

Question on Tibet in the Belgian Federal Parliament

19.01 Samuel Cogolati (Ecolo-Groen): *In recent years, the Chinese government has made clear its intention of interfering in the succession of the Dalai Lama. This position ignores the fact that Tibetans choose their spiritual leader without foreign interference for centuries and violates the fundamental right of Tibetans to religious freedom.*

On March 19, the spokesman of the Chinese Foreign Ministry Geng Shuang example said that "the reincarnation of living Buddhas, including the Dalai Lama, must respect Chinese law." As such, a senior official said at training the reincarnation system was "never a purely religious issue or a personal right back to a living Buddha," but it was more of "an important representation of the strategies and policies of the Chinese Communist Party in the region."

To counter China's attempts to interfere in the succession of the Dalai Lama, a bill was presented to the Congress of the United States last September. If adopted, it will make official US policy that the appointment of a future Dalai Lama and other Tibetan Buddhist leaders can only be decided by the Tibetan religious community. More recently, on 11 November, the Dutch Minister of Foreign Affairs sent an official communication to Parliament detailing the Dutch government policy on Tibet, which states that "the position of the firm is that it belongs to the Tibetan religious community it -even a future successor to appoint the Dalai Lama. " Thus, questions arise:

- What is the position of Belgium compared to repression by the Chinese Communist Party of Buddhist worship in Tibet, particularly in relation to the policy of presence and increased police surveillance near the temples, the replacement in compulsory education of the Tibetan language by mandarin or partial demolition of the temple Larung Gar?

- What is the position of Belgium on the succession of the Dalai Lama?

- Belgium she would be ready to push a debate and a position at the European level on this?

19.02 Philip Goffin, Minister: I share your concerns about the situation of human rights in Tibet. My services continue to follow developments closely. Belgium does not hesitate to express his concerns in this regard in various relevant forums.

Within the framework of our bilateral relations with China, this issue is discussed regularly at various meetings. This was particularly the case during a bilateral meeting with my services and the vice chairman of the Tibet Autonomous Region, which took place December 13, 2019.

Our country is also intervened during the Universal Periodic Review on China in November 2018. This is a specific mechanism of the Council of the UN Human Rights under which each country has the subject to scrutiny. On that occasion, the Member States submit questions and recommendations on the situation of human rights in the country under consideration. In this regard, Belgium inquired about

China's intentions to address the concerns expressed by the United Nations concerning the treatment of ethnic minorities in Tibet, including from the UN Committee against Racial Discrimination (CERD) which ensures compliance with the provisions of the international treaty on the elimination of all forms of racial discrimination.

With other countries, Belgium has supported a joint declaration as the Council of Human Rights and the General Assembly of the UN, calling on China to implement the recommendations of the CERD committee.

Moreover, human rights are one of the most important pillars in relations between the EU and China. In this context, the situation of Tibetans and other minorities is actively discussed with the Chinese authorities. The situation concerning ethnic and religious minorities is discussed at the annual Europe-China dialogue on human rights. This topic is also covered during the sessions of the Council of United Nations human rights.

Concerning the Dalai Lama's reincarnation as a religious leader and based on the principle of freedom of religion, it logically belongs to the Tibetan religious community to name his successor without interference from temporal authorities

In conclusion, I can assure you that the situation of human rights in Tibet is an issue that we will continue to actively follow. In this regard, Belgium will continue to contribute constructively to the coordinated position by the European Union.