

SCOTTISH CROSS PARTY GROUP ON TIBET (CPG)
MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON 12TH DECEMBER 2018 AT 6:00 PM

Attendees:

Linda Fabiani MSP (Chair)
Ross Greer MSP
Maureen Watt MSP
Dr Martin Mills (Secretary)
Roger Eames
Rosalind Eames
Noémie Farcy-Michel
Sonam Tsering Frasi
Linda Hendry
Dr Callum Pearce

Professor Mike Lean
David Lloyd Hudson
Sir Maxwell MacLeod of Fuinary
Val Robertson
Mio Shudo
Victor Spence

Apologies:

Jenny Campbell
Angus MacDonald MSP
Tavish Scott MSP

1. Apologies

Jenny Campbell, Angus MacDonald MSP and Tavish Scott MSP sent their apologies.

2. Minutes of the previous meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 24/10/18 were amended and approved.

3. Matters arising

The Secretary drew the CPG's attention to the recent publication of the briefing paper on *Mass Relocations and Resettlement on the Tibetan Plateau*. This is available online, via the CPG's WordPress site: <https://scotlandtibet.files.wordpress.com/2018/12/tibetan-relocations-briefing-paper-ratified.pdf>.

4. Introduction of Mr Sonam Frasi, Representative of the Office of Tibet

The CPG welcomed Sonam Tsering Frasi, the new Representative for the Office of Tibet, London. SF addressed the CPG, emphasising the success of the Dalai Lama's Middle Way Approach in keeping the Tibet issue open. SF discussed the 'new narrative' recently adopted by the Central Tibetan Administration (CTA) as a development of the Middle Way Approach, resetting the narrative to make it clear that Tibet was never a part of China. This, he explained, is in response to China's unwillingness to engage in discussions over the situation of Tibet.

SF noted five key areas of ongoing concern: the continued detention of Tibetan political prisoners by the Chinese authorities, including the 11th Panchen Lama; the continued imprisonment and mistreatment of Tibetans involved in the 2008 'third uprising' against Chinese rule; the effects of climate change on the Tibetan Plateau, something that has been exacerbated by Chinese actions; the self-immolations of Tibetans, which SF described as acts of desperation linked to calls for the Dalai Lama's return to Tibet; and the way that Western nations have largely given up on the Tibetan cause and considerations of human rights. He noted that China has successfully promoted its own narrative defining Tibet in Chinese terms, and that the recent Belt and Road Initiative is facilitating the Chinese takeover of the region.

SF finally thanked the CPG for its work, and suggested proposing a parliamentary motion in March 2019 to mark the 60th anniversary of the Dalai Lama's exile to India. He then took questions from attendees on US support for the Tibetan cause, recent Chinese border incursions in Bhutan and north-western India and the funding of the CTA through the Green Book taxation system.

Questions were raised by the group regarding what people in Scotland could do to help Tibetan refugees, and the possibility was raised of funding a residency for a Tibetan writer through the Royal Society of Edinburgh. SF welcomed the suggestion, and noted the value of scholarships and education sponsorship funded by foreign donors. Suggestions were proffered as to how to source the donation for a residency or scholarship, and it was agreed to raise the issue as a dedicated agenda item for the next meeting of the CPG.

5. Writers in Tibet

There was a fascinating discussion of political themes and imagery in modern Tibetan literature. This focused on two works in particular: the poem *Notes on Remembering the Wild Yak* ('brong dran pa'i zin tho) by Jangtse Dhonko, who writes under the pen-name of Nyen; and the novel *The Howling Red Wind* or *The Red Wind Scream* (rlung dmar 'ur 'ur) by Tsering Dondrup. For further information, the speaker directed interested parties to the book *Oral and Literary Continuities in Modern Tibetan Literature: The Inescapable Nation* by Lama Jabb (published by Lexington Books, 2015).

6. Tibet news report

A roundup of news about Tibet prepared by the Scottish Centre for Himalayan Research and covering the period October to December 2018 was circulated around the CPG.

7. Updates:

a. Exhibition and reception

The Secretary noted that 3-4 volunteers will be needed for the Tibet exhibition to be held in the Garden Lobby of the Parliament Building in March 2019 (4th-9th). Volunteers will need to fill in a security check form beforehand.

b. 10 March 2019

Organisation of the 10 March event was discussed, and the difficulties of attendance by Tibetan refugees was noted.

8. Next meeting

The next meeting of the CPG will be held on Wednesday, 27 February 2019.