

Statements of support to the Baltic Parliamentary Conference on Tibet

Riga, 3 June 2026

Statement by Member of Parliament Jan PATERNOTTE - Netherlands

Dear colleagues in Riga and dear Mr. Gere.

I dare not say colleague because my acting is miserable, but perhaps we are at least brothers in arms for the Tibetan cause.

Congratulations to all of you and especially to Mr. Vilums for holding this Tibet conference in the Saeima.

May I say what an excellent place to hold these discussions.

Latvia knows very well what it means to survive and overcome imperial domination, ruthless suppression and forced demographic change. The Baltic struggle for liberty and democracy is an inspiration to all who hold these values dearly, and especially to those of us who believe in better, freer days for Tibet.

As in the days of Sovietisation and Russification in the Baltics, the ethnic alteration of Tibet is now official state policy.

In adopting China's Ethnic Unity Law, the Chinese Communist Party no longer hides its ambition to erase age-old ethnicities and replace them with an old dominant Han culture.

This policy entrenches the state-led removal of Tibetan children, some as young as three years old, into Mandarin boarding schools and kindergartens. It deepens policies of forced labour and sterilisation in Xinjiang, and it reflects the same pattern of cultural destruction and forced assimilation that we see in Inner Mongolia.

A state that destroys the language, faith and family life is not promoting harmony but destruction.

And this should be a matter of utmost urgency to any country committed to upholding international human rights, including my own, the Netherlands.

But where governments may find it difficult to speak up, parliaments can take action.

In the Netherlands, China critical resolutions find broad support from left to right. And last year the Dutch parliament at my instigation proposed the appointment of an EU Special representative for Tibet, as well as a common EU-Tibet strategy.

Similar initiatives in other European parliaments are essential.

They serve not only the Tibetan cause, but also the position of Europe itself.

Because in this changing world, our core strength lies in values and in respect for international law and human rights, Tibet and our policies towards China are a key test case for that commitment. Parliamentarians really hold the key here. We can give Tibetans a voice in our houses and if we stick together, also a representative in Brussels.

Please enjoy your conversations there. Keep up the good work and Bhod Gyalo!