**Press statement**

**Tibet support Group established in Czech Parliament – Chambre of Deputies**

**Welcome for Dhondup Wangchen in the Czech Parliament**

On 25th January, four Czech MPs, Mr. Hayato Okamura (Christian Democrats/KDU) Ms. Olga Richterova (Vice president of the Chamber of Deputies, Pirat Party), Mr. Marek Benda (ODS) and Mr. Martin Exner (STAN), all coalition parties, relaunched the Tibet Support Group in the Czech Parliament – Chamber of Deputies, following the elections in October. Hayato Okamura became the Chair of the group.

Secretary of the Tibet group in the Chamber of Deputies became Katerina Bursik Jacques, who is already in the same position in the Czech Senat. In the Senat, the group is chaired by senator Premysl Rabas. Both groups pledged to be “very active” and work closely together.

The Friends of Tibet Group in the Czech Parliament was initially established in 2007 by Katerina Bursik Jacques, former MP and Chairwoman of the EU Committee of Parliament and the Friends of Tibet Group.

The announcement was made at a press conference in the Czech Parliament – Chamber of Deputies, in the presence of filmmaker, former political prisoner and campaigner against the Beijing Winter Olympics Dhondup Wangchen and director of ICT-Europe, Wangpo Tethong.

During his meeting with Olga Richterova, Vice-president of the Chamber of Deputies, Dhondup Wangchen asked for the Czech government to boycott the upcoming Olympic Games. Dhondup also asked MPs to support resumption of negotiations between China and representatives of the Dalai Lama and to establish contact with the Tibetan parliament-in-exile.

Olga Richterova: "It was an honour to meet the Tibetan film director and prisoner of conscience Mr. Dongdub Wangchen, who was imprisoned, tortured and silenced by the Chinese regime just for touching on the subject of Chinese rule in Tibet in his films. It is completely unacceptable that anyone should be denied the right to free expression in such a brutal manner. I am glad that the time when our country's leaders cowered before authoritarians is coming to an end, and that we are returning to the human rights dimension of foreign policy, in line with the legacy of Václav Havel."

After the launch Wangpo Tethong commented that: ”Czech politicians show a deep understanding and sympathy for the Tibetan cause because of the special friendship between Vaclav Havel and the Dalai Lama and their experience with communist regimes. The establishment of the Friendship Group is in the spirit of the Dalai Lama’s insistence on peaceful means to achieve a lasting solution to the Tibetan conflict.”

On 24 January Dhondup Wangchen was received at the Czech Senate by Senate First Vice-Presidents Jiří Růžička, chairman of the Senate Friends of Tibet Group Přemysl Rabas, Vice Chairman Jiri Oberfalzer and senator Marek Hilser.

"The Czech Senate was one of the first parliamentary chambers in the world to call for the non-participation of politicians in the Beijing Games," said Jiří Růžička.

Wangchen is in the Czech Republic at the invitation of Potala NGO and the NGO Czechs Support Tibet in collaboration with International Campaign for Tibet.