

Secretary Tillerson says he is committed to promoting dialogue on Tibet and receiving the Dalai Lama

Date : February 1, 2017

In response to written questions posed by members of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Mr. Rex Tillerson, who received Senate's confirmation as Secretary of State on February 1, 2017, has said that he will commit to encourage dialogue on Tibet and to receive the Dalai Lama.

Secretary Tillerson also expressed concern for the restrictions imposed by China on reporters, civil society actors, diplomats and others in accessing to Tibet, for the denial of visas to foreign journalists and the limitations to freedom of movement and information. He responded affirmatively to the question whether he would consider "problematic" the above-mentioned restrictions, when compared with the free access to the United States provided to Chinese officials and Chinese state-controlled media.

Furthermore, Tillerson committed to make an assessment of US policy regarding providing visas to Chinese officials, and to adopt "the best policy, recognizing that reciprocity in treatment is a principal in bilateral relations."

The International Campaign for Tibet welcomes the commitments made by now Secretary Rex Tillerson on Tibet and the Dalai Lama. They reflect the views of the American public who have consistently been supportive of the vision of the Dalai Lama for Tibet.

Below is the full text of the questions for the record on Tibet and the answers by Tillerson.

QUESTION: "It has long been the policy of the U.S. government, provided by the Tibetan Policy Act, to promote a dialogue between the envoys of the Dalai Lama and the Chinese government toward a solution on the Tibet issue that guarantees the respect of the "distinct identity" of the Tibetan people, who continue to suffer under China's oppressive rule. The dialogue is now at a standstill and the lack of substantive progress toward a genuine resolution continues to be a thorny issue in U.S.-China relations. What will you do to promote dialogue between envoys of the Dalai Lama and the Chinese government?"

ANSWER: *Should I be confirmed, while recognizing Tibet as part of the People's Republic of China, I will continue to encourage dialogue between Beijing and representatives of Tibet's "government in exile" and/or the Dalai Lama. I will also encourage Beijing and the governments of all nations to respect and preserve the distinct religious, linguistic, and cultural identity of the Tibetan people worldwide.*

QUESTION: Will you commit to receiving and meeting with the Dalai Lama?

ANSWER: Yes.

QUESTION: China consistently blocks the access of reporters, civil society actors, diplomats and others to places like Tibet, routinely denies visas to foreign journalists and otherwise restricts both freedom of movement and freedom of information. At the same time, Chinese government officials encounter none of these same challenges in the U.S. Even state-controlled media is given free reign and broadcasts without interference in cities across America. Do you view this as problematic?

ANSWER: Yes.

QUESTION: Do you think it would be advisable to limit the number of visas allowed to executives or administrative personnel from Chinese state-owned media enterprises operating in the U.S. if foreign journalists continue to face visa restrictions, police harassment and surveillance?

ANSWER: *Should I be confirmed, I commit to assessing what should be the best policy, recognizing that reciprocity in treatment is a principal in bilateral relations.*

QUESTION: Would you support targeting Chinese officials who are responsible for denying access to Tibet to US citizens with visa sanctions, as provided in the "Reciprocal Access to Tibet Act" introduced in the last Congress?

ANSWER: *Should I be confirmed, I commit to assessing what should be the best policy, recognizing that reciprocity in treatment is a principal in bilateral relations.*