

Estonian President Toomas Hendrik Ilves has expressed support for the preservation of Tibet's culture at a meeting with visiting Tibetan spiritual leader, the Dalai Lama.

President Ilves had an unofficial meeting with the Nobel laureate Wednesday in Estonia's capital Tallinn, despite China's protest. The meeting took place at the International Center for Defense Studies where the Dalai Lama participated in a seminar.

President Ilves said the religion and culture of Tibet are truly unique and maintaining them for future generations is one of the great humanistic duties of our time.

But he also reiterated his government's one-China policy.

The Chinese Embassy issued a statement expressing China's opposition to foreign leaders meetings with the 76-year-old exiled monk. Beijing claims the Dalai Lama is campaigning for Tibet's independence, which he denies.

The Dalai Lama arrived to Estonia earlier Wednesday from France. He came at the invitation of the Estonian Institute for Buddhism to deliver a series of lectures, including a free public talk in Tallinn's Liberty Square.

While in Estonia he was also expected to meet with Latvian and Lithuanian politicians.

The Dalai Lama will leave Estonia for Finland Thursday.

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