrate His Holiness the Dalai Lama.

Senator BROWN. Thank you.

Mr. Germano, what can the international community and U.S. policymakers do to help preserve Tibetan culture?

Mr. GERMANO. Well, I think there are two things. One is what you were just talking about, which is continuing to raise the profile of challenges Tibetan communities face, which has been cited frequently today. Such a spotlight has a positive function and I believe Tibetans perceive it as positive.

But the other thing, I think, that policymakers and governments and nonprofits can do is help create a dense network of people who are engaged inside China, both Americans and Europeans, as well as Tibetans and Chinese who are living within China, and try to help support a dense network of engagement, of mutual understanding, of shared reciprocal partnerships on a variety of issues.

And I think these two things together really represent the greatest hope that we can offer back to Tibetans.

Senator BROWN. Thank you.

Arjia Rinpoche, if the Chinese Government seats their choice for the next Dalai Lama, how will senior Tibetan Buddhist teachers and leaders deal with that?

ARJIA RINPOCHE. Of course, this is a very difficult issue. For instance, regarding the reincarnation of the 10th Panchen Lama—in the beginning, the Chinese Government had some liberal officials. They really wanted to include the Dalai Lama's preference and ideas. However, because of the political upheaval that happened at that time, they changed everything.

So now the reincarnation of the Dalai Lama is the issue. Of course, the Chinese Government has already set up rules and has

planned for that. But His Holiness is still very healthy and very strong. So I guess that is just a good time. He can make some kind of right decision, just as he created a setback for the political selection.

Then, also, I am thinking about the dialogue between the Chinese Government and the Tibetans-in-exile. The Chinese Government has never given a chance to talk to them; they have never even recognized the exiled government as a government that is the representative of Tibetans.

So for that, my request is the U.S. Congress or Government should support us by pushing them to have dialogue. If they still don't give that chance, then the U.S. Government can talk to the exiled government. Then there will be pressure on the Chinese Government.

Thank you.

Senator BROWN. Thank you very much.

Congressman Walz?

Representative WALZ. Thank you, Senator. And thank you all for the testimony. It is incredibly helpful for us to do our job.

Professor Germano, I had a question. The obvious charismatic nature of this current Dalai Lama and the ability to capture the attention of the world, I think, through force of personality and force of belief, is there any concern that the lack of that will diminish the ability to make the case on behalf of the Tibetan people?

Are the cultural ties to the importance of the Dalai Lama so strong they will outweigh that personal charismatic nature?

Mr. GERMANO. You mean in terms of him—

Representative WALZ. In succession, when we get succession is what I am looking at. I am just wondering how much that personal force of will from this Dalai Lama and how that holds together—you understand the cultural binds better. Is that a concern?

Mr. GERMANO. Right. You mean the eventuality of him passing away.

Representative WALZ. Yes.

Mr. GERMANO. I think that is a major concern, because not only are we looking at the precise nature of his successor, but, also, the reality that from birth to the age of 18 or 19, he is not going to be really equipped to offer leadership, apart from the symbolic kind.

And so I think that is a great concern and with all these other pressures, not only what he emerges like at the age of 20 when he could take an adult leadership role, but, also, in terms of what transpires within those 20 years in such a volatile time, when so much will be changing and at stake.

So I think that this is a very pressing concern. Now, of course, the current Dalai Lama has remarkable qualities, but there is no question that the Tibetan people, as I was trying to talk about in my presentation, invest much more in him than simply the fact that he is such a remarkable individual. He has come to represent—

Representative WALZ. Right.

Mr. GERMANO [continuing].—something like a lightning rod, and that will persist.

Representative WALZ. Okay. And I don't know if you would take on this. I am, just like many of us, starting to come to see the biography and the background of Prime Minister Sangay. How will that work? I mean, being that this was—if I'm understanding this right, the process was the Diaspora was part of the election process and we have this young, Western, Harvard-educated leader now.

Maybe for all—maybe Arjia Rinpoche, if you have an intake on this on that side, how would that work? Have you thought that through yet? I know I'm asking you for somewhat of a subjective opinion here. Either one of you.

Mr. GERMANO. Well, I'm much more knowledgeable about Tibetan communities inside China than outside, but, of course, like everyone, I have followed the process.

I think the great challenge, which is clear for all of us is that when someone like Lobsang Sangay takes over this very prominent role, who is he responding to, because on the one hand, he has a constituency of Tibetans outside of China, particularly those who are in vulnerable situations in India and Nepal and Pakistan, as well as kind of the global Tibetan Diaspora. And on the other hand, he has a responsibility to the preponderance of Tibetans who actually live in China under extremely different circumstances. These are very different responsibilities and he has to somehow step up to both of them.

And with His Holiness, given his unique status in the world globally, as well as in Tibetan communities, I think that was a very different set of challenges. And so I think what we're going to be looking at most acutely over the coming years is the way he handles those two sides of the equation.

Representative WALZ. How did Tibetans inside Tibet familiarize themselves with Lobsang Sangay? How did they know about him? How did they know, because he is from India and—could you answer, Arjia Rinpoche, please?

ARJIA RINPOCHE. Yes. Through the Internet—that is the communication method that allows more and more people inside Tibet to learn about the exile situation, as well as about Lobsang Sangay.

But still I don't think a majority of Tibetans know the situation and how important it is. So I agree with his idea and I am thinking that the exiled Tibetans have two major missions to do. One is taking care of the exiled Tibetans in India, Nepal, and the United States and everywhere else. The other major mission is to have a dialogue with the Chinese Government.

Of course, that is the role for Lobsang Sangay. It is very challenging, I guess. But the exiled government still has to kind of follow His Holiness the Dalai Lama's guidance and maybe they will have a chance to discuss.

So the Dalai Lama himself also said he has already resigned from the political positions, but before the envoys or spokesmen ever meet, he still will want to discuss issues. Of course, the Chinese Government, I guess, accepts this.

Thank you.

Representative WALZ. Very good. Very helpful.

Ms. Sangdrol, again, I am so sorry for the plight that you have endured. I am also thankful that you have chosen to turn that situation into a positive for others and fight for freedom.

I just had a question. You mentioned on several of your answers the importance of this Commission and the political prisoners list.

I, too, share your belief that this is a very important place to get information out and to engage the American public and the world on this.

Does this Commission need to be—can it make an impact? We are not all fully seated yet. We are quite a few months into the new Congress and we are not joined yet.

Is it helpful if we get this done for you when this Commission is fully functioning?

Ms. SANGDROL. Yes. What you do is so important for us. It is very helpful and I can add into this in Tibetan.

INTERPRETER. She said yes. In the past, what you have done has had great benefit, as she talked about in her comments, and she really appreciates all the strong support that the Commission has shown the Tibetan people.

In particular, she would stress, again, the political circumstances are central. Tibetans face many different challenges, but unless their political constraints and problems are solved, nothing else will help. And so the real key is to take care of the political circumstances, to bring attention to that, to try to engage the Chinese to support His Holiness in his efforts to try to resolve that, and, if that can be resolved, everything else will kind of come along for the ride.

And so she really does believe that you can have an impact and she appreciates all the help you have done, and she would ask the Commission to do everything they can in the future and continue this good work.

Representative WALZ. Well, thank you for that.

Thank you, Senator. I yield back.

Senator BROWN. Thank you, Congressman Walz. I have been called to a vote. Secretary Otero will proceed with her questions and will chair the rest of the roundtable.

Secretary Otero, thank you.

Ms. OTERO [presiding]. Thank you, Senator. Thank you Congressman.

Let me just ask some questions—starting with Professor Germano.

In your presentation, you talked about the many ramifications of the situation that you described, but particularly, you spoke about the issue of Tibetan culture.

I wonder if you could speak about just how great is the current threat to Tibetan culture, to Tibetan identity, in both China and the world. To what degree are all those cultural underpinnings that are part of Tibet and part of certainly what the Dalai Lama refers to so often, how are they under threat? I would like to hear more from you on that.

Mr. GERMANO. Sure. My own background is really in Tibetan religion. I spent many years in Tibetan monasteries and so forth. But what always concerns me is that when people are so focused on Tibetan monasteries, monks, and so forth, that they don't perceive the real plight of the Tibetan people, which is in the broader, cultural arena.

The first thing, of course, is language. Tibetan language is one of the most important languages in the history of the world. Now, if you look at the number of speakers—5 or 6 million speakers—it seems very minimal. But when you look at other measures of linguistic weight, such as the heritage of classics of world civilization that are only in the Tibetan language, the number of journals, periodicals, Web sites, and so forth, that are created in an ongoing fashion in the Tibetan language, we can see that it belongs to one of the top tiers of languages around the world.

And this vital language is under severe pressure on all fronts, both inside China, as well as outside China. Inside China, of course, it's the Chinese language. Outside China, it's Hindi, Nepali, the English language, and so forth.

Keep in mind that Tibetan is a family of many different languages that are as divergent as French and Portuguese and Spanish from each other, and yet we all call all of them a single language, the Tibetan language. And so it is not just about preserving that kind of common standard that is beginning to emerge across the plateau, but also preserving all those specific Tibetan languages in Amdo and Kham and elsewhere that are particular to people's identity and wellbeing and so forth.

So we must focus on the problem language, especially Tibetan language as a medium of education. If people can't use language within governmental processes, commercial processes, and so forth within the broader social arena, then they are not going to want their children to go through an educational process that is based upon Tibetan.

If the Tibetan immersive educational process isn't of high quality, again, they are not going to want it. Yet education is very crucial for the preservation of Tibetan language, and Tibetan language is crucial for Tibetan culture on kind of multiple fronts.

Also, when we look at issues of culture, we have different livelihoods—agrarian, nomadic, urban. Tibetans traditionally are mostly rural communities, agrarian and nomadic in character. And so we want those communities, to the degree that they want to continue traditional patterns, to be able to do so rather than to be pressured by external forces to shift those livelihoods. So I think that is another challenge.

A third challenge is so much of Tibetan culture is local in character. It is specific to locality. For example, in Lhasa, prior to 1959, people could identify what block you came from based upon your speech patterns. People can tell what village you come from, even today, in much of Tibet.

So the cultural patterns—linguistic, religious, clothing, architecture, and so forth—are very local in character and a lot of that knowledge of people's history and identity and kind of values is embedded in oral traditions.

I think one of the kind of threats now is with the global valorization of written traditions, and then, in particular, written traditions in Chinese or Hindi or English and so forth, that all this distinctive Tibetan identity bound up with the oral information, their old knowledge, memories, their ways of doing things, artists and crafts and so forth, is under great threat.

So that's just kind of some general background issues.

Ms. OTERO. Thank you. Thank you, Professor.

Arjia Rinpoche, one of the areas that you have addressed as certainly one of the most important freedoms that all human beings should have, religious freedom—to be able to worship as one wishes, and that clearly applies across the globe—I wonder if you would have any recommendations, especially to U.S. policymakers, on how we may support religious freedom in Tibet, again, in the context of religious freedom as a right that should be available to everyone.

ARJIA RINPOCHE. Yes. That is a very important and complicated situation there. If you go to a Tibetan region, then you will see lots of monasteries open and lots of monks practicing and saying prayers or wherever.

But, actually, the inside and the outside are very different. They have a saying in Chinese. They say: “Tighten inside, but loosen outside.” So that means if you are a tourist or somebody from the outside, you can’t tell what is inside. It looks like they have lots of freedom there, especially compared to the time of the Cultural Revolution, et cetera. Of course, there is a look of freedom. But inside it is very tight. For instance, every monastery has a Religious Department controlling them. We have to report to the Religious Department so often about what’s happened and what’s going to be.

Then if they give a permit, you can do what you have asked for. If they don’t give a permit, you can’t do it. For instance, foreigners visit the monasteries and pass to the monks the Dalai Lama’s pictures or whatever. But soon after they have received that item and after the tourists have left, then the secret agents will come and ask, “What is your relationship?” “What did this guy say,” and so on.

So that is why the inside policy is still very, very tight. Now, I’m in exile already 13 years. So when I hear that the situation is getting worse in the monasteries, my concern or recommendation is not really a clear one. But I guess if access to the media opened up so it can go there and freely report or find information from inside Tibet, it would be a very helpful thing.

Then, also, there has to be more dialogue with the government; it has to be more liberal, and the monasteries have to have more chances to communicate to other societies or other countries. Now, all of them are closed up. If they can establish some kind of communication, then the relationship maybe will be a little better and helpful.

Thank you.

Ms. OTERO. Thank you. Thank you very much.

And then let me just ask one question of Ms. Sangdrol. I am certainly very appreciative of your testimony. And as other members of the Commission have said, we certainly not only recognize the many trials that you endured as a prisoner, but, also, just your presence here demonstrates your continued courage and effort.

I would like to ask you—there are protesters in Tibet; they hope that their actions may improve things. Do you think that that is the case? Do you think that they will continue peaceful protests, or will they try other approaches, maybe even resort to violence at some point in order to be able to make a difference?

Ms. SANGDROL. I believe in the peaceful option for our struggle for truth. And, also, I think in Tibet so far, we always are doing peaceful actions, what you said now. And I and Tibetans inside Tibet, we still believe like that and we never—I know we are doing the peaceful demonstrations, but China is using the weapons to crack down but Tibetan people never give up.

However, China cracked down and tortured us, we never gave up, the struggle is continuing. And for the future, if China is not listening to our—how can I say—ignoring what Tibetan people's mind might be thinking, and I don't know what will happen.

But so far, we believe that peaceful is a very powerful way, because I believe truth has great—how do you say *drebu*—great result.

Ms. OTERO. Thank you. Thank you very much. Clearly, we will continue addressing these human rights issues.

Ms. SANGDROL. Thank you. We will never give up continuing to struggle for our freedom, and, also, we need your help. Please continue to support us.

Ms. OTERO. Thank you. Thank you. Any other questions?

[No response.]

Ms. OTERO. Well, I think we have concluded the questions. And so I want to thank everyone on the panel for your presentations and for your presence here and for addressing the questions of this Commission.

Thank you very much.

[Whereupon, at 10:58 a.m. the roundtable was adjourned.]

A P P E N D I X

PREPARED STATEMENTS

PREPARED STATEMENT OF BHUCHUNG K. TSERING

JULY 13, 2011

I would like to address this issue by looking at the impact of the recent devolution of the authority of the Dalai Lama to an elected Tibetan leadership on the future of Tibet.

To begin with, why did His Holiness divest himself of his authority? I see there are three main reasons.

First, this is part of his long held aspiration to democratize the Tibetan community and to develop a system of democratic governance in the Tibetan polity. His Holiness has said that since his childhood, he had developed an admiration for democratic values.

Secondly, through the system of rule by elected leadership, His Holiness is enabling the Tibetan struggle to sustain itself even if there is no resolution to the Tibetan issue in the foreseeable future. He believes that the issue to be addressed concerns the six million Tibetan people and not the person of the Dalai Lama.

Thirdly, His Holiness has said that it looked hypocritical for him to be combining spiritual and political authority in himself when he was calling others to separate religion and politics.

What are the implications of the Dalai Lama's decision to devolve authority? On the broader issue of the Dalai Lama's historical bond with the Tibetan people, particularly the majority of them who are in Tibet, I do not foresee any changes in the future. He will continue to be revered by the Tibetan people and also regarded by them as their "source of refuge for this life and the next."

The change is and will have an impact on the Tibetan political movement in exile. First of all, this will be a challenge to Dr. Lobsang Sangay, the newly elected Kalon Tripa, the Chairman of the Tibetan Cabinet, who will be assuming office in August. On the positive, this Kalon Tripa will be more powerful than anyone so far. But the changes also mean that the new Kalon Tripa will have to assume more responsibility, be more decisive and not to be seen pushing issues back into the Dalai Lama's hands. He will also have to mold himself to be the Tibetan political leader, separate from the Dalai Lama. Also the Tibetan administrative system in exile, including the various offices connected with the Dalai Lama, will have to undergo the necessary repositioning under such a development.

At the people level, the Tibetan people in exile will also have to undergo a paradigm shift in their thinking and adapt to this new reality. They will have to learn to see the elected leadership as their political leaders.

Some of the implications of the Dalai Lama's decision on the Chinese leadership's policy are:

It challenges the Chinese authorities' position on the dialogue process. To date, even though the nine rounds of talks between envoys of the Dalai Lama and the Chinese leadership have touched on issues connected with the rights of the Tibetan people, the official Chinese position is that the talks are not only with the private envoys of His Holiness the Dalai Lama and are about his return.

There is a situation where the directly elected leader of the Tibetan people take the helm of the direction of the movement, there will be more voices that are there which may not be there currently which will be having an impact on the future policies of the Tibetan administration if there is no solution during that time.

It thwarts China's plans for the future Dalai Lamas. Despite their position that the Dalai Lama should stay away from politics, the Chinese authorities have been putting a long-term plan into action with the intention of controlling the process of the reincarnation of the next Dalai Lama to serve their political ends. Accordingly they have formulated regulations saying that only the Communist Party can anoint the highest Tibetan religious leader (not understanding the obvious contradiction), or in recent days even commanding that the Dalai Lama should be reincarnated irrespective of what the present incarnation is saying. Therefore, this decision of the Dalai Lama to break away from the historical role of the institution has effectively thwarted any such Chinese plans.

It bursts the myth about the return of the "Old Society": One of the scare tactics that the Chinese authorities continue to use among Tibetans in Tibet to maintain control is to project the period during independent Tibet (referred to as the "old society" as opposed to life under China, which is the "new society") as horrendous, and to say that the Dalai Lama's aim is to restore the "old society." The Dalai Lama's

decision including the removal of the name of the government of Ganden Phodrang (that ruled Tibet) from the present Administration in exile takes away the opportunity for the Chinese to continue resorting to this myth.

There is one interesting impact that the Dalai Lama's devolution of his authority would have on his relationship with the governments throughout the world. Internationally, governments should now find it easier to have a simple, transparent and clear position towards the Dalai Lama than in the past. To date, quite a few governments have tried to overcome the perception of being seen as dealing with Dalai Lama the political leader by formally regarding him as a spiritual leader only. Now that the Dalai Lama has divested himself of his political position, unless politics kick in governments should find it easier to have a formal relationship with him as an eminent religious leader.

PREPARED STATEMENT OF NGAWANG SANGDROL

JULY 13, 2011

I would like to first thank you very much for inviting me to speak here today.

1. My name is Ngawang Sangdrol. When I was 13 years old I joined a peaceful demonstration. I shouted "free Tibet" and "long live the Dalai Lama." Just because of these two slogans, they put me in jail and tortured me. They sentenced me to 23 years but due to international pressure, especially US Congressional support, I was released after 11 years. Now I live in a free country. But thousands of Tibetans are still suffering in those same prisons today.

2. His Holiness the Dalai Lama is very important for all Tibetans, but especially important for those political prisoners. Countless Tibetans have died under China's persecution but those who are still alive, their greatest wish is to see His Holiness. His Holiness is our refuge not only in this life but also in future lives.

3. In my own experience as a political prisoner, when I was in solitary confinement for six months, the conditions were terrible. For the first ten days in this small dark cell I would be given only one meal a day of a tiny dumpling without any meat. There were rats, which terrified me, and it was so cold. The bed was a thin piece of cloth and the blanket was very thin. But every day I imagined His Holiness at the top of my head. This gave me peace of mind, although physical conditions were terrible. This was the only thing that gave me some strength to live.

4. I feel the Dalai Lama should be allowed to go home. Of course, that is not going to solve the whole problem. But this is something that would be so powerful and important for the Tibetan people. He is not only important for this generation, but for generations to come. China tried to extinguish Tibet. But it is because of the Dalai Lama that the Tibetan spirit and culture is still so strong today.

5. Finally, Tibet has many problems, but our biggest problem is the political situation. If the political problem is solved, all our other problems can be managed. Therefore, please do everything you can to bring peace and freedom in Tibet.

Thank you.

PREPARED STATEMENT OF HON. SHERROD BROWN, A U.S. SENATOR FROM OHIO;
COCHAIRMAN, CONGRESSIONAL-EXECUTIVE COMMISSION ON CHINA

JULY 13, 2011

There are a number of Commission vacancies and I hope that they will be filled soon.

In the meantime, I want to assure everyone who is interested in the Commission's work that it will continue and that the outstanding staff has continued its important mission.

Today's roundtable is on "The Dalai Lama: What He Means for Tibetans Today."

In many ways, this roundtable can mean what he means for all of us who care about basic human rights for everyone.

Thousands of people, including many Tibetans, gathered in Washington, DC this past week to hear His Holiness the Dalai Lama perform a sacred ritual and share his teachings on world peace.

The world knows His Holiness as a Nobel Peace Prize winner, a symbol of compassion, and guardian of the Tibetan people.

Since the 1950s, he has made peaceful overtures to the Chinese government. As a result he was forced into exile into the Indian Himalayans.

The president met with the Dalai Lama last time and I hope he will meet with him again this time.

For decades the Dalai Lama led Tibet's peaceful campaign for legitimate Tibetan political and cultural rights through prayer and speech, traveling across the world, even as foreign governments worried about Chinese reprisal for welcoming their so-called "separatist."

But in recent months he has reduced his political role so he can focus on spiritual matters.

Regardless of his role, His Holiness the Dalai Lama remains the best hope for restoring stability to Tibet and guaranteeing the genuine autonomy that is the right of Tibetans.

And the genuine autonomy that is the right of other ethnic minority groups in China.

Tibetans in China continue to suffer from human rights abuses and restrictions on their constitutional and universal rights to the freedom of religion, expression, and association.

These abuses are deliberate acts of the Chinese State.

The attack on Tibetan language, culture, religion, and rich history is intentional and political. It is harsh and brutal.

Just as they've done with the Uyghur people, the Chinese government has attacked every aspect of life and culture of Tibetans.

And just as they've done with leading critics of government policies like Rebiya Kadeer, the government has done everything it can to discredit and subvert the Dalai Lama.

Last month's Commission Roundtable heard from Chinese legal experts who discussed how the Communist Chinese government sees lawyers as a threat to stability to the regime.

The Roundtable briefly touched on how in the United States—and other democratic nations—lawyers are in many ways the foundation of stability of the state.

In repressing defenders of rights, China suppresses the diversity of cultures.

The Beijing government treats legitimate expression of cultural diversity as a threat to sovereignty. In the United States our very motto is "E Pluribus Unum", out of many there is one—that our strength as one nation comes from the diversity of its people.

Yet respect and recognition of fundamental rights is essential for the preservation and celebration of China's minority cultures.

The situation in Tibet remains abysmal since the Chinese government's violent crackdown on largely peaceful protests that began in March 2008.

According to the Commission's own Political Prisoner Database, hundreds of political prisoners remain imprisoned.

Far from seeing the Dalai Lama as an indispensable negotiating partner, Chinese officials continue their attempts to discredit him.

Negotiations between the two sides have stalled, with the longest break since formal dialogue resumed in 2002.

At this critical moment, we have gathered an expert group of panelists to discuss what the Dalai Lama means to Tibetans—and to our world.

PREPARED STATEMENT OF MARIA OTERO, UNDER SECRETARY FOR DEMOCRACY AND GLOBAL AFFAIRS AND SPECIAL COORDINATOR FOR TIBETAN ISSUES, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE; MEMBER, CONGRESSIONAL-EXECUTIVE COMMISSION ON CHINA

JULY 13, 2011

Thank you, Senator Brown, other Commission Members and staff for convening this roundtable. It's my pleasure to be able to participate today for the first time as a Commissioner and to make brief remarks on the Dalai Lama as the Special Coordinator for Tibetan Issues.

I have had the honor of meeting several times with the Dalai Lama as an internationally recognized religious leader and Nobel Laureate. I have also had an opportunity to speak with Tibetan Buddhists in remote settlements in India and with new arrivals and long staying Tibetan refugees in Nepal. I have learned that for many of them, the Dalai Lama is the earthly manifestation of the living Buddha. To young Tibetans, I have seen that the Dalai Lama is a positive example of how to make the world a better place, and is a source of wisdom and compassion in their personal lives.

The Dalai Lama's views are widely reflected within Tibetan society, and command the respect of the vast majority of Tibetans. The U.S. government believes that the Dalai Lama can be a constructive partner for China, particularly as it deals with the challenge of resolving continuing tensions in Tibetan areas. His consistent advo-

cacy of non-violence is an important factor in reaching an eventual lasting solution. China's engagement with the Dalai Lama, or his representatives, to resolve problems facing Tibetans is in the interests of the Chinese government and the Tibetan people. We believe failure to address these problems and reexamine existing, counterproductive policies will exacerbate already existing tensions that could, in turn, undermine China's efforts to maintain its current social and economic development.

The Administration's goals on Tibetan issues are twofold. First, it is to promote a substantive, results oriented dialogue between the Chinese Government and the Dalai Lama or his representatives. Second, it is to help sustain Tibet's unique religious, linguistic, and cultural heritages. The Administration at all levels—from the President, Secretary, Assistant Secretaries, to myself—has urged the Chinese Government to engage in a dialogue with the representatives of the Dalai Lama. We remind the Chinese government that the vast majority of Tibetans advocate non-violent solutions to Tibetan issues and genuine autonomy—not independence or sovereignty—in order to preserve Tibet's unique culture, religion and its fragile environment. Regrettably, the Chinese government has not engaged in a substantive dialogue with the Tibetans since January 2010.

I want to take this opportunity to briefly mention some of our concerns and ongoing activities. We are extremely concerned about the deteriorating human rights situation in China and in particular in the Tibet Autonomous Region and other ethnic Tibetan areas in neighboring provinces. Recent regulations restricting Tibetan language education, strict controls over the practice of Tibetan Buddhism, the arrests of prominent non-political Tibetans, and the heavy security presence reflect the difficult human rights situation there today. The forcible removal of monks from Kirti Monastery is also a cause for deep concern.

Despite many challenges, we are committed to continuing our long-standing support for non-governmental organizations that work in ethnic Tibetan areas and assist Tibetan refugees in South Asia.^μ Both the State Department and the U.S. Agency for International Development support cultural and linguistic preservation, sustainable development and environmental preservation in Tibet and Tibetan majority areas, as well as Tibetan refugee communities in other countries, through numerous programs.^μ In addition, the State Department's Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration continues its long-standing support for Tibetan refugees through ongoing support to non-governmental organizations as well as the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. In fiscal year 2010, \$3.5 million was provided to support reception services, education, healthcare, and water and sanitation for Tibetan refugees in South Asia, including new arrivals from China.

At the end of this month, the U.S. Agency for International Development's India Mission will issue an award for a new \$2 million, two-year program to support Tibetan settlements in India, Nepal, and Bhutan. The new program will support the development of organic agriculture for selected Tibetan settlements in India, Nepal, and Bhutan; and provide vocational training to Tibetan youth remaining in the settlements. USAID anticipates the program will result in increased economic opportunities which will encourage youth to remain in the settlements, strengthen community ties, and preserve cultural and linguistic traditions. Strengthening Tibetan communities and preserving their extraordinary cultural and religious traditions have been at the center of the Dalai Lama's work.

The Dalai Lama celebrated his 76th birthday last week in Washington, joined by thousands of Tibetans. While he is still vigorous and healthy, it is my great hope that Chinese leaders will seize this opportunity to pursue a substantive dialogue to resolve remaining differences and provide the next generation of Tibetans and Chinese with peace, prosperity, and genuine stability.

