

**SCOTTISH CROSS PARTY GROUP ON TIBET (CPG)
MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON 14TH MARCH 2018 AT 6:00 PM**

Attendees:

Linda Fabiani MSP (Chair)
Ross Greer MSP
Martin Mills (Secretary)
Caroline Belch
Julia Bourkland
Stuart Cardno
Roger Eames
Linda Hendry
Vera MacDonald
Samantha May
Callum Pearce
Tom Worthington

Apologies:

David Lloyd Hudson (Treasurer)
Angus MacDonald MSP
Jackie Fordyce
Chonpel Tsering

1. Apologies

Chonpel Tsering sent his apologies, and will attend the next meeting of the CPG on May 9th.

Ross Greer MSP had to leave the meeting early due to other commitments, and gave his apologies.

2. Minutes

The minutes of the informal meeting held on 06/12/17 were approved.

The minutes of the AGM held on 04/10/17 were amended with the redaction of one name, and otherwise approved.

3. Matters arising

Linda Hendry had not been receiving emails from the CPG, and as such had been unable to send her apologies for AGM. It seems that the email link on the CPG's Scottish Parliament webpage may be going to a former secretary. Roger Eames added that he did not receive the reminder of the current meeting, as sent out by Martin Mills, but this may be a problem with the junk email filter. Linda Fabiani will check the CPG webpage and update the details there as required.

While there had been plans to hold some kind of protest or awareness-raising event in Edinburgh on 10th March, this did not happen.

The CPG recognised that Kagyu Samye Ling has recently celebrated their 50th anniversary, and resolved to send a letter of congratulations.

Martin Mills submitted the briefing paper *Mass Relocations and Resettlement on the Tibetan Plateau* as evidence to the Foreign Affairs Committee's inquiry on China and the international rules-based system. The committee noted that the paper can be published by the CPG as a briefing paper, but only after it has been considered as part of the inquiry and with the requirement that we make it clear that the paper was submitted as evidence.

It was suggested during the informal meeting of the CPG that the essay competition organised by Tashi might be included on the CPG webpage. Martin Mills has not yet heard anything from Tashi, so this has not happened.

ACTION POINT: Martin Mills will write a letter congratulating Kagyu Samye Ling on their 50th anniversary.

4. Discussion on childbirth in Tibet

There was a lively and fascinating discussion on the issue of childbirth among nomadic and semi-nomadic Tibetans in China's Sichuan province. It was noted that in some areas the mortality rate of women in childbirth can be as high as 40%, while infant mortality rates commonly stand around 10%. Dealing with this issue would require the training of local *amchi* (practitioners of Tibetan medicine), monks and community leaders in perinatal care, the resuscitation of new-born babies and the prevention of infectious diseases.

5. Update/presentation by the Secretary on the recent fire at the Jokhang Temple, Lhasa

Martin Mills gave an update on the fire that broke out in Lhasa on 17th February. Initial footage appeared to show a fire somewhere within or near the Lhasa Tsuglagkhang complex, and the Central Tibetan Administration (CTA) in Dharamsala reported at first that the fire had not affected the Jokhang temple. However, China's Xinhua News Agency later confirmed that the Jokhang itself was the centre of the blaze. The fire most probably started with an electrical fault in the temple's ventilation system, breaking out in the roof above the Jowo (the statue of the Shakyamuni Buddha). It appears that firefighters took 40 minutes to reach the site, despite earlier claims by Chinese authorities to UNESCO that the Tsuglagkhang had its own dedicated fire service.

While it is unclear how much of the temple was damaged by the fire, examination of photographs provided by Xinhua suggests that the Jowo shrine was itself affected: a pillar by the statue appears to be missing its decoration of semi-precious stones, and the wooden Newar carvings normally visible behind the statue are obscured by cloth hangings. This may indicate that the ornaments popped off in the heat of the blaze, and that the carvings were damaged or destroyed by the fire.

6. Next meeting

The next meeting of the CPG will be held on Wednesday, 9 May 2018.

7. AOCB

Roger Eames passed on a message from Jackie Fordyce, who has recently travelled to Dharamsala. Jackie met both the Dalai Lama and Sikyong Lobsang Sangay (president of the CTA), and asked Sangay if he would be willing to visit the Scottish Parliament. He has indicated that he would need to be invited — but, as noted in the minutes for the informal meeting of the CPG held on 06/12/17, an official invitation would not be possible. Martin Mills also pointed out that such a visit would require funding for travel and accommodation for both Sangay and his bodyguards.