

# COP25 CLIMATE ACTION FOR TIBET: THE EARTH'S THIRD POLE

## 5 - POINT CALL TO ACTION



### **1. Recognize the Global Ecological Importance of the Tibetan Plateau**

The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) must recognize the global ecological significance of the Tibetan Plateau, making it central to any discussion on global climate change.

The Tibetan Plateau is not only the largest and highest plateau on earth but also home to the third-largest natural repository of ice and the largest source of accessible fresh water in the world. It is the head source of Asia's six largest rivers, which flow into 10 of the most-densely populated nations and serve as the life support for 1.5 billion people. The plateau also influences the timing and intensity of the Indian and East Asian monsoons. Hence it is referred to as the "Roof of the World", the "Earth's Third Pole", the "Water Tower of Asia" and the "Rain Maker".

A comprehensive understanding of global climate change is therefore impossible without taking into account the drastic ecological changes occurring on the Tibetan Plateau.

### **2. Strengthen Climate Change Research on the Tibetan Plateau**

The UNFCCC should launch scientifically based research studies to better understand both the impact of climate change on the Tibetan Plateau and the critical role it plays in reversing the pace and scale of global climate change.

With a temperature rise twice the global average, the plateau has witnessed rapid glacier retreat, extensive permafrost degradation and massive grassland desertification. The plateau has also experienced increasing cases of floods and landslides since 2016. The scale of destruction from recent disasters, particularly from the Bolo twin landslide (October 11 2018, November 3, 2018) in Jomda county in Eastern Tibet that blocked the Driчу or the Yangtze River for 11 days could have been greatly reduced, if the Chinese government had implemented more pro-active climate awareness programs, adaptation and mitigation efforts, and a proper disaster relief mechanism in the Tibetan areas.

Such studies would inform and enable the Tibetan people, the Chinese government and the international community to; protect the Tibetan Plateau from further degradation, mitigate the impact of climate change in the region and adapt to a new climatic reality which is emerging on the Tibetan Plateau.

### **3. Respect Traditional Knowledge and Way of Life in Tibet**

The Tibetan pastoral nomads have served as skilful custodians of the alpine pastures. Their knowledge and experience must be incorporated into climate mitigation and adaptation practices.

Unfortunately, the Tibetan nomads have been compelled to forsake their traditional, self-reliant way of life due to China's re-settlement programs. Therefore, the Chinese leadership must promptly address the flaws behind their poorly planned resettlement policies and provide the newly-resettled nomads with jobs, education, healthcare services, and business opportunities so as to restore their dignity.

For formulation of any laws and policies to establish national parks and nature reserves in Tibet, the cultural sentiments of the Tibetans and their traditional knowledge should be considered and the lives of millions of Tibetans who inhabit these areas designated as nature reserves should not be undermined. It is vital that their voices and needs should be heard and respected.

### **4. Strictly Regulate Urbanization and Tourism in Tibet**

The rapid expansion of towns and cities places a severe ecological burden on Tibet's fragile ecosystem. A clear and ecologically favorable framework of urban planning guidelines must be set-up and rigorously adhered to by the Chinese government at all levels of administration.

The historical mistakes made by the Chinese government in rapidly urbanizing China must not be repeated in Tibet. The increasing cases of floods and landslides in Tibet in recent years were partly due to the excessive construction activities in the region.

Hence, the Chinese government must include the local Tibetan population in the decision-making process for any major development projects in the Tibetan areas. The influx of tourists into these areas must be regulated with clear instructions to protect the region's fragile ecosystem.

### **5. A Global Climate Action for Tibet, the 'Earth's Third Pole', is Needed**

The Tibetan people, Chinese government and the international community can and should work together to protect the Tibetan plateau, which, after North Pole and South Pole, is the home to the third largest natural repository of ice on the earth. As His Holiness the Dalai Lama has rightly stated, "Climate change is not the concern of just one or two nations. It is an issue that affects all humanity and every living being on this earth."

The Tibetan plateau needs to be protected, not just for Tibetans but for the health and sustainability of the entire world. Therefore, a 'Global Climate Action for Tibet' needs to be carried forth by the international community and the various national governments to ensure that Tibet is placed at the forefront of the Global climate change and Environment agenda.

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