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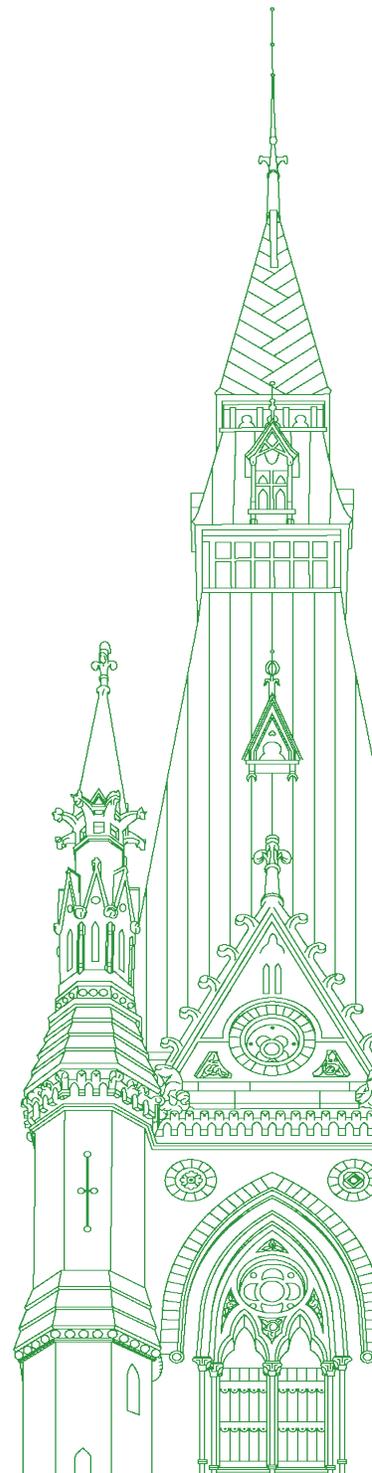
Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development

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Chair: Mr. Sven Spengemann

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• (1535)

[English]

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Marty Morantz (Charleswood—St. James—Assiniboia—Headingley, CPC)): Welcome to meeting number 18 of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development. Pursuant to the motion adopted on April 25, the committee is meeting with the delegation from the Central Tibetan Administration.

As always, interpretation is available through the globe icon at the bottom of your screen. For members participating in person, keep in mind the Board of International Economy's guidelines for mask use and health protocols.

I'd like to take this opportunity to remind all participants in this meeting that screenshots or taking photos of your screen is not permitted.

Before speaking, please wait until I recognize you by name. When speaking, please speak slowly and clearly. When you are not speaking, your mike should be on mute. As a reminder, all comments by members and witnesses should be addressed through the chair.

I would now like to welcome our witnesses and would like to thank them for taking the time to be here with us today.

At the table, we have Sikyong Penpa Tsering, president of the Central Tibetan Administration; the Venerable Tenzin Rabgyal, abbot of the Panchen Lama monastery; and Dr. Namgyal Choedup, representative of His Holiness the Dalai Lama at the Office of Tibet in Washington.

I'd like to recognize that we also have several other members of the delegation in our audience today, and I thank them as well.

Sikyong, I would like to turn the floor over to you for five minutes for your opening statement. Please proceed.

Mr. Penpa Tsering (Sikyong, Central Tibetan Administration): Thank you very much, honourable Chair and honourable members of the Standing Committee of Foreign Affairs.

Thank you very much for this opportunity to present the case of Panchen Rinpoche, and the status of Tibet and our analysis of the situation that concerns Tibet.

Before I hand over the floor to my colleague, Zeekgyab Rinpoche, who is the abbot of the Tashi Lhunpo Monastery, the traditional seat of the Panchen Lamas through many centuries, I would like to say that this is a representative case of many other Tibetans

who also suffer the same fate. Panchen Rinpoche's case is one of forced disappearance. Even 27 years after his disappearance or abduction by the Government of China, we still don't know whether he's alive or not. The Chinese government only says that he's hale and hearty, and he doesn't want to be disturbed. At least if there were some evidence that he is alive or not, that would soothing for the Tibetans.

We know that this is a political decision by the Chinese government, because this also concerns the reincarnation of His Holiness the Dalai Lama. There is reciprocal recognition of reincarnation between His Holiness the Dalai Lama and the Panchen Lamas.

I personally feel that China made a big mistake, a tactical mistake, by not recognizing Gedhun Choekyi Nyima, the young boy who was recognized by His Holiness the Dalai Lama. If China had done that, they would have Gedhun Choekyi Nyima under their control as of today, not the boy selected by the Chinese government and not recognized by the Tibetan people.

Even now, if you go to Lhasa, you will not see a picture of the Chinese-selected Panchen Lama. You will see only the picture of the 10th Panchen Lama. That is symbolic of Tibetans' non-recognition of China's selection of the Panchen Lama.

We know for a fact that, if he is alive, he has not been given any religious training to take on his traditional religious leadership next to His Holiness the Dalai Lama, thereby incapacitating him in every way. Even if he's alive and let free in the future, they've made sure that he will not be able to perform his religious duties, deprived of his traditional religious teachings.

Before I go over to other issues, I would request the chair to allow Zeekgyab Rinpoche, the abbot of Tashi Lhunpo Monastery, to present the case for Panchen Lama. After that, if the chair allows, I will touch on other issues that concern the issue of Tibet or the Sino-Tibetan conflict.

Chair, thank you again for the opportunity.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Marty Morantz): Please proceed, sir.

Mr. Tenzin Rabgyal (Abbot of the Tashi Lhunpo Monastery, Central Tibetan Administration): [Witness spoke in Tibetan, interpreted as follows:]

Tashi delek to everyone.

As the abbot of the Tashi Lhunpo Monastery, I would like to take this opportunity today to make some fervent appeals to the Canadian government on behalf of the millions of disciples of His Holiness the Panchen Lama in Canada, Tibet, the Himalayan regions, etc. I would also like to address this appeal to the followers of Tibetan Buddhism throughout the world, as well as the advocates of human rights, religious freedom and the rights of the child.

Currently, we see the Chinese government undertaking ruthless and restrictive policies in Tibet. The situation is worsening day by day. We see human rights being trampled, and religious freedom and the rights of the child being denied. Those Tibetans who disagree with the Chinese government are being arbitrarily detained, and many are being disappeared.

Today, I would like to explain this situation in Tibet in the context of the disappearance of an eminent spiritual leader, the 11th Panchen Lama, Gedhun Choekyi Nyima.

In 1989, the 10th Panchen Lama died suddenly and mysteriously while in the town of Shigatse in Tibet, where our main Tashi Lhunpo Monastery is located. Subsequently, as per Tibetan Buddhist convention, his Holiness the Dalai Lama, announced, on May 14, 1995, his recognition of Gedhun Choekyi Nyima from Nagchu in Tibet as the unmistakable reincarnation. This was also in accordance with the historical tradition of His Holiness the Dalai Lama and the Panchen Lama, referred to as the father and son, being involved with the recognition of each other as well as in their teacher-student relationship.

However, sadly, three days after the announcement, on May 17, 1995, the Chinese authorities detained the less than six years old Gedhun Choekyi Nyima, his parents and entourage. They have not been seen since then, and 27 years have passed.

To make matters worse, later in 1995, the Chinese government interfered in our religious process and forcefully appointed a child by the name of Gyaltzen Norbu as the fake 11th Panchen Lama. Since then, he has been used as a political tool by the Chinese government.

Therefore, with great concern, I would like to make the following five appeals to the Canadian Parliament and the administration.

• (1540)

First, I urge the Canadian Parliament to pass a motion urging the Canadian government to mandate the ambassador to China to meet with the 11th Panchen Lama and ascertain his whereabouts and well-being.

Second, I urge the Canadian government to honour the 11th Panchen Lama with an award recognizing him as a victim of enforced disappearance for 27 years, and as someone who has been denied his human rights, religious freedom, the rights of a child and other fundamental rights of movement, residency and action.

Third, in order to enable his early release and as a way to draw attention to his situation, I urge the Canadian Parliament to observe the birthday of the 11th Panchen Lama.

Fourth, I also appeal to the Canadian government to actively call for the release of Chadrel Rinpoche, a lama of the Tashi Lhunpo

Monastery, who was the head of the search committee for the 11th Panchen Lama, as well as many other Tibetan political prisoners.

On account of the dire situation inside Tibet, Tibetans have been resorting to acts of self-immolations, the latest being a 25-year-old Tibetan singer, Tsewang Norbu, on February 25, and an 81-year-old man, Taphun, on March 27, this year. At least 157 Tibetans have sacrificed their most-cherished lives in order to draw the attention of the international community, including the United Nations, to the critical situation in Tibet. Therefore, I urge the Canadian government to respond positively to their plea.

Fifth, the aspiration of the Tibetans in Tibet is for His Holiness the Dalai Lama to be able to return to Tibet at the earliest. Therefore, I urge the Canadian government to concede to taking concrete initiatives to support His Holiness the Dalai Lama and the Central Tibetan Administration to enable the resolution of Sino-Tibetan conflict through the mutually beneficial middle-way approach.

The Canadian people and government have been consistently supporting the Tibetan people, so I take this opportunity to express my sincere gratitude. The five-point appeal I have made today is in one way also connected to the well-being of the several million believers and connected to the democratic rights of individuals.

• (1545)

I have firm belief that the Canadian government will consider the reality of the Tibetan situation, particularly on the issue of Panchen Lama, and consider my appeals positively.

Finally, may peace prevail on earth. Thank you all very much.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Marty Morantz): Thank you very much for your profound opening submission.

We have a number of members of Parliament who will have questions for you now, so we're going to proceed.

First up is MP Garnett Genuis for six minutes.

Please proceed, sir.

Mr. Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, CPC): Thank you so much, Mr. Chair.

It's such an honour to be with you today. Thank you for joining us.

When I'd been a member of Parliament for only a few months, I had the opportunity to meet with His Holiness in Dharamshala. I didn't know very much about the Tibetan struggle at that time, but that meeting and subsequent conversations have been an inspiration to me, in particular the way in which Tibetan people who have been the victims of such extraordinary injustice respond with love, goodwill and a desire for peace and reconciliation. I find that personally inspirational, and it's I think a key feature of what has sustained such support for the Tibetan cause.

Be assured of my continuing support. We take note of the important points and suggestions made with respect to the Panchen Lama, and I assure you that I will continue to advocate for his release and for the Government of Canada to be actively engaged. We'll review the specific suggestions that you made.

I want to share that our party has advocated on a number of points that are of particular importance around religious freedom. One is that we've consistently advocated for the reopening of the office of religious freedom as a real centre of excellence and a focal point for advocating for religious freedom around the world. We see various ways in which the Chinese government is attacking the religious freedom of Tibetans and of other communities in China.

We also proposed in the last election to have a publicly published list of prisoners of conscience of particular concern as a way of highlighting some of these ongoing cases.

It's great to hear the Tibetan language being spoken. One key feature of the repression that we see is the attack on language and the fact that young people in Tibet now are forced into schools where the language of instruction is not their own language.

To start off my questions, I wonder if you could speak specifically to the issue of language and education in Tibet and concerns about the attacks on the Tibetan language.

• (1550)

Mr. Penpa Tsering: On the issue of language, I want to inform this committee that our language comes from India. It has nothing to do with Chinese language. The alphabet of Tibetan language is *ka kha ga nga*; in Hindi, it's *ka kha ga gha nga*. It's the same language that comes from India. Our religion also comes from India.

With regard to language, during Mao Zedong's time, they had to use Tibetan language. There was no other way, because Tibetans didn't speak the Chinese language. To spread propaganda, they used the Tibetan language. However, during the Cultural Revolution a lot of things were destroyed during the 10 years from 1966 to 1976. Even before that, the previous Panchen Lama, the 10th Panchen Lama, submitted a 70,000-character report to the Chinese government, as early as 1962, speaking about the destruction of the Tibetan language and religious heritage in Tibet after the Communist invasion of Tibet.

There was a little freedom when Deng Xiaoping, came into power and Hu Yaobang also visited Tibet. The former Panchen Rinpoche was also released. The Panchen Rinpoche was always a very outspoken personality, a leader of Tibetans, who did not fear persecution, even though he was under house arrest for many years and had been through very repressive actions by the Chinese government, including putting a hat on his head and being criticized by his own people, shaming him during those periods. However, after he was released, he played a very important role in getting language, religion and culture back on track in Tibet. Unfortunately, he died under very mysterious circumstances in 1989.

When Hu Jintao took over as party secretary, he imposed martial law and there was much more control in Tibet. When Hu Jintao came in as President of China, in those days he even named His Holiness as a wolf in monk's clothing. That was the kind of rhetoric that was being used during his time.

When Hu Jintao took over as the President of China, then he introduced dual language. That was still okay, because you have to learn other languages, but when Xi Jinping came into power, it's now one nation, one language, one culture.

Under this policy, the Chinese Community Party is striking at the very root of our identity, which is our language. Today the Chinese language has to be taught from the preschool Montessori level. The Tibetan language is reduced to just a study of the language. Even if you're proficient in the Tibetan language, it's very difficult to get jobs—

Mr. Garnett Genuis: I'm sorry, Sikyong. I need to jump in because of a constraint in my time.

Before my time wraps up, colleagues, there have been discussions—and I think this will be a matter of quick support—and we've been asked about our support for pushing for the resumption of dialogue. I would quickly like to seek the support of the committee for a motion that notice has been given for.

I move:

That the committee report to the House its call for the immediate resumption of Sino-Tibetan dialogue.

I'll yield my time after that.

• (1555)

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Marty Morantz): Thank you, Mr. Genuis, for your motion.

Is there any debate on the motion? Mr. Oliphant has his hand up.

Please proceed.

Hon. Robert Oliphant (Don Valley West, Lib.): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I want to thank Mr. Genuis for the motion. We are in agreement with the sentiment of the motion. It does build on something.... I'm looking at Mr. Bergeron as well, because it is very similar to a motion that we worked on a year and a half ago. He presented it in the House, attempting to get unanimous consent. It didn't have unanimous consent.

I think that, for some of the depth that was in the motion Mr. Bergeron put to the House, it may be helpful to add it to this motion. In that one, it called for "dialogue between representatives of the Tibetan people, His Holiness the Dalai Lama or his representatives, the Central Tibetan Administration and the government of the People's Republic of China with a view to enabling Tibet to exercise genuine autonomy within the framework of the Chinese constitution."

I think it was a fuller statement, and it involved a number of parties. Mr. Virani was also helpful in shaping that motion. If we could move towards that motion, I think it would be a better understanding, because a lot of people just won't know what the "middle way" is or what something is... I think that motion we worked on was maybe at the Canada-China committee, not the foreign affairs committee, if I'm correct.

I was going to do this later. I thought this would come up later in the meeting, so I haven't had time to write that out as an amendment, but you're kind of getting the point. I printed off the unanimous consent motion that Mr. Bergeron presented last year.

My other concern is that, because I believe we will all be in agreement with it, I would hope that we could take the motion and issue a press release or a media release on this as a statement from our committee that we would do it. I suggest that instead of presenting it to the House because I want to move this quickly, I want to get it done, and I don't want to waste time in the House later if it comes back for concurrence and those kinds of things. I would like to give this out as a statement that we all agree on and present unanimity on it, especially after the testimony we've heard today.

I could read out that motion, if it's helpful. I have a copy of it as well, if that's helpful for the clerk. It's sort of amending it to read this, which I could read again if people wanted to hear it.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Marty Morantz): Perhaps you can give the wording to the clerk, and then we can have it sent out.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: I have a point of order.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Marty Morantz): We have Mr. Genuis on a point of order.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: I just wonder if there would be unanimous consent to adjourn debate on this for the time being if people want to do some wordsmithing, and then we can come back to it.

Ms. Rachel Bendayan (Outremont, Lib.): That's not a point of order.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: I'm seeking unanimous consent, so it is a—

Ms. Rachel Bendayan: Okay. Well, that was going to be my intervention. I think that out of respect for the witnesses we should do this later.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Sure, yes.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Marty Morantz): I'll recognize Ms. Bendayan.

Ms. Rachel Bendayan: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I was wondering if we could proceed with the questions the witnesses came here to answer and do this debate later in the meeting.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Marty Morantz): Yes, I think we should circle back to the wording of the motion towards the end of the meeting.

We have MP Arif Virani next, for six minutes of questions.

Mr. Arif Virani (Parkdale—High Park, Lib.): Thank you, Chair.

In terms of clarifying my own position with respect to the Sino-Tibetan dialogue, I was in favour of it when it came before the Canada-China committee and I'm in favour of it at all times. It is something that is critical in terms of resuming, so let me be clear about that.

First of all, *thu-chi che, katrin che*.

Thank you for being here, Sikyong. Thank you, Rinpoche. It is very critical what you are talking about today, and we are very pleased to have you here at the committee providing this testimony.

On behalf of the thousands of Tibetan Canadians I represent, and on behalf of the thousands of Tibetan Canadians I've interacted with in this country, I want to talk to you first about the Panchen

Lama. I think it should be clear to everyone that the Panchen Lama is not the heir to the throne of the Dalai Lama, but they work in conjunction. One recognizes the other's incarnation.

When we say that the Chinese have taken control of the Panchen Lama and forced him to disappear and named a replacement, they're trying to take control of the succession. In the event of the passing of His Holiness, they would attempt to control the reincarnation. That, to me, strikes at the core of what we are talking about when we talk about religious freedom. That is clearly what is at issue here.

You know that the Canadian government has been long-standing in its position about the whereabouts of the Panchen Lama, going back to 1995. In 1998, a thousand birthday cards were delivered by Canadian children to the Panchen Lama on what would have been approximately his ninth birthday. Even as recently as 2016-17, we were making formal representations in this regard. We will continue to do that as parliamentarians. I will continue to do that on behalf of my constituents, and I think everyone here in this committee will continue to speak to that issue.

Can you tell me, with respect to the succession issue, what you foresee as the dangers with respect to not identifying and locating the Panchen Lama and ascertaining his whereabouts? If that is not done immediately, what is the danger that this presents?

If you could respond in about 60 seconds, please, I have a few other questions.

• (1600)

Mr. Penpa Tsering: Even though there is a tradition of Panchen Lamas recognizing the Dalai Lama and Dalai Lamas recognizing the Panchen Lamas, the ultimate issue that relates with reincarnation concerns the person who is going to be reincarnated. The person who is going to be reincarnated leaves signs and messages that define where or when—to which family—the person will be born. Irrespective of whether the Panchen Lama is there or not, there will be a system in place that will be decided by His Holiness the Dalai Lama.

Mr. Arif Virani: We've been talking about the Sino-Tibetan dialogue, and I know that dialogue at one time was quite robust. In terms of my own readings, there were about nine different rounds of meetings between 2002 and 2010, and then an abrupt stop. Since 2010, the positions have hardened, the dialogue has ceased and, under Premier Xi, we know that it has hardened even further.

Can you tell us why it is important to address the Sino-Tibetan dialogue and a little bit more about the middle way? Everything I hear about the middle way reminds me of the Canadian federation and what we give to provinces with control over certain jurisdictions, yet it is constantly portrayed in propaganda exercises by the Chinese Communist Party as some sort of independence revolutionary movement. I do not think it is that.

Sikyong, can you address the nature of the middle-way approach and what is meant to be achieved under the Sino-Tibetan dialogue?

Mr. Penpa Tsering: With the permission of the chair, I would like to take a little more time on this because this is one of the most important issues that concerns us in the Sino-Tibet conflict.

Since 2010, there has been no traction whatsoever from the Chinese side. They stopped dialogue. In hindsight we know for a fact the reason they originally wanted to resume or start a dialogue in 2002 was mainly so that Tibetans would not protest at the coming out party of China that was the 2008 Olympics. Therefore, the dialogue went on for some time, but there was no concrete result out of that. Since 2010, it has stopped.

Therefore, as you all know, I took over the responsibility of Sikyong on May 27 last year. There was the pandemic and I could not travel to other countries, except to Italy and Switzerland last November.

This time, before coming here, we had a series of round table meetings with the French in Europe to understand the current situation in Ukraine and post-Ukraine implications for the world and the new world order that might emerge to see how Europeans would look at China under those circumstances. It was quite educational for me.

Then I went on to have other meetings. This time I visited the United States on the invitation of Speaker Pelosi. We have had a series of meetings with Under Secretary Uzra Zeya, who was appointed by the Biden administration not even one year after into coming into office at the level of undersecretary. Under the Obama administration it was an undersecretary position, but it went down to assistant secretary during the Trump administration and now it has been elevated back to undersecretary. She will very soon be visiting Dharamshala, after my return there, and will meet with His Holiness and see how our administration works.

She also helped organize a round table meeting with ambassadors, where the Canadian deputy chief of mission was also present. The idea was to see how like-minded countries could come together on the resumption of dialogue. Then we also met with Kurt Campbell of the National Security Council, who is responsible for the Indo-Pacific. We had a series of meeting at the Congress, including a very long meeting with Speaker Pelosi and ranking members of both the House Foreign Affairs Committee and the Senate foreign relations committee.

We feel that there should be a change in the narrative, because the Chinese propaganda and narrative are so strong that they make people believe Tibet has been part of China since time immemorial. China has the manpower and the resources to do that. People don't study Tibetan history.

I would like to note this book, *Tibet Brief 20/20*, written by Michael van Walt van Praag. His last assignment was as professor at Stanford. He's an expert on international law and the history of Tibet. Unfortunately, most of the sources of information for the western world regarding the history of Asia, particularly east Asia, come from Chinese sources.

What he did in this book over the last 10 years, working with about 70 experts from inner Asia, not just China but Japan, Russia, Mongolia, Uighur and central Asian countries, was to conclude that whether it's to do with the Mongolian order...and when says "Mongolian order", our relations with China have been there from the seventh to ninth centuries. At that time, Tibet was a big empire, having conquered the Chinese capital, Xi'an, in those days up to

Samarkand in Uzbekistan today. Tibet was a big empire. Then we had 400 years of disintegration. During those periods we had relations with the Mongols from 1220 onwards. Even the—

• (1605)

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Marty Morantz): Mr. Tsering, I'm sorry to interrupt. Out of fairness, we have so many members who want to ask questions. Perhaps you could continue with your explanation in concert with the questions from all the members. I want to make sure that everybody has a chance to get in. It's been over eight-minute rounds. We usually have six-minute rounds.

I'm going to move on to our next member of Parliament, MP Stéphane Bergeron, for his question.

Thank you.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron (Montarville, BQ): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

[*English*]

You referred to the Tibetan language as the core of the Tibetan identity, so if you will allow me, I will speak in my own language, which is French. Please put on your earpiece in order to have simultaneous translation.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Chair, Mr. Tsering would like to finish answering Mr. Virani's question, if possible.

With your permission, I'd like him to give him the opportunity to do so.

[*English*]

Mr. Penpa Tsering: Thank you very much.

I won't go too much into the history. This book says that whether it's according to the Mongolian order or the Chinese order or the Manchu order or the Tibetan order, or as per international law today, Tibet has never been considered part of China.

Then we have another book written by a Chinese professor, Hon Shiang Lau, who is also now based in San Diego. He was a professor at the City University of Hong Kong. He studied the Manchu period. His study was based on the historical imperial records of the Manchu, which indicate that the Manchu never considered Tibet as part of China.

Therefore, the Chinese narrative to the international community is misleading, and now it is important that the countries recognize the historical independent status of Tibet. By that, I do not mean to say that we are going to change our position from the middle-way approach to independence, but when countries say that Tibet is part of the PRC, then you are going against international law. The one agreement that we have with China is the 1951 17-point agreement that was signed under duress after the invasion of Tibet in 1950, and that is illegal and unfair. On the other hand, when you say that Tibet is part of PRC, then you are telling the Chinese government that it can do whatever it wants with Tibet, inside Tibet, and we will not interfere in whatever it does.

On the other hand, countries also support negotiations between His Holiness the Dalai Lama's representative, or CTA leadership, with the Chinese government and we find this a contradiction, because there is no leverage for the middle-way approach. People don't realize that His Holiness has climbed down from independence to the middle-way approach, which is seeking autonomy for Tibet, for the Tibetan people to be able to preserve their language, culture, religion, way of life and their environment, which is also very important, not only for the Tibetans but also to the whole region.

Therefore, we urge governments to change their position if possible, and if it is not possible, to please not repeat this statement that Tibet is part of the PRC. When you do that, then you are kowtowing to the Chinese. You are listening to the command of the Chinese, and China respects only strength, not weakness. If countries want to be the pony, they'll ride you again and again and they will not respect you at all.

If you are able to stand up.... I request that you read this book, and the translation of the Chinese version will also be coming out soon. These are the latest books. We are not talking about Tibetans. His Holiness has always said that, when the Chinese put this precondition that His Holiness should say that Tibet is part of People's Republic of China, they also put the precondition that His Holiness should say Taiwan is part of China. His Holiness cannot represent the Taiwanese people. His Holiness gave the answer that I'm not a historian and let us leave history to historians. This is what historians are talking about—the history of Tibet.

But, His Holiness is very pragmatic. We look at the reality of the situation inside Tibet, and for us what is more important is the preservation of the very identity of the Tibetan people. Therefore, I urge governments, particularly the Canadian government, not to repeat the statement that Tibet is part of PRC, kowtowing to the Chinese government.

Thank you.

• (1610)

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Marty Morantz): Thanks.

Mr. Bergeron, you have just under two minutes left.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Tsering, a few moments ago, you mentioned Taiwan. I'd like to point out that we have the Taiwanese representative here in the room, in Ottawa.

Thank you for being with us, Mr. Chen.

Mr. Tsering, in August 2020, we welcomed your predecessor, Lobsang Sangay, to our committee. While Mr. Sangay was extremely critical of the People's Republic of China's actions towards Tibet and Hong Kong specifically, we were quite surprised by his optimistic remarks.

Building on discussions at the Special Committee on Canada-China Relations, I then went to the House and tabled the motion Mr. Oliphant just read to you. We felt some optimism on the

Tibetan side at that time, but now I get the impression that optimism has faded to some extent.

Can you tell us what might have changed since we met with Mr. Sangay in August 2020 to make the optimism we felt in his words seemingly fade away?

[*English*]

Mr. Penpa Tsering: At that time, we were not really sure about Xi Jinping asking for a third term. Now he's asking for a third term and, unlike his predecessors, he has been consolidating all of his powers. It's a very dangerous threat. He likes to be called the core leader, comparable to Mao Zedong.

His new policies of “one country, one language, one culture” is striking at the very identity of not just the Tibetans but also the Uighurs. Even Cantonese-speaking Chinese people have to face that.

We find that these are very dangerous threats—

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Marty Morantz): I'm so sorry to interrupt again, but I want to clarify. To be fair to all members, it is Ms. McPherson's round and I want to make sure that everyone has a chance to ask you and hear from you about the very important information you have.

I'm going to turn the floor over to Ms. McPherson. She can decide if she wants you to continue with this answer, or to ask a different question. Thank you.

You have six minutes, Ms. McPherson.

• (1615)

Ms. Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, NDP): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you all so much for being here today. It's a great honour. It's a pleasure to have all of the guests in the room with us today as well.

It would be rude of me not to ask you to, please, continue with your answer.

Mr. Penpa Tsering: These are the challenges we face with President Xi Jinping at the helm. We are not against multiculturalism and we are not against development, but when a majority community completely overwhelms a minority community, it leads to cultural genocide.

What is happening to the Uighurs is happening on an industrial scale. The present party secretary of the Uighurs was stationed in Tibet from 2011 to 2016. Tibet always used to be the testing ground for new policies. After testing these policies inside Tibet, he implemented them for the Uighurs. Therefore, the restrictions and the gridlock system.... When he was working in Tibet as the party secretary, the gridlock system that he introduced is so strong now that it's not possible for Tibetans to come out to protest. He controls the surveillance on the Tibetan people. It is so strong, and they use all kinds of modern technology to surveil monastic institutions and individuals.

You do not hear much about Tibetans being able to do anything except burn themselves, hoping against hope. One hundred and fifty-seven Tibetans have burned themselves, hoping against hope that the Chinese government will give some attention to their plight, or the international community will do something for them. Unfortunately, that is not forthcoming.

Under President Xi Jinping, things look very dire. Even hopes for negotiation in the immediate future seem to be remote.

Ms. Heather McPherson: Thank you very much.

You spoke about the Uighurs. I was one of the members of the subcommittee in Canada that undertook a study on the situation of the Uighurs and found that there were examples of genocide, and that it was a genocide being perpetuated.

In 2021, the Canadian government imposed sanctions. I was wondering whether or not you think those were effective. Do you think they effectively helped the situation there? What more could Canada do in that situation that may also be applicable to the Tibetan situation?

Mr. Penpa Tsering: Whether the sanctions are effective or not, I think depends on the level of sanctions, because China is huge and the economy is huge. One thing that you have power over is your own people and businesses. You can definitely tell your businesses not to invest in Tibet or Uighur, where they are using forced labour, or those kinds of things.

However, imposing other sanctions on China, I don't know how effective that is, because they will have many other avenues to avoid the implications of those sanctions. You can definitely tell your business people not to invest in Uighur or Tibet.

Ms. Heather McPherson: I think we can do much more in this country on that front. There are certain pieces of legislation that have come forward from different individual members. The government has been slow to bring forward that legislation, so I'm hopeful that individual members will bring forward legislation that will be much more effective on that front.

Here is my final question. You spoke a bit about having a discussion with others, with the global community, about the situation in Ukraine and the impacts of that on how the situation in Tibet is perceived. I'd love to hear more about that if I could.

Mr. Penpa Tsering: We are still trying to learn from each other how the Chinese perceive the evolving crisis in Ukraine and what implications, post-Ukraine, it will have on Russia and its relations with China, and also what role China will play now, because every one of us knows that the Chinese are now translating what is going on in Chinese social media, and Chinese social media is very controlled by the state.

From what the state allows the people to speak about and what they're not allowed to speak about, it's very clear that the Chinese government supports Russia. I have a feeling that they have an understanding between themselves. There's a lot of talk about the Chinese not being very happy with Russia invading Ukraine even before the Olympics were over. It seems they had an agreement, but the Chinese are also very afraid of secondary sanctions from the west. We have to understand that we are not the butter all the time. We have a Tibetan saying, referring to the butter and the stone. You

throw the stone at the butter, the butter melts. You throw the butter at the stone, the butter also loses.

With international trade in Canada, you export 25 billion dollars' worth of goods, but China imports more than 77 billion dollars' worth of goods. The trade imbalance is very stark. If there is a trade war, China will lose. It's not just one side. It is actually both ways.

● (1620)

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Marty Morantz): The second round will have five-minute rounds, and two-and-a-half-minute rounds.

MP Aboultaif, please proceed.

Mr. Ziad Aboultaif (Edmonton Manning, CPC): Good afternoon, and thank you for your visit today with your delegation.

Human rights violations are the number one issue being practised by China against the Tibet region and the people there, with all kinds of denials of fundamental rights, whether rights to freedom of expression, to beliefs, to practices or to freedom of movement. In this course of history, it seems like the stronger China gets, the more the violations increase against that specific region. That's definitely where the concern is, because that can escalate more, God forbid, to what we see now happening in Ukraine.

How do you see the future, moving forward, based on China getting stronger and getting more aggressive on the world stage, not just in the region but definitely in Tibet. You know, the geography is there. How do you see the future?

Mr. Penpa Tsering: I feel there is a lot of insecurity on the part of China. They are belligerent against India. They're keeping the hot spots going on in Taiwan and the South China Sea. I try to analyze the situation and understand the geopolitical and geostrategic issues as much as possible, but I see no other reason for them to do all this, apart from keeping the Communist Party alive.

If there is no Communist Party, there are no international relations. There is no international trade. We have been talking about China's violations for so many years, so many decades, but only now the international community is waking up to the reality. I think it's time for a recalibration of your policies to understand that China is not going to be a responsible power, however strong it becomes.

There is also this Achilles heel of China, where they feel very insecure because they spend more money on internal security than external security. That itself is symbolic of the deep distrust between the rulers and the ruled. When the Communist Party is threatened, it's going to definitely do something with India, Taiwan or the South China Sea to instill nationalism for the Communist Party to survive.

Mr. Ziad Aboultaif: Your diplomatic efforts to explain or to make the awareness better on the world stage among many countries is definitely noticeable. That's going to also require leadership, a continuity in leadership, on your side. That's not a concern.

Where do you see that golden time, that golden moment that's going to come? It will happen in the course of history that the opportunity for an improvement will come. It could be a historic improvement for the region.

Mr. Penpa Tsering: It's very difficult to predict when it's going to happen, but as Buddhists we believe in impermanence. As westerners say, "Change is the only constant." The question is, when is the change going to come? We are watching the situation, and whenever there's an opportunity we should be able to seize it, but then we need the support of the international community also, with all the like-minded countries coming together, not just one or two countries supporting it.

Mr. Ziad Aboultaif: Besides surveillance, which is also a big concern happening in the region—and inside China too—do you see a sentiment from some people inside the territory of China, on the opposite side of Tibet, that they can understand your concern as a region and that they may at some point meet you halfway to help you get a better deal than the one you have right now?

• (1625)

Mr. Penpa Tsering: Within the Chinese leadership also, we know that there are the hardliners and the soft-liners. I think former president Hu Jintao also is now concerned. We understand that he regrets that they appointed Xi Jinping as his successor, but it's too late in the day.

Let's see what happens in his third term, because there has to be a sharing of bread. Xi Jinping cannot eat all the bread by himself.

Mr. Ziad Aboultaif: With your neighbours to the south, can you explain to us the level of co-operation you're having there?

Mr. Penpa Tsering: In India...?

Mr. Ziad Aboultaif: Yes.

Mr. Penpa Tsering: India has been very kind to us. If not for India, we would not be where we are today.

We are very thankful to the government and the people of India for their support, and we have a very transparent relationship with India.

Mr. Ziad Aboultaif: Does that go for Pakistan too?

Mr. Penpa Tsering: Pakistan used to have better relations with the United States. When we sent our first CIA trainees to be trained in Saigon, Camp Peary and Colorado, we used to send Tibetans from Bangladesh, East Pakistan—

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Marty Morantz): I'm sorry. That's your time for this round.

Ms. Bendayan, you have the floor.

Ms. Rachel Bendayan: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Sikyong, thank you for attending our parliamentary committee today.

You referenced in earlier testimony the plight of and indeed the similarities to the Muslim Uighurs in China. I wonder if you could comment on the following information that I have read recently. A Reuters article from September 22, 2002, stated:

China is pushing growing numbers of Tibetan rural laborers off the land and into recently built military-style training centers where they are turned into factory workers, mirroring a program in the western Xinjiang region that rights groups have branded coercive labor.

The article states that "Beijing has set quotas for the mass transfer of rural laborers" and estimates that over a half a million people are involved in those transfers.

I would also like your comment on a recent report from December 2021 indicating that the Tibet Action Institute has looked at the "colonial boarding schools" run by China and is conservatively estimating that at least 800,000 Tibetan children are now housed in these state-run institutions and are being forcibly separated from their families with the goal, obviously—as you also mentioned earlier in your testimony—to deny them their culture, their religion, their language and, indeed, their families.

Taken together, I wonder if you could comment on these policies and what they mean to you and your people.

Mr. Penpa Tsering: Since I assumed office, we have been focusing a lot more on studying the situation inside Tibet, because we don't want to be misinforming the international community as to what is happening there. We're still in the process of developing the information management system and information gathering, processing and repackaging and doing it for the advocacy work.

The Tibet Action Institute's report is very concerning, because they're talking about 78% of Tibetan students being put in boarding schools. When you point that out to the Chinese, they always point fingers at the United States government for how they treated the natives or at the Canadian government for how they treated their first nations. The United States and Canada realize their mistakes and are making up for it. China knows it's wrong, but they still do it in Tibet, and that's very unfortunate.

Ms. Rachel Bendayan: Thank you, sir.

Just this week here in Canada, and indeed in many countries around the world, we observed World Press Freedom Day. It was on May 3. That day recognizes the importance of a free media and journalistic freedom. I wonder, Sikyong, if you could comment on the current state of press freedom in Tibet.

Mr. Penpa Tsering: According to Freedom House, Tibet is second in the countries with the least freedom, including access to information and the media. One big concern is that China always tells something to the international community and then something to their domestic audience. Unless there is freedom of information and access to journalists about what is happening there...

That's also the reason that things are not coming out of Tibet. Forget about journalists. It's not safe for even an ordinary Tibetan to be caught sending any information out of Tibet. If you receive information into Tibet and you don't redistribute it, you are still safe, but if you redistribute it, you land in serious problems.

The free flow of information should be the basis, I think, for freeing not just the Tibetan people but also the whole of China from the grip of Chinese propaganda.

• (1630)

Ms. Rachel Bendayan: Thank you.

Do you yourself fear facing any sanctions for coming here to speak to us and to others about what is going on in Tibet?

Mr. Penpa Tsering: They cannot do anything to me. They don't allow us to come into Tibet anyway. I don't know whether they know about my distant relatives or not. I haven't seen them for all my life. I've never been to Tibet. To fulfill my emotional needs, I try to go to the border areas to see Tibet through the fences. There is nothing the Chinese government can do to me unless they send somebody to kill me. There's nothing they can do to me. I don't fear any sanctions.

Ms. Rachel Bendayan: Would you like to return to Tibet one day, sir?

Mr. Penpa Tsering: Happily. That's what we are looking forward to. Unfortunately, it doesn't look very likely that it will be soon, but we are working towards that.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Marty Morantz): Thank you, Ms. Bendayan. That's five minutes.

Mr. Bergeron, you have two minutes and 30 seconds. Please proceed, sir.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Tsering and Venerable Tenzin Rabyal, I'd like to start by saying this is precisely the type of situation that keeps us up at night with one question on our minds. What can we do? We're wondering the same thing about the current situation in Ukraine.

It's also the question we asked ourselves when your predecessor appeared before the Special Committee on Canada-China Relations. You had one very specific request today: You want Canada to press the Chinese authorities for news about the Panchen Lama.

I imagine you've made similar requests to other governments.

Have the representations of various governments around the world brought you any news about the Panchen Lama?

[*English*]

Mr. Penpa Tsering: Including the United Nations, it has not yielded any results so far. I'm not sure whether High Commissioner Michelle Bachelet, when she visits China this time, will be pressing China for more information on the Panchen Lama. The Chinese government keeps saying that he is healthy, that he doesn't want to be disturbed and that he's being educated. He is already 33 years old now. Unless there is multilateral pressure from everybody, China is not going to respond positively. That has been the case for that many years.

I have a lot of skepticism when it comes to the United Nations. Our office has been there in Geneva for so many decades, but even the Secretary-General doesn't mention Tibet in statements. That's very unfortunate. I consider the United Nations one of the most undemocratic institutions in the world, next to maybe FIFA. We have hope, but the veto powers of these nations are too dangerous. It doesn't help the world community. They should be changing the structure of the United Nations.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Marty Morantz): Thank you, Mr. Bergeron.

Now we'll move on to Ms. McPherson for two and a half minutes.

Ms. Heather McPherson: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Again, thank you to our witnesses today.

You spoke about what's happening in Ukraine with the Russian Federation invading, the impacts on China and how China could potentially see a need to increase nationalism. There will be risks for Taiwan and for Tibet at that time.

I'd like you to explain that a little more for us, so we have that on the record. If you could, just touch upon what we've already seen with the loss of language and culture in Tibet and what the potential losses will be going forward.

● (1635)

Mr. Penpa Tsering: With the Ukraine situation now, we'll have to see how much China is trying to help, covertly or overtly, to support Russia. I strongly believe that there was some level of agreement between the Russians and the Chinese when it came to Ukraine. Otherwise, Russia alone would not have the capacity to take this on with the whole of Europe or NATO.

China has always supported countries that are, if we can call them, rogue nations, authoritative nations, countries that don't support human rights. They have always worked together to preserve their like-mindedness. Again, that is a very dangerous trend.

Let us see whether it's going to be an ideological war between the free world and the authoritarian regimes around the world. If the authoritarian regimes gain the upper hand, it's going to be very difficult for the world community in the years to come. It will be a new global order that will be dangerous, that does not respect any international law and that is going to set a very bad precedent for the whole world community.

Ms. Heather McPherson: Could you give us some of the further impacts that will have on Tibet?

Mr. Penpa Tsering: On further impacts on language and culture, the more that China becomes stronger and aligns with other authoritarian countries, this will lead to more and stronger laws. Even now, they are already reintegrating the Chinese constitution when it comes to language and culture. What is provided in the Chinese constitution and what is being implemented on the ground are two totally different things. That is what the Chinese always do. Communism has always been based on lies.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Marty Morantz): I'm sorry. I have to move to our next questioner.

Mr. Chong, you have the floor for five minutes.

Hon. Michael Chong (Wellington—Halton Hills, CPC): Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Thank you for appearing in front of our committee.

In March of last year, the Government of Canada announced sanctions against certain Chinese officials for their participation in gross and systemic human rights violations against the Uighur Muslim minority in the Xinjiang province in China, just north of Tibet.

I have two questions.

First, how do you view the effectiveness of these sanctions against these particular Chinese officials and entities? Second, what is the likelihood that applying similar sanctions against Chinese officials in the Tibet Autonomous Region would improve the human rights record of the PRC in Tibet?

Mr. Penpa Tsering: Again, one has to understand how Communist China functions. Communist China functions based on the authorities that come from the central level. If you have to sanction the leaders in Uighur, their actions are approved by the central leadership, so then you will have to start sanctioning the president himself. Only then will there be some impact. Otherwise, sanctioning officials at the lower level alone does not help, because they have the support of the central leadership. They don't mind.... Some people don't mind not going out of their country, so it doesn't help to just not grant them visas. China always uses visas as a very important tool to bar people from speaking out against Chinese human rights abuses and other issues.

If there have to be sanctions, the sanctions have to begin from the top level. That is how the Communist government functions.

Hon. Michael Chong: Just over a year ago, Canada's ambassador to China, Ambassador Dominic Barton, visited Lhasa from the 26th to the 30th of October in 2020. It was the first visit by a Canadian government official to Tibet since 2015.

Given the highly controlled nature of these organized trips by the PRC to Tibet, how do you view their effectiveness? Do you think they are trips that the Canadian government and other government officials from other democracies should participate in, or do you view them as a tool of propaganda?

• (1640)

Mr. Penpa Tsering: They are definitely a tool of propaganda. I don't know how much the ambassador was briefed about the situation inside Tibet before his visit, but I think you need a lot more briefing. These are all tours conducted by the government, which wants the ambassadors and visitors to see only those places, institutions and people that it wants them to see. It does not reflect the reality of the situation inside Tibet.

If Tibet has been turned into a socialist paradise, as they claim, why can't they allow not just ambassadors but also people from all walks of life to come into China? I would urge the Canadian Parliament to move an act similar to the United States'. Reciprocity is the foundation of diplomatic relations, and reciprocal access to Tibet or Uighur is very important, because any Chinese person can come to any part of Canada.

There's no restriction for any Chinese person to visit any part of Canada. However, if a Canadian goes to China, you need another permit to go into Tibet. There is no reciprocity in that. If the Chinese are not afraid of showing the socialist paradise they have turned Tibet into, why don't they allow people to come in and see it

for themselves? Why is it only select people, like ambassadors, who are taken to selected parts of the institutions and areas they want them to see?

I am sure the ambassador may not have been.... Of course, we are not denying that there is development in Tibet. There is development, but again, the development is for whom? That is a big question.

Hon. Michael Chong: Thank you for that answer.

The final question I have is.... In your opening remarks, you mentioned you would like to see the adoption of a motion by this committee and by the House of Commons regarding the resumption of the Sino-Tibetan dialogue. Can you elaborate on that?

Mr. Penpa Tsering: Some people questioned me about the relevance of the middle-way approach today, and I keep saying that it is more relevant than ever before. We've seen Ukraine, the destruction that has gone into it and the amount of money that went into the lives and properties.

The middle-way approach is based on non-violence as a means, and non-violence can be the only way in this 21st century to resolve conflicts. That is what His Holiness has been doing over so many decades. He even deters.... It's not like Tibetans cannot take up violence—

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Marty Morantz): I'm sorry to interrupt again.

Mr. Virani, you have the floor.

Mr. Arif Virani: Thank you very much.

Sikyong, I want to continue with a couple of points. One is just to preface the comment about Ambassador Barton's trip. He was definitely briefed by the Canada Tibet Committee. There are members of the Canada Tibet Committee here in the room. I think the more access we have, the better, to go in with eyes wide open into the region.

I want to go back to something that you started on—and I think Rabgyal Rinpoche also referenced it—about the immolations. One thing that I recollect from when Ambassador Barton came back and talked about Lhasa—and I want to raise this with you squarely—is that we've now had 157 people in the last 10 to 20 years who have immolated themselves.

Buddhism is a pacifist religion. It is really shocking that this is what it comes to for people to make a point. The ambassador mentioned things such as individuals who are security officials of the Chinese in Lhasa not just carrying guns but carrying fire extinguishers because they are so concerned about the potential for immolations.

Can you comment on the situation and how it has got to the stage that people are immolating so frequently? How does their desperation lead them to that situation?

Mr. Penpa Tsering: The two latest cases of self-immolation included a very young 25-year-old boy who was a singer and had a very promising career. He was born after the Cultural Revolution. He did not see culture. He did not witness culture. He only saw what the Chinese government is doing to Tibet and Tibetans today. That is evidence of the policies and programs that the Chinese government implements in Tibet, which do not help the Tibetans as a people and China as a nation.

There is a lot of frustration because you cannot voice your concerns. There is no freedom of thought. There is no freedom of speech. There is no freedom of movement. Your life is reduced to that of an animal. That is why they are forced to do this, even at 81 years old. You see a range of people committing self-immolation, hoping against hope that there will be some response from the Chinese or the international community.

• (1645)

Mr. Arif Virani: Can I raise another issue that you mentioned in your opening statement, which were the environmental concerns? I know we've heard about this in Parliament. We had received, in the 42nd Parliament, His Holiness the Karmapa, who also talks a lot about Tibet as "the water tower of Asia" and how on the Tibetan high mountain plateau, the ice melting feeds as many as 10 of Asia's major rivers, from the Mekong to the Ganges, etc.

Can you explain how critical the situation is with respect to the environmental concerns on the Tibetan high mountain plateau? I understand there have also been recent repercussions against Tibetan environmental activists, who have also spoken out about its importance. They have faced repercussions from the People's Republic of China. Could you address that, please?

Mr. Penpa Tsering: It's not only Tibet when it comes to the plateau of Tibet, which is 12,000 feet above sea level on average. I think the next big thing is going to be water security in the region. All the downstream countries are facing a lot of problems because China uses Tibet's water as a tap. It has built so many dams. On the Mekong alone, before it flows into the next country, there are some 32 dams. When they let it flow, it causes flooding. Then if it dries up, they will stop it. Water security is going to be a huge problem. Some say this could lead to the third world war. Who knows?

Today we are political refugees, but in a few decades to come there might be so many more environmental refugees. About two billion people, directly or indirectly, depend on Tibet's water, the water that originates from the Tibetan Plateau.

Mr. Arif Virani: In my last 40 seconds here, could you just talk about building alliances on this goal of ensuring there's more accountability with China? We have the Taiwanese trade representative here. That is terrific. We've talked about the Uighurs. We could talk about Tiananmen. We can talk about issues like Hong Kong democracy dissenters.

How can we as parliamentarians help you gather alliances to put more of a focus on China and the human rights abuses we are seeing?

Mr. Penpa Tsering: It's very important that administrations work with administrations and parliamentarians work with parliamentarians to build alliances on your front. Then we will work with the Uighurs and the Mongols and the Hong Kongers to find com-

mon ground to face common challenges. The issues are different. The backgrounds are different. Despite that, we face the same opponent.

Mr. Arif Virani: Congratulations on your recent election, *Sikyong*. Welcome to Canada on your first official visit.

Thu-chi che.

Mr. Penpa Tsering: Thank you.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Marty Morantz): Thank you.

Now for the third round, just to save time to deal with the motion, we're going to go to four- and two-minute rounds. First up is Mr. Genuis.

You have the floor for four minutes.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I've really appreciated hearing from the witnesses. I know we're all subject to these time constraints.

I wonder if you could speak further about the environmental issues. It's interesting to me that some people have some misperception about the Government of China's environmental performance. I wonder if you could just share a bit more about how that misperception can be countered, recognizing the real threats to the environment that we're seeing in Tibet and the implications for the region.

Mr. Penpa Tsering: We in our prayers also say that Tibet is the heavenly abode, the land surrounded by snow mountains. The westerners started calling Tibet "the roof of the world". Asians started calling Tibet "the water tower of Asia". Now the Chinese environmental scientists call Tibet the third pole, because Tibet has the largest number of glaciers and permafrost, which feed all these major rivers that flow into Pakistan, India, Bangladesh, Burma, Laos, Cambodia, Thailand, Vietnam and into China itself. In China 50% of the water is polluted. Tibet is the only place that has pristine water and a pristine, fragile environment.

It's very important for the whole region that Tibet's environmental issues are addressed and ecological issues are taken care of. There should be more collaboration between the Chinese environmental scientists and international environmental scientists to come out with detailed, analytical studies of the environmental situation. That will help the whole region.

• (1650)

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Thank you, *Sikyong*. It might be worthwhile, next time you're in Canada, to have you meet with the environment committee. I know these issues are very important. We can pursue them further.

One issue we've been highlighting is concerns about foreign state-backed interference in Canada and other countries around the world, and the impact this has on the Tibetan community, the Uighur community and, really, Canadians of all backgrounds, who are raising concerns about human rights and aggressive actions by the Chinese government and by other foreign states.

Could you share your perspective on efforts by the Chinese government to influence events beyond its borders and the concerns that we're hearing specifically from Tibetan Canadians about those influences being present here in Canada?

Mr. Penpa Tsering: Transnational repression has become a term that was not there earlier. China always talks about Tibet and the Uighurs being domestic issues, internal affairs, where they don't want the international community to interfere. On the other hand, now it has made the United Front Work very proactive in the international community. This organization used to be responsible for creating problems among nationalities within China, but now it has extended its arms beyond China through transnational repression.

You have witnessed it here, in the case of Chemi Lhamo. It uses the students and scholars associations, through the consulates and the embassies. We really urge the Canadian government to protect your own people, your own citizens, when they face such repression. Whenever we have cases, we will definitely be reporting these to your authorities.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Thank you.

I appreciate your mentioning the case of Chemi Lhamo. She was a graduate of the parliamentary internship program that we have here for Tibetan young people. I think many of us here participate in that program. It's great to see the contribution to Parliament and to so many other walks of life that are being made by Tibetan Canadians and all the things they go on to do. They advocate for the Tibetan cause, yes, but they also contribute to Canadian life in so many other ways.

Once again, I want to thank you for being here. I just recognize the contribution of the Tibetan Canadian community as well. Thanks.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Marty Morantz): Mr. McKay, you have the floor for four minutes.

Hon. John McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood, Lib.): Thank you, Chair.

It's good to see you again, Sikyong.

I have two questions. The first question has to do with the comment you just made about China's spending more money on its internal security than it spends on its external security. I think we have some feel for the expenditures on external security, which is a massive amount of money. I'd be curious as to how much money is actually getting spent on internal security and where it is getting spent.

Mr. Penpa Tsering: I don't have the exact numbers right now. I would be happy to submit a report on this.

Much of the money is spent on state security, which has to do with the functions of the security apparatus in Tibet, with the United Front Work, with intelligence, with the surveillance systems that are placed in all of the monasteries and on individuals. All of that adds up to more money being spent in Tibet than in other regions of China, because it considers Tibet as always a very sensitive area. These are the areas it spends money on.

Hon. John McKay: I think it was Henry Kissinger who said that nations only operate in their own interests. I would be curious to

know how you would explain to Canadians on the street why they should care about what goes on in Tibet. Why is it in Canada's interest to pay attention to what is happening in Tibet and, for that matter, other regions in and around China?

These places are quite foreign to most Canadians, and in some instances Canadians would be hard-pressed to find Tibet on a map. Why should they care about what is obviously an egregious situation and only getting worse? Why is it in Canada's interest? Why is it in Canadians' interests to care about Tibet?

• (1655)

Mr. Penpa Tsering: Only when problems come to your door do you realize that it's happening. Otherwise, you feel it's too far away, but we all know about the interdependent nature of how we exist. Anything that happens in a small part of the world affects the larger community, the international community. It's not like before. Things are changing.

Then with trade, as I mentioned before, I tried to check the volume of trade between Canada and China. It's 25% of your exports that go to China and 77% being imported. China makes money out of this. It uses all of this money, again to repress its own people or to not follow international rules.

I think what is more important are Canadian values. If Canadian values have to be promoted internationally, then Canada has to work towards that, not within Canada but in the whole international community, to promote the values that you cherish.

Hon. John McKay: I have an interest in forced labour. In fact, I tabled a bill on the floor of the House this week. I would be interested in your comments as to how much of the goods coming out of China, indeed out of Tibet, for that matter, are products of forced labour?

Mr. Penpa Tsering: We are doing a study on that. As soon as we've finished, we will be able to present it to you—in the near future.

Hon. John McKay: If you could, this committee would be very interested in that. I would be very interested in that.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Marty Morantz): Please submit that to the clerk when it's available.

Mr. Bergeron, you have the floor for two minutes.

[Translation]

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

On January 29, at a virtual meeting with several Tibetan associations in Canada, Dr. Namgyal Choedup, representative of the Central Tibetan Administration to North America, spoke to the importance of reaching out to Chinese students in Canada “as part of His Holiness Dalai Lama’s vision of building better understanding between the Chinese and Tibetan societies”.

Do you feel that Chinese students in Canada are aware of the situation in Tibet and that reaching out to them will truly build better understanding?

That question begs another.

Wouldn't those students risk coming under pressure from the authorities in the People's Republic of China?

[English]

Mr. Penpa Tsering: We always try to reach out to the Chinese. As His Holiness always says, we are not against the Chinese people. The Chinese are human beings just as we are. Every human being needs happiness. That's why during all of our meetings—in Washington, D.C., New York and, on Sunday, in Toronto—I'll be meeting with another 60 or 70 Chinese. We always try to reach out to the Chinese and explain to them the situation inside Tibet.

Unfortunately, the students who come from inside China to study here do not have too much freedom. They have the students and scholars associations, which are used by the consulates to come and protest when ever they they want them to. Otherwise, they will not be allowed to go back into China or they may face a lot of actions from the Chinese government. They always fear that.

You have a lot of Chinese in Canada who enjoy Canadian freedom and Canadian values. I think some politicians think that if they support Tibet, they will lose Chinese friendship or votes. That should not be the case. The Chinese who live in Canada enjoy freedom here, and they should be supporting the human values that Canada cherishes, rather than supporting the Chinese government. Not being able to go back to China is the weapon that China uses all the time—not granting visas.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Marty Morantz): Ms. McPherson, you have two minutes.

Ms. Heather McPherson: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Again, thank you for all of your testimony and information about the human rights abuses, the loss of culture, language and religion, and the attacks on the Tibetan people. It has all been very illuminating for me. Thank you.

Like my colleague Mr. McKay, I'm very eager to see the report on forced labour and child labour that you'll be providing to us. Thank you for that as well.

As the last member of Parliament asking questions today, I would like to give you one more opportunity to tell us how we can help. What can the Canadian Parliament do, what can members of Parliament do to help you? Could you take the last few minutes just to do that, please?

● (1700)

Mr. Penpa Tsering: To start with, if you can adopt a reciprocal access to Tibet act, then we can go from there on larger issues. Until such time that there is a political solution to the Sino-Tibetan conflict, one of my jobs is to keep my community compact together. We are witnessing a lot of demographic and social changes, and also the challenges we face because of that.

I have put forward a proposal to the international development department on humanitarian support for Tibetans in the exiled community, as well as the Tibetan community in Canada, for them to be able to learn their language and culture. We have five Tibetan com-

munities, in Toronto, Montreal, Ottawa, Calgary and Vancouver, B.C.

I will also make it a point to present to you this book later. I think it's aligned with the Wallenberg institution. This will be forwarded to you. There is also a suggestion on policy recommendations for course correct. If you go through that, I think we can save a little time on practical actions that Canadians can take.

Ms. Heather McPherson: Thank you very much.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Marty Morantz): I think we're going to move to the motion now. Let's continue debate on the motion.

The meeting is still on. The meeting is not adjourned. We'd like the witnesses to stay while we deal with the motion.

Are there any speakers to the motion?

Ms. Bendayan.

Ms. Rachel Bendayan: Mr. Chair, I'm not sure if that decision is debatable, but out of respect to the witnesses, while we engage in this discussion, it would be more appropriate for the witnesses to be released.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Marty Morantz): I was hoping everyone would get a picture with them before we're done. I don't really want them to leave. If they're willing to stay for a picture until we're done with the motion—

Ms. Rachel Bendayan: We should ask them what they prefer. I wouldn't mind standing up for a picture, and then coming back to debate.

Hon. Michael Chong: Mr. Chair, may I suggest that you suspend the meeting for five minutes to allow photos to be taken.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Marty Morantz): That's an excellent suggestion, Mr. Chong.

Hon. Michael Chong: We could then resume the meeting with the continuation of the debate on the motion.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Marty Morantz): We will suspend.

● (1700)

(Pause)

● (1705)

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Marty Morantz): We're now resuming the meeting, and we are live.

We'll continue debate on the motion. Who would like to start?

Hon. Robert Oliphant: Are we in camera now?

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Marty Morantz): No, this is public. We're resuming debate on the motion that Mr. Genuis tabled earlier, which is being amended and subamended.

Hon. Robert Oliphant: If I could then continue with the amendment, my understanding is that we have reached an agreement between the Conservatives and the Liberals, but I haven't had a chance to bring the Bloc Québécois and Heather.... Will she be back? I didn't want to begin without her.

There's a reworking of the motion, which the clerk has sent around, but I think we're going to rework it again.

It would read:

That this committee call for dialogue between representatives of the Tibetan people (his Holiness the Dalai Lama or his representatives and/or the Central Tibetan Administration)—

I remember we worked on that language a lot at CACN.

and the government of the People's Republic of China with a view to enabling Tibet to exercise genuine autonomy within the framework of the Chinese constitution; report this motion to the House, and request the government table a response to the report.

It would ask for a government response. The reason we're doing that, I will be very clear, is that we don't want to take time on a concurrence debate on this. We want to get this done here. We would ask for the government response, but with the hope that we in this room are all committed to work with our House leaders to make sure we do not get into a concurrence debate on this. We don't want to take House time.

It's not that Tibet's not an important issue. It's precisely the opposite. We don't want a political division on this. That would be our hope.

If we're agreed on the language that Mr. Bergeron presented, which we've all agreed to before, I hope that will work.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Marty Morantz): Excellent.

Before we vote, I was very moved by the testimony we had today. Certainly, it was very informative. There's lots to unpack and discuss here.

Ms. Bendayan.

Ms. Rachel Bendayan: I understand from my colleague Mr. Oliphant, who spent a long time on the Canada-China committee in the previous mandate, that an extensive study was done on this issue. I was not part of that committee, but I wonder what the analysts have as instructions—I apologize if this is already clear to everybody else—in terms of the testimony we heard today.

To your point, Mr. Chair, I agree with you. I just wonder what the analysts had intended to do with the testimony we heard today.

Mr. Chair, I did not realize there was a motion on the floor. If you would like to proceed to the vote.... I thought we had agreed unanimously.

• (1710)

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Marty Morantz): No. I made that interjection just before I was about to call the vote.

Ms. Rachel Bendayan: My apologies.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Marty Morantz): It's my fault for interjecting, but I just felt like I should say something before we get into the vote.

Why don't we vote on the motion? It sounds like everyone is on the same.... I'm sorry. We're voting on the amendment.

Do we need a recorded vote?

No.

(Amendment agreed to)

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Marty Morantz): Now we're on the main motion.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: Can we do a recorded vote on the motion, just to put it on the record?

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Marty Morantz): There is a call for a recorded vote on the main motion as amended.

(Motion as amended agreed to: yeas 10; nays 0)

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Marty Morantz): I'm not clear on the rules around here. I know it's not a tie, but am I allowed to be recorded in support as well?

An hon. member: By unanimous consent.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Marty Morantz): Do I have unanimous consent to be recorded in support? Thank you very much.

Now I think we're going to go to Ms. Bendayan's question.

[Translation]

Ms. Rachel Bendayan: I can repeat the question if you'd like.

I'd just like to know if the analysts intend to do anything in particular based on the testimony we heard today.

I'd also like to know, what options do you recommend to the committee?

[English]

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Marty Morantz): I'm told that the analysts would need direction from us as to what to produce. I don't know if a formal report could be done. We have the motion, and there is of course the transcript of the discussion in the committee Hansard. I'm not sure what else...unless anyone has anything in mind.

Go ahead, Mr. Aboultaif.

Mr. Ziad Aboultaif: Thank you, Chair.

This meeting was a public meeting, wasn't it?

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Marty Morantz): Yes.

Mr. Ziad Aboultaif: Okay. If it's a public meeting, I think we're going to be questioned over the content of it, and it would be nice if the committee put out a report on that for the record, because it's public information already.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Marty Morantz): Next is Mr. Bergeron.

[Translation]

Mr. Stéphane Bergeron: Mr. Chair, correct me if I'm wrong.

As I recall, when we had Mr. Sangay here, the motion that Mr. Oliphant initially read was tabled in the House as a report from this committee.

We could do exactly the same thing this time: Consider the motion we just passed a committee report and table it in the House of Commons. And, as the saying goes, Bob's your uncle.

[English]

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Marty Morantz): That has already been agreed to. I think what Ms. Bendayan and Mr. Aboultaif are asking is if there's anything in addition that the committee could produce regarding the testimony we've heard today.

Go ahead, Mr. Oliphant.

Hon. Robert Oliphant: I think a middle way may be that we take the highlights of the testimony, put it into a press release and couple it with the motion that we've made. It's not really a study report, because we didn't really do a study, but I think we have more than the motion. A couple of quotes we've heard that were important could be presented by the analysts into not a lengthy press release but into highlights: that we met with them, this is what they said and this is a motion that we passed.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Marty Morantz): Mr. Chong, you have the floor.

Hon. Michael Chong: Yes, I support what Mr. Oliphant has suggested.

We have already decided to report to the House on something regarding what came out of the testimony. I think the chair issuing a statement, a press release, that combines both the report that we just agreed to send to the House, along with highlights of the testimony, would be a good way to deal with the matter that Madam Bendayan has raised.

Thank you.

• (1715)

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Marty Morantz): Are there any other comments?

Go ahead, Mr. Genuis.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: I agree. I would just like to suggest that, in particular, we highlight some of those specific asks around the

Panchen Lama case in the press release. Those were important other issues that were not mentioned in the motion that we adopted. I agree with the approach. I just want to put that in a suggestion as well.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Marty Morantz): I agree with the suggestions.

I think what we do is direct the analysts at this point to prepare a press release. We can have a look at it and see if it's cumulatively what we'd like to see go out.

Hon. Robert Oliphant: I would worry. It should be our press release and not his press release. His press release would be about his asks of us. I would be happier if we focused on the more general terms. He can give his own press release on the very specific asks.

I think, frankly—I always hate complimenting Mr. Genuis, but I have to—what he did very well in his first round of questioning was acknowledge that we were hearing something and that we would take it under consideration. I think that is important to be said. I think you were very cautious to not fully take it. I thought your wording was very good. I noted it, in fact.

I think the press release should really be our press release on what we heard.

Mr. Garnett Genuis: When the Tibetans come, we all start loving each other as well. It's amazing.

The Vice-Chair (Mr. Marty Morantz): We need to go in camera now to deal with committee business.

I'm going to exercise the chair's prerogative.

Analysts, please prepare a press release for our review, and we'll look at it once it's received.

Thank you. We're going to suspend and go in camera.

[*Proceedings continue in camera*]

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