

Global Solidarity for Tibet in a Changing World: The Tibet Support Groups (TSGs)

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*Delegates of the 3rd Special International Tibet Support Groups Meeting, Dharamshala March, 2026.
Courtesy Central Tibetan Administration.*

“We can see that all the desirable experiences that we cherish or aspire to attain are dependent upon cooperation and interaction with other sentient beings.”

- His Holiness the 14th Dalai Lama

It is evident from humanity’s long and chequered history that we need to come together in resolving conflicts, which is more evident than ever now in the rapidly changing world we live in. Conflict resolution impacts parties directly involved in the conflict, with external parties having an influence in this process. The example of the East Timor Crisis in the late 1990’s, where the United Nations (UN) intervened and brought resolution to this conflict.

The Tibetan and Chinese civilisations share a vast border; they have experienced times of friendship as well as conflict. Since the formation of the People’s Republic of China (PRC) by the Communist Party of China (CPC) in 1949, a new conflict ignited between these two neighbours, which eventually led to Tibet being militarily annexed by the PRC’s military – People’s Liberation Army (PLA) from 1950 onwards. With this onset, both Tibet and China have been working toward the resolution of this conflict, with major developments taking place in the 1980s and 2000s, the Tibet fact-finding delegation and Sino-Tibetan dialogue respectively. As the two concerned parties work towards resolving their conflict, the larger world as an external party is influential in the resolution of this conflict. The external parties that include sovereign states (neighbours and stakeholders), NGO’s, think tanks and media, etc., play an important role, with many of them known as the Tibet Support Groups (TSGs). The TSGs becomes even more important if there is a clear non-parity between the



two contested parties, as is the case between Tibet and China. As stated by a cabinet member of the Central Tibetan Administration (CTA), *“Tibet’s struggle in exile has been made possible in part due to the unwavering solidarity and generous support”*.

With major developments taking place in 1989, including the brutal Tiananmen massacre and the 14th Dalai Lama being awarded the Nobel Peace Prize. The Tibet-China conflict was brought to the limelight once again. Tibetans and their supporters, understanding and learning from the past, saw this as an ideal setting to formalise, consolidate and enhance the numerous Tibet Support Groups. Eventually leading to the 1st International Tibet Support Group Conference (ITSGC) in 1990 held in Dharamshala. Since then, 9 such conferences have been held, with the most recent being in Brussels in 2024. Along with these conferences, three special meetings in relation to the International Tibet Support Groups have taken place. These special meetings were held when significant developments had taken place in Tibet. The most recent being held from 7th to 9th March, 2026. The 3rd Special International Tibet Support Groups Meeting (SITSGM) was held in Dharamshala, which saw Tibet supporters from 32 different countries take part.



Delegates of the 9th International Tibet Support Group Conference at Brussels, Belgium February, 2024. Courtesy Central Tibetan Administration.

What are Tibet Support Groups?

According to the website of the Central Tibetan Administration, it describes Tibet Support Groups as *“non-governmental organizations formed voluntarily by individuals to support the Tibetan people’s freedom movement through various non-violent means. TSGs raise awareness of the Tibet issue in regional, national & international levels and engage in concrete actions to mobilize support for the legitimate rights and aspirations of the Tibetan people. Towards this end, TSGs work independent of the CTA based in Dharamshala, India, but in due recognition and awareness of its policies and initiatives for the resolution of the Tibet issue through a peaceful negotiation.”*



Images from the Opening and the Closing session of the 3rd Special International Tibet Support Groups Meeting. Courtesy Central Tibetan Administration.

Furthermore, there are 258 such TSGs around the world. As per this description, one gets an idea of its engagements and activities pertaining to Tibet that focus on advocacy and bringing awareness of Tibet throughout the world. The TSGs further hold regular major conferences and their own regional conferences to update each other, review their engagements and plan future initiatives.

What can be further seen is how, through these conferences like the ITSGC, major campaigns are initiated, and various important Tibet organisations were even established, notably the Students for a Free Tibet (SFT), the International Tibet Network and the Core Group for Tibetan Cause-India, to name a few. These organisations, along with TSGs, continue to be the conduit for Tibet supporters around the world by empowering younger generations in the Tibetan movement.

3rd Special International Tibet Support Groups Meeting (SITSGM):

As stated earlier, nine major conferences, which gathered Tibet Support Groups from around the world, have taken place, and it is supplemented by three special meetings, with the latest being held at Dharamshala this year.

The 3rd SITSGM was convened by the Core Group for Tibetan Cause-India, bringing together 104 delegates from 32 different countries. The delegates ranged from Film personalities, politicians, researchers, activists, artists, diplomats, professors, journalists, and many more. This indicates the wide variety of Tibet supporters around the world. The Core Group for Tibetan Cause-India was a group that was established at the 1st Asian Tibet Support Group Conference held in 2002 at Rewari, India

The 3rd special meeting, like the 2 other special meetings, was held in light of significant junctures of the Tibetan movement.

The 1st SITSGM was held in the run-up to the 2008 Beijing Olympics, during which the popular Lhasa uprising took place. This uprising saw Tibetans throughout the 3 regions of Tibet calling out Beijing for its occupation and atrocities. Popular literature also came from Tibet, with the author of 'The Division of Heaven and Earth: On Tibet's Peaceful Revolution' echoing how this uprising made him witness Tibet's roar for the 1st time since the ages of the Tibetan Empire.

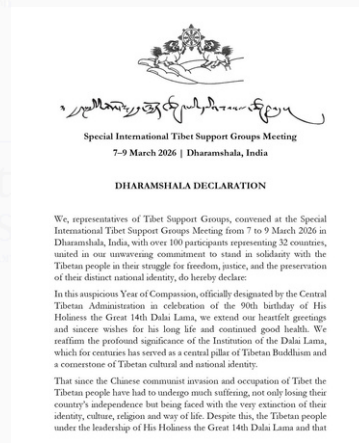
The 2nd SITSGM was held in 2012 when a large number of continuous self-immolations were taking place in Tibet and in exile, and the Dalai Lama had devolved his political authority, thereby ushering in the Central Tibetan Administration (popularly known as the Tibetan Government in Exile) as his political successor.



The 3rd SITSGM held this year is in light of the Chinese polices aimed to uproot Tibetan identity at schools and monastic bodies by forcing Tibetan children into Colonial Boarding Schools and the 90th birthday celebration of the Dalai Lama. Furthermore, this meeting happens to take place when Beijing is holding its important “Two Sessions”, which began from 4th/5th March onwards. Thereby, clearly sending a message to China (akin to other SITSGM) that its conflict with Tibet continues to remain unresolved, and more importantly, that international support to it remains firm.

This meeting saw the release of the “Dharamshala Declaration” on 7th March, 2026, which emphasised:

1. Affirms continued global solidarity for Tibet and the Tibetan people.
2. Supported and endorsed the 2nd July Statement on the reincarnation of the Dalai Lama.
3. Praises and supports the democratic institution of the Central Tibetan Administration. Calls upon the governments, international organisations and civil society to extend formal recognition of CTA as the Tibetan Government-in-Exile.
4. The resolution of the Tibet-China conflict in a peaceful manner, calling for the resumption of negotiations between the Chinese and Tibetan representatives.



Press Conference of the Dharamshala Declaration and the cover of the 3 page declaration on 7th March, 2026. Courtesy Central Tibetan Administration.

The meeting likewise strategised campaign planning based on the regional groups on initiatives pertaining towards future engagements in the Tibetan movement.

Epilogue:

Following the meeting, the delegates received an audience with the Dalai Lama at his residence on 9th March and took part as special guests in the 67th Tibetan National Uprising Day commemoration event held in Dharamshala.

The delegates shared positivity and the reality of the current changing world affairs, with them continuing to advocate for Tibet. The TSGs are among the important beacons for the Tibetan movement, and its continued advocacy highlights the dire need to resolve this conflict.



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