

PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release

On the 50th Anniversary of EU-China Relations, ICT Urges the EU to Put Human Rights First

Brussels, 6 May 2025 - As the European Union marks 50 years of diplomatic relations with the People's Republic of China, the International Campaign for Tibet (ICT) calls on EU leaders to place the Union's founding values—human rights, democracy, and the rule of law— at the heart of all future engagement with China.

“Half a century of commercial, political and even cultural dealings with the Chinese Communist Party must not overshadow the urgent and escalating human rights crisis across China and in Tibet,” said ICT Europe Executive Director Wangpo Tethong. “Across Tibet, Hong Kong, East Turkestan, Southern Mongolia, and beyond, basic freedoms are being systematically dismantled.”

Under President Xi Jinping's leadership, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) has intensified its authoritarian grip, expanding mass surveillance, criminalizing dissent, and pursuing forced assimilation policies. Tibetans in particular face a severe erosion of their religious, cultural, and linguistic identity—illustrated by a coercive boarding schools system and restrictions and interferences on spiritual practice. These policies not only violate the rights of the Tibetan people but also represent a direct threat to the survival of a distinct Tibetan culture and civilization altogether.

Where the EU must step up on China:

- **Condition cooperation with China on tangible human rights improvements.** Economic and diplomatic engagement must not come at the cost of human dignity.
- **Mainstream human rights across all areas of EU-China relations.** Trade, development, and environmental cooperation must be consistent with the EU's human rights principles and used as leverage to promote tangible human rights improvements.
- **Reform the EU-China Human Rights Dialogue.** Suspend the current format and replace it with a transparent, benchmark-driven framework that delivers concrete outcomes.

- **Use the upcoming EU-China Summit to speak out.** European leaders must directly raise concerns about the situations in Tibet, East Turkestan (Xinjiang), Hong Kong, and mainland China, and press Beijing to honour its international obligations.

In the year of the 90th birthday of His Holiness the Dalai Lama, the EU should also actively press China to resume dialogue with the representatives of the Tibetan spiritual leader. Reviving this dialogue remains the only viable path toward a long-term and mutually acceptable solution.

As the EU reflects on the past 50 years of its relationship with China, ICT urges policymakers to ensure that the next 50 are guided not by expediency, but by the principles of justice and universal human rights.

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