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THE RIGHT OF PEOPLES TO SELF-DETERMINATION AND ITS  
APPLICATION TO PEOPLES UNDER COLONIAL OR ALIEN  
DOMINATION OR FOREIGN OCCUPATION

Letter dated 6 February 1990 from the Permanent Representative of the  
People's Republic of China to the United Nations Office at Geneva  
addressed to the Under-Secretary-General for Human Rights

In the debate of the forty-sixth session of the Commission on Human Rights under Item 9 "The right of peoples to self-determination and its application to peoples under colonial or alien domination or foreign occupation", a few NGO representatives referred to Tibet Autonomous Region of the People's Republic of China as a country and further demanded the "right to self-determination" for Tibet. I have the honour to transmit herewith a "Position Document on the Question of Tibet" in order to ensure a correct understanding of the facts.

I should be very grateful if you would arrange for the aforementioned document to be circulated as an official document of the Commission on Human Rights under Item 9: "The right of peoples to self-determination and its application to peoples under colonial or alien domination or foreign occupation".

(Signed) FAN GUOXIANG  
Ambassador  
Permanent Representative

Annex

POSITION DOCUMENT ON THE QUESTION OF TIBET

(February 1990)

1. The People's Republic of China is a united, multi-national country, jointly formed through long-time co-operation by 56 nationalities, including the Han, Tibetan, Mongolian, Man, Uygur and Hui nationalities. Since the thirteenth century A.D., Tibet has remained an inseparable part of the sacred territory of China. During the 700-odd years thereafter, the successive central Governments of China all exercised effective sovereign administration over Tibet. In the nearly four decades after the collapse of the Qing Dynasty in 1911 to the founding of the People's Republic, despite the fact that the imperialists launched armed invasions against Tibet and tried hard to foster followers in the upper stratum of society in an attempt to separate it from China and turn it into an "independent state" under foreign control, the fact that Tibet is a part of the Chinese territory remained unchanged. And not a single country in the world has ever recognized the so-called "independence of Tibet". At present, Tibet is an autonomous region, same as a province, in the People's Republic of China. The Tibetan people are a member of the big family of the Chinese nation. These facts are well-known to all countries in the world.

2. The Government of China has all along attached great importance to the ethnic issue, regarding as its basic policy in this area to ensure equality and solidarity among various nationalities, apply autonomy in regions inhabited by ethnic minorities and promote common development and prosperity of all nationalities. The equal democratic rights enjoyed by various ethnic groups in the political, economic, cultural and other fields have been clearly specified by the Constitution and the Law on Regional National Autonomy. This policy has been fully implemented in Tibet as well. Today, the Tibetan people, like people of other nationalities in China, enjoy every right for citizens as provided in the Chinese Constitution, including the right to freedom of religion and worship. In addition, they enjoy various privileges and freedoms provided in the Law on Regional National Autonomy, such as the establishment of autonomous bodies to exercise the right of autonomy; freedom of using and developing the Tibetan language; freedom of keeping their own customs and traditional culture, etc. All these incontestably demonstrate that it is a sheer fabrication with ulterior motives to allege that the Chinese Government has "deprived the Tibetans of their fundamental rights and freedoms".

3. Since the fall of 1987, several riots have occurred in Lhasa, the capital city of Tibet Autonomous Region. These riots are linked neither with the ethnic or religious matters, nor with the human rights issue, but are incidents deliberately provoked by a few separatists in an attempt to split China. These separatists not only wantonly advocated the so-called "independence of Tibet", but were unscrupulously engaged in such violent acts as beating, smashing, looting and burning. No sovereign State could tolerate these activities. The measures taken by the Chinese Government for the sake of protecting the personal safety and property from being violated are entirely justified and above criticism, which brooks no interference by any foreign Government, any international organization or any individual.

4. It is universally known that the right of the peoples to self-determination is an important concept developed since the Second World War. This concept has its specific connotation. In essence, it refers to the right of the oppressed nations and peoples to get rid of the imperialist and colonialist rule and strive for winning the people's liberation and national independence. In today's world, however, some people, in disregard of the history and reality that Tibet has been a part of China, blatantly manipulate the real meaning of the right of peoples to self-determination which is recognized by international law. They even go so far as to raise the issue of the so-called right of peoples to self-determination in Tibet in total defiance of the basic norms governing international relations. What they are up to is obviously trying to lay hands on the question of Tibet, interfere in China's internal affairs, and preach "the independence of Tibet". This can by no means be tolerated by the Chinese Government and the whole Chinese people including the people of Tibet. The human rights bodies of the United Nations should stop such manoeuvre which wilfully distorts the gist of the United Nations human rights instruments.

5. As is known to all, before the democratic reform took place in 1959, there had maintained in Tibet a comprehensive feudal serfdom, which was politically the theocratic dictatorship of the feudal lords, and economically the monopoly economy of the feudal lords based on manor system. At that time, the Tibetans even had no freedom of person, let alone human rights. Only after the abolition of the serf system and the introduction of democratic reform into the Tibetan society, did the people there begin to enjoy the civil rights and all the political, economic, social and cultural rights guaranteed by the Constitution of the People's Republic of China. And only then did they enjoy the basic human rights for the first time. Over the last decade, the central Government has adopted a series of special preferential policies and flexible measures for Tibet Autonomous Region, which have brought about the generally-acknowledged achievements and progress in the fields of economy, culture and education, etc. As far as human rights are concerned, the Chinese Government's success in abolishing the feudal serf system in Tibet and transforming that society from serfdom to people's democracy contributes most to the protection of fundamental human rights enjoyed by our Tibetan compatriots.

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