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The Sogan Foundation  
索甘基金会

A 501(c)(3) charitable organization founded by Sogan Rinpoche

**Opening Ceremony**  
for the  
**Pleasure Garden of Full Knowledge Tibetan High School**

Dear friends, on behalf of myself and the Sogan Foundation, I offer my warmest greetings to all of the delegates from the Beijing Central Government, the Bureau of Education of Qinghai province, the Government of the Tibetan Autonomous District of Golok and the other Autonomous Districts within Qinghai, the Education Department of Golok, the staff, teachers and students of the Tibetan High School, and all the guests who have come here today from near and far.

In recent years, new policies of the Central Government have brought success and prosperity to many parts of the country. These new economic policies have done much to benefit the country, bringing help to the poor and education to the people. This has been helpful to the Tibetan people, and for this we are thankful. However, the lands of the Tibetan people are large, and the population is small. Tibetans often live in small and isolated groups. Perhaps it is for this reason that Tibetans often have not benefited as much as other groups from the social and economic advances of the country. This is a great concern to all of us.

I have thought for a long time about how I could help with this situation. I believe that without a modern education, the Tibetan people will not be able to contribute fully to the growth and prosperity of the country. Therefore I created the Sogan Foundation in America, and made plans to build a school to provide modern education to Tibetans. When I looked for the best location for the school, I thought first of Golok, the region of my birth. In May of 2004 I contacted officials of the Tibetan Autonomous District of Golok. We began to talk about building a new school here. With their support, we made a detailed plan to build a new school building and provide it with the best teachers and educational materials. This plan was developed by bringing together the knowledge and experience of people in this country and in America, with the common goal of improving the situation of the Tibetan people.

Once the project plan was written, it was offered to the local and regional governments, and they gave their approval and encouragement. I then took the plan to the Sogan Foundation and worked for several years to raise all the necessary funds. With these funds from the Sogan Foundation and the efforts of our friends in Golok who managed the project from start to finish, we have now arrived at this auspicious day for the opening of the school and the beginning of a new era in the education of Tibetan peoples.

I am therefore very happy to join with you today to open the new school, the Garden of Full Knowledge Tibetan High School. This is our gift to the Tibetan Autonomous District of Golok and especially to all the children of Golok. I am praying

for the good fortune that this new school will be a garden where full knowledge of the arts and sciences of the modern world will grow in the minds of students and brings a harvest of prosperity and happiness to the people of Golok.

I remember long ago when representatives of the central government of China came to this region and gathered the people from all over to encourage our commitment to the welfare and prosperity of the entire country. Today we have come here to rejoice in a fulfillment of that commitment in the opening of the new school. The Tibetan people now have a real opportunity to gain the knowledge and skills necessary to master the technologies of the modern world. When this knowledge is taken up and joined with the compassion and wisdom of our ancient Tibetan tradition, it will be a continual benefit to every student, to all the people of the region, and to the entire country. For these reasons we rejoice in the opening of the school and look forward to making full use of this great opportunity.

You might ask why I have made all these efforts over many years to build this new school. I grew up in Golok as the child of a poor nomadic family. Although I had the title of the Sixth Sogan Rinpoche, I had no access to a modern education. When I became an adult, I left my home and traveled to many other countries where the people are prosperous and well educated in the ways of the modern world. This gave me a new understanding of the culture of the Tibet, with its long history from ancient times to the present. Wherever I went, I saw that people respect the Tibetan culture because it holds one of the greatest treasures of the world, the precious teachings of the Buddha, that reject anger and hatred and promote peace in the world and happiness in the heart. This is not just my idea. It is what I have learned in my travels all over the world. This is how the educated people of the world view Tibet and Tibetan culture. As Tibetans we should always take great pride in the way our culture is viewed by the peoples of the world, and in the important contribution it makes to the welfare of the entire world.

However, I know that our Tibetan people have fallen behind much of the world in the knowledge of science and technology. I have seen how much economic success depends on that knowledge. If we are to achieve our goal of prospering in the modern world, it is not enough that we learn the ways of other cultures. We must learn these arts and sciences as Tibetans, and join the modern world without losing our own culture. If we learn modern science, but forget our own Buddhist heritage, we will lose the thing that makes our culture so valuable to the world. Our Tibetan Buddhist heritage is the one thing that enables us to bring peace and happiness to the modern world. They can never be found in mere science and technology.

While science and technology alone will not bring happiness to the mind or peace to the world, without them we Tibetans cannot succeed in the modern world. Skill in science and technology is necessary to develop the strength of our Tibetan communities and to contribute to the prosperity of our country. Without skill in science and technology, we will remain a poor and isolated region, and will not have the strength to maintain our precious cultural and religious heritage. For the sake of Tibetan people, for the sake of our country, and for the sake of the world, the Tibetan culture must be a strong and vital force in the world. This can only happen if we bring the best of modern education into our Tibetan communities, and study it in our own language. The ancient language of Tibet is a great treasure, and one of our most important gifts to the world. The wise and cultured people of many foreign countries are now studying the Tibetan

language. It is being taught in the great colleges and universities of Europe, America, Australia and Asia. Its importance is understood by many peoples of the world, as Tibetan language alone is the key to the great treasury of the Lord Buddha's wisdom. If we Tibetans do not maintain our skills in our own language, we are abandoning a precious jewel and taking up a lump of coal.

Why have we had difficulty in both maintaining our language and culture while taking our proper place in the modern world? Our lack of success is a result of a lack of modern scientific and technological skills. This has a number of causes. First, not enough of our children go to school. They are from families of nomads and farmers where the parents and grandparents do not send their children to school, but expect them to spend their time looking after their animals and farms. Even when the children go to school, they often do not finish their studies. In the schools, there are often not enough fully qualified teachers. In the classrooms there are often not enough basic educational materials. Finally, even when a student completes school, it is often difficult to find a good job.

So what is to be done? In my own case, I am in charge of Abo Sera Monastery in Sichuan province, and Bayon Monastery in Golok. Other than these responsibilities, I have had to think carefully of my responsibility to the whole country. I believe it is the responsibility of each of us to maintain our own cultural traditions, as well as to work for the benefit of our communities and the entire country. The people of Golok, my own people, are dear to my heart, and dedication to their material and cultural prosperity is something I will never abandon.

In order to make any real contribution to society, to help in a real way in the prosperity of the people and their culture, it is necessary to have enough resources. As you know, I am a simple Buddhist monk from a poor nomadic family of Golok. Where could I get the resources necessary to make a real contribution to my society? My answer to this question has been to travel to other lands to seek these funds, not for myself, but for my Tibetan people. Because of the high regard that much of the outside world has for Tibetan culture and the Tibetan people, I have had some success. First I found some helpful people and established the Sogan Foundation in America. This group worked long and hard to build this school for modern education in Golok. Second, I spoke to many organizations and people about this project, and asked for their help. I found many people who had the resources, the wisdom and the generosity to help and were happy to contribute to this project. In this way I received hundreds of contributions from many people who understood the great importance of this project.

Now, on behalf of all those who have come here today, officials, teachers, students, nomads and farmers, and all who will benefit from this project, I thank every one of the donors who made possible the opening of the school today and the great benefits it will bring in the future. I know that they are now rejoicing in this great event and we will never forget their kindness.

However it is not enough to build a school with all that is needed for a modern education. The school must have good teachers, clever students, and a helpful staff. It must be supported by the leaders and the whole community, so that parents happily send their children, and the children happily go to learn. This will happen when everyone understands that the school is a path to a better future; a future where our Tibetan heritage is honored, carefully learned, and joined with the best of modern technology and science.

Only in this way will material success not be gained at the expense of inner happiness. Science and technology must truly help all of the people, so that the entire country benefits.

The success of this new school will depend on honoring our Tibetan culture which is our root, on the wise and benevolent policies of our leaders, families, and teachers who are our support, and on the hard work and good qualities of the students who are our hope for the future.

All the students who will come to study in the school should understand that it was not easy to plan and build this school. It was made possible only by wisdom, kindness and great efforts of many people, including the Sogan Foundation, its donors from all over the world, and by many officials and workers. Understanding this, you must take up your studies with hard work and high aspiration. Your studies here will be effective when you seek to benefit not just yourself, but your own Tibetan people and your entire country. With the good motivation of wishing to benefit others, to improve your community, to support your own people and your ancient traditions, your studies will have a deep strength that will overcome all obstacles.

In your education the Tibetan language is most important. Your skills in Tibetan language must be developed and improved, as this is the great language of the wise and compassionate tradition of our people that must be upheld for the sake of the world. The languages of Chinese and English also have an important place in your studies. The sciences and computer studies depend often on a working knowledge of Chinese and English. The English language is now the principle common language of the entire world. It is needed for all kinds of jobs and studies.

Along with your studies in school, it is very important to increase the reach of your thoughts and activities. The Buddha taught that the basis for understanding the world is the view of dependant arising, and the basis for engaging in activities is the benevolent path that harms no living being. In both religious and the worldly activities, it is important to understand the difference between proper and improper activities, and to always seek the welfare of others more than your own.

It is important that we follow the famous words of the Chinese Communist Party: "A good person is one who puts himself before others to face difficulties, but puts others before himself to enjoy benefits and pleasures." In this way you must always make your goal in life and in your studies not the small pursuit of selfish gain, but rather the great pursuit of the welfare of your country, your society, your own people and your Tibetan traditions. It is important that you know this to be your own responsibility. Take it up with pride and accomplish it with diligence and enthusiasm. It will be the cause of your own good fortune and the prosperity of your people.

What is this responsibility? It is to follow your teachers with respect and gratitude; to follow the rules of your school; to be kind and helpful to your fellow students, and to work together as a team to accomplish your goals.

In brief, the future of Golok depends on efforts of the students. Whether Golok will prosper or not is up to you. You carry in your hands our hopes for a better future for Golok. In this we all have a common goal. If you are unable to take up this responsibility, and do not fulfill these hopes, then all of my work to raise money and build this school will be wasted. The efforts of the good people in the Education Departments of Qinghai and Golok will be obstructed. The donors who generously gave to this project will be

very sad. But most of all, you will have wasted a great opportunity to truly benefit yourself and others. Please keep this in mind and never forget it.

I ask that the teachers and the families always help the students not only in their school work, but also by giving them the wisdom that comes from your own life experience. Take care of them both in class and at home. It is most important that you help them overcome their faults, and guide them if they go astray.

In particular, I ask all the leaders and officials who are concerned with education to continue all your good efforts with kindness and high resolve. As for the parents, families and community members, the students need your help. Even if they work hard, and the teachers, leaders and officials are kind and skillful, without your support it will be very difficult for the students to succeed. For these reasons, I ask each and every one of you to always continue your good efforts.

May this wonderful new school be free of any obstacles, and may it bring success, happiness and prosperity to all who enter its doors. May every student work hard and be happy and successful in learning. May they be supported and encouraged by the community, and prosper in their chosen jobs or in further efforts at higher education. Most important, may they always succeed in joining the power of modern technology with the wisdom and compassion of the Lord Buddha's teaching. This is the only way to bring about both prosperity and success in the world, and peace and happiness in your own mind. In this way, I am certain that we will see in this land a new prosperity and harmony. This will bring our people a full share of the benefits of both the modern world and their own precious culture. For this to happen, I ask that everyone here join together and work hard to reach these important goals.

And now, I pray to the Three Jewels for the peace and happiness of ourselves and all beings. May all our deep aspirations and goals fulfilled without obstacle,

With many Tashi Deleks to all,

Sogan Tulku, Pema Lodoe, with blessing on this the 14th day of the 6th month of the Fire Pig Year (July 29, 2007).