

Moratorium on Resource Extraction in Tibet

Moratorium - Operative Statement

“There shall be no mining in Tibet until the Tibetan people can, for their own ends, and with full free, prior and informed consent, control and make decisions about the extraction and disposal of their mineral wealth using the highest standards of participatory governance and ecological management.”

Explanatory Notes:

1. The moratorium is applicable to all individuals, governments and companies engaged in or seeking to be engaged in resource extraction inside Tibet. It is based on the principled position that under occupation, local Tibetan people impacted by the mining site are not in a position to give free, prior, and informed consent.
2. The moratorium is applicable to all of historical Tibet.¹
3. The moratorium applies to all of Tibet’s known minerals. Other natural resources, such as water and forests, are presently exempt from this call.
4. The moratorium on resource extraction is consistent with the spirit of the Tibetan Government-in-Exile’s Development Guidelines, issued in 1999.

Request for Endorsement:

The coalition requests that the private sector, governments and non-governmental organisations worldwide, endorse and promote the above-outlined moratorium on resource extraction in Tibet.

The International Tibet Support Network’s Working Group on Economic Rights is developing an online endorsement webpage at <http://tibetnetwork.org>, which will be launched shortly. In the meantime, please email your organization’s endorsement of the moratorium to: kate@studentsforafreetibet.org chonpel@tibetnetwork.org. Please include your name, organization and contact information. Endorsers will be listed on the website.

Background

The exploitation of Tibet’s natural resources has been a concern to Tibetans and their supporters for many years. The opening of the Gormo-Lhasa railway in 2006 and rapid growth in the number of mining operations in recent years has intensified these concerns.

Tibet has 126 known minerals, including rich deposits of chromium, copper, iron and boron². In 2007, China’s top geologist confirmed that vast deposits of copper, iron, lead and zinc had been found along the route of the newly opened railway, indicating that a primary purpose of the

¹ “Tibet” refers to all Tibetan areas currently under the jurisdiction of the People’s Republic of China. This includes the Tibet Autonomous Region (Ch: Xizang Zizhiqu), the area west of the Yangtse River, and other Tibetan inhabited areas in the Chinese provinces of Qinghai, Gansu, Sichuan and Yunnan.

² Tibetan Government-in-Exile (2000) “Tibet 2000: Environment and Development Issues,” *Chapter Six: Minerals and Mining*. Accessible at: <http://www.tibet.net/en/diir/pubs/edi/tib2000/chap-6.pdf>

railway is to open up Tibet's mineral wealth for rapid extraction. One copper deposit in Qulong, Tibet, has a proven reserve of 7.89 million tons, making it the second largest copper find in China and Tibet. The Government of China has also acknowledged that mining is now one of Lhasa's "pillar industries"³

With these developments, there has been an unprecedented increase in exploration and investment in Tibet's extractive sector. Chinese, Canadian and British mining companies have taken the lead, often in joint ventures and with considerable support from their governments.

In March 2007, a report commissioned by the Government of Canada to look at corporate social responsibility in the extractive sector included the suggestion that "international 'no-go' zones for Canadian extractive companies be established, including countries with serious and widespread human rights abuses, such as Burma and Tibet."⁴

Even TAR⁵ authorities have acknowledged the adverse effects that mining can have on Tibet's fragile environment. Most recently, in June 2007, they announced a ban on the mining of gold, mercury, arsenic and peat to preserve the mineral resources and protect the environment.⁶ Chinese authorities have also recently announced their decision to levy a deposit on mining companies that wish to exploit the TAR's mineral resources.

While these initiatives can be viewed as positive steps, they do not protect the rights of the Tibetan people, their culture or their environment. Nor do they address the challenges currently faced by the Tibetan people as they seek full participation in decisions that affect the development of their country. In this context, mining poses a serious threat to the Tibetan people, their culture and their fragile environment and a moratorium is the best precautionary measure until these issues can be resolved.

For further information on the Tibetan Government in Exile's "Guidelines for International Development Projects and Sustainable Investment in Tibet," please visit:

<http://www.tibet.com/aidTibet.html>.

³ Xinhuanet (24 July, 2007) "Mining companies in Tibet told to pay exploitation deposits." Accessible at: http://en.ce.cn/National/Local/200707/24/t20070724_12283099.shtml

⁴ Advisory Group Report (29 March, 2007) The National Roundtables on Corporate Social Responsibility and the Canadian Extractive Industry in Developing Countries, pg. 52. Accessible at: www.pdac.ca/pdac/misc/070329-advisory-group-report-eng.pdf.

⁵ The Tibet Autonomous Region (TAR) comprises less than half of Tibet (U-Tsang and western Kham). Within China, the TAR is regularly and erroneously identified with "Tibet".

⁶ Xinhua (13 June 2007) "Tibet set to ban gold mining to protect environment." Accessible at: http://news.xinhuanet.com/english/2007-06/13/content_6236503.htm