



INTERNATIONAL CAMPAIGN FOR TIBET

Dalai Lama's message to global climate summit shows need for urgent action in Tibet

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As a native of one of the world's most beautiful and endangered landscapes, the Dalai Lama has sent his prayers and advice to the largest annual global climate change summit.

"We have to take serious action now to protect our environment and find constructive solutions to global warming," the Tibetan spiritual leader wrote in a message to the 24th Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, known as the COP24 Climate Conference.

The event, taking place now in the Polish city of Katowice, has brought together delegates from nearly 200 countries to create a roadmap for implementing the 2015 Paris Agreement to combat climate change.

Climate crisis in Tibet

Now 83, the Dalai Lama has long been devoted to protecting the environment.

In his message to COP24, he said this devotion began during his upbringing in Tibet, an area of immense biodiversity and natural wonders.

"As someone born in Tibet, the rooftop of the world, where Asia's great rivers rise and the world's highest peaks are to be found, I have loved nature since my childhood," the Dalai Lama wrote.

Unfortunately, since China conquered Tibet and forced the Dalai Lama into exile in 1959, Tibet's native splendors have been devastated.

As a direct result of China's continued occupation, Tibet is now warming twice as fast as the rest of the world. Its enormous glaciers are quickly melting, and China's policies—including its damming and mining projects, bottled water production and forced settlement of nomads—have helped cause landslides, floods, earthquakes and other disasters.

Dalai Lama's environmental leadership

Given Tibet's importance as a source of water and biodiversity, the climate crisis taking place there affects the entire world.

In his message to the conference, the Dalai Lama said climate change is a problem for all of humankind.

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“When we see photographs of the earth from space, we see no boundaries between us, just this one blue planet,” the Dalai Lama wrote. “This is no longer a time to think only of ‘my nation’ or ‘our continent’ alone. There is a real need for a greater sense of global responsibility based on a sense of the oneness of humanity.”

Need for Tibetan autonomy

In the case of Tibet, that responsibility could be fulfilled by pressuring the Chinese government to grant the Tibetan people autonomy over their land.

The Dalai Lama is committed to environmentalism. In addition to articles on the subject, he told International Campaign for Tibet (ICT) Chairman Richard Gere -- during ICT’s 30th anniversary celebration earlier this year -- that the environment was his “main concern”.

“The Dalai Lama’s message to COP24 shows what a true leader he is on the issue of climate change,” ICT President Matteo Mecacci said. “In order to save the world’s environment, the international community must step forward to help the Dalai Lama and the Tibetan people regain their autonomy in Tibet.”