

Sikyong meets MPs; urges UK government to support Middle Way

[8 November 2016] UPDATE: On 1 November, Sikyong Dr Lobsang Sangay met with British MPs at the Houses of Parliament and called on the UK government to support the Middle Way Approach. The exiled Tibetan political leader also called for “a coordinated approach” between the UK, US and EU to tackle China over Tibet. The Sikyong also met with the Speaker of the House of Commons, a meeting which was condemned by China. The parliamentary visit was part of the Sikyong's five-day visit to the UK.

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The Sikyong at UK Parliament

On 1 November 2016, Sikyong Dr Lobsang Sangay, gave a briefing and held a discussion with MPs at the Houses of Parliament in Westminster, London. The meeting was hosted by the All-Party Parliamentary Group for Tibet (APPGT) and chaired by Tim Loughton MP (Chair of the APPGT). [The Sikyong is the democratically-elected political leader of the Tibetan people, and heads the Central Tibetan Administration based in Dharamsala, northern India. He is effectively the Prime Minister.]

During the meeting, Dr Sangay covered a range of topics, including the lack of religious freedom in Tibet, the exploitation of Tibet's natural resources and China's development of the region. He specifically discussed the demolitions at Larung Gar Buddhist Institute and the suicide of three nuns due to the forced evictions.

Dr Sangay stated China's political and religious repression of the Tibetan people continues to this day. He said the Chinese government's goal is to sinocise Tibet, by targeting the foundations of Tibetan civilisation: Tibetan Buddhism, Tibetan culture and Tibetan language.

The Sikyong emphasised the Dalai Lama's and Central Tibetan Administration's commitment to the Middle Way Approach, which seeks genuine autonomy for Tibet. Dr Sangay referenced President Obama's support for the Middle Way, saying he “[hoped] the UK Government will come out with a similar statement”. He also asked MPs to speak out in solidarity with those at Larung Gar and express support for the Middle Way Approach.

Dr Sangay stressed his belief that the UK needs to co-ordinate with the US and EU in order to properly address the Tibet issue with China. He stated that British support was “always noted in Beijing” as well as giving hope to Tibetans in Tibet.

Tim Loughton MP thanked the Sikyong for his briefing and said the UK should be seen to be “standing shoulder-to-shoulder” with other countries in solidarity with Tibet.

During the following discussion MPs raised a number of questions, including the state of negotiations with China, China's exploitation of Tibet's water resources, the relationship between the exiled community and the Indian government, and the future of the Dalai Lama lineage.

MPs attending included Nic Dakin, Fabian Hamilton, Chris Law, Tim Loughton, Dr Tania Mathias, Kerry McCarthy, Liz

McInnes, Patrick Grady and Catherine West.

See more photos via facebook

Sikyong meets Speaker of the House

Following his meeting with the APPG for Tibet, the Sikyong met Rt Hon John Bercow MP, the Speaker of the House of Commons. In the private meeting, the two discussed current issues affecting Tibet and the Speaker recounted his previous meetings with the Dalai Lama. According to the Central Tibetan Administration, the Speaker “expressed his strong support for the non-violent and just cause of Tibet”.

After the private meeting, the Sikyong went to the House of Commons public gallery to watch proceedings. In an unprecedented gesture, the Speaker, from the Speaker’s chair, acknowledged the Sikyong’s presence in the gallery, saying it was “a pleasure and a privilege” to welcome him to the House. (See video clip below.)

China condemns Sikyong and Speaker meeting

China criticised the UK government for allowing the Sikyong to meet the Speaker of the House, calling Dr Sangay a “separatist” and the leader of an illegitimate government.

At a press conference on 4 November, a Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson said, “China is opposed to this act by the Speaker of UK House of Commons which imperils China’s core interests. The so called Tibetan government in exile was formed by fleeing separatists after a failed coup in 1959 and has no legitimacy or international recognition. China strongly opposes Lobsang Sangay and other people’s separatist acts in any capacity in any country and will strongly oppose their contact with foreign officials.”

The spokesperson added, “We urge the UK to honour their promise and avoid causing damage to China-UK relations.”

(Source: Press Trust India)

Sikyong in the UK: 30 Oct - 3 Nov

The Sikyong arrived in the UK on 30 October for a five-day visit. On his first day, Dr Sangay gave a talk at the University of London Union to members of the Tibetan community living in Britain. He also he met with young Tibetan children at the London School of Tibetan Language and Culture and spoke about the importance of learning and preserving one’s language and cultural identity.

On 31 October, the Sikyong had an Opinion published in The Guardian, entitled: "A plea to Britain: don't forget Tibet in your dealings with China". (Read more below.)

During his second day in the UK, Dr Sangay gave a talk to students at Westminster University on the uniqueness of Tibetan experimentation with democracy in exile. Later in the day, the Sikyong travelled to Oxford and gave a talk entitled 'Rise of China, what about Tibet?' at the prestigious Oxford Union, where the likes of Winston Churchill, Ronald Reagan, Mother Teresa and the Dalai Lama have spoken.

On 1 November, following his visit to Parliament, the Sikyong gave an interview on BBC World News television. During his interview with Haida Yakim, Dr Sangay called on world leaders to put in practice their values on democracy and human rights and not shy away from meeting the Dalai Lama.

The Sikyong also discussed China's ultimate goal for Tibet, which he said was "to turn Tibet into China; make Tibetans into Chinese, that's their cultural assimilation drive." However, he added that Tibetans will persevere, noting, "Tibetan identity is deeply rooted... Tibetan people will be there on the Tibetan plateau for [a] long time to come." (Read full transcript.)

The Sikyong had further engagements with dignitaries and officials whilst in the UK, including a meeting with representatives of UK-based Tibet support groups including Tibet Society. The Sikyong departed the UK on 3 November.

The Sikyong writes in The Guardian

On 31 October, The Guardian published an Opinion by the Sikyong. In his article, Dr Sangay called on the UK government to "re-evaluate its engagement" with China and take a leading role with other like-minded governments "to act together from a position of strength to confront the Chinese leadership".

Dr Sangay said the UK should promote "an approach that balances its business, trade and diplomatic interests with a respect for the rights of the Chinese and Tibetan people."

He added, "[The UK] must hold fast to its commitment to upholding the democratic values that shape the spirit of this great country," but warned, "Failing to do so only endorses China's efforts to impose its narrative on the rest of the world."

Read the full article via The Guardian:

[A plea to Britain: don't forget Tibet in your dealings with China](#)

[Biography of Dr Lobsang Sangay](#)

Dr. Lobsang Sangay was born and grew up in a Tibetan settlement near Darjeeling, northern India, where he attended the Central School for Tibetans. He completed his BA (Honours) and LLB degrees from Delhi University. In 1992, he was elected as the youngest executive member of the Tibetan Youth Congress.

In 1996, as a Fulbright Scholar he obtained a Master's degree, and in 2004 he became a Doctor of Juridical Science (SJD), the first Tibetan ever to receive such a degree from Harvard Law School. His dissertation, *Democracy in Distress: Is Exile Polity a Remedy? A Case Study of Tibet's Government-in-exile* was awarded the Yong K. Kim' 95 Prize. In 2005, he was appointed as a research fellow and promoted to senior fellow, a post held until early 2011.

Dr. Sangay is an expert on International Human Rights Law, Democratic Constitutionalism, and Conflict Resolution. He has spoken in hundreds of seminars around the world. He organized seven major conferences among Chinese, Tibetan, Indian and Western scholars including two unprecedented meetings between His Holiness the Dalai Lama and Chinese scholars in 2003 and 2009 at Harvard University.

In 2007, he was selected as one of the twenty-four Young Leaders of Asia by the Asia Society and a delegate to the World Justice Forum in Vienna, Austria, where top legal experts and judges from around the world congregated.

In 2011, he was elected to the post of Sikyong, the democratically elected leader of the Tibetan people and political successor to His Holiness the Dalai Lama of Tibet, in an unprecedented competitive democratic election in the Tibetan Diaspora.

In 2016, Dr. Sangay was re-elected as the Sikyong for the second consecutive term.

On 15 June 2016, National Endowment for Democracy (NED) presented a citation to Dr. Sangay to recognise and honour the democratic institution of the Central Tibetan Administration as envisioned by His Holiness the Dalai Lama.

(Biography provided by the Office of Tibet, London)

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