

**Regular Press Conference Transcript:
MAC Minister Chen's Comments on
Restoring the Historical Truth of the 1992 Hong Kong Talks**

Note: MAC regular press conference is usually presided by the spokesperson.

Friends from the Media, Ladies and Gentlemen, Good Afternoon.

You must all be quite surprised to see me here today at this regular press conference held by the Mainland Affairs Council (MAC). Controversies surrounding the so-called "1992 Consensus" have lasted for 18 plus years since 2000. I dare to say no one here, and even no one else from both sides across the Taiwan Strait understands the "1992 Consensus" as deeply as I do. Thus, I'd like to explain this to you all here today, so we can move on and stop arguing over this matter.

I was motivated to do so today after coming across an interesting public opinion survey released by the Cross-Strait Policy Association (CSPA). The poll asked: "What exactly is the '1992 Consensus'?"

I trust that you all have seen this survey on the "1992 Consensus" released by the Association this morning. I will draw on their data in my explanation.

The first question asked [in the survey] was: Do you think there is a "1992 Consensus" between the two sides of the Taiwan Strait? 32.6% said yes, 45.1% said no and 22.4% had no opinion. This result is close to the responses received in a undisclosed poll conducted earlier by the MAC, in which the percentage of the public believing there was a consensus was lower than the percentage thinking such consensus did not exist.

[The next question stated that] whether or not you believe there is a consensus, are you clear about what the "1992 Consensus" actually is? 40.2% responded "clear" and 55.5% responded "unclear." More were "unclear" than were "clear." The poll further asked whether you are clear or not about what [the "1992 Consensus"] actually is? Which of the following

descriptions of the "1992 Consensus" is the closest? In other words, what do you think the "1992 Consensus" is?

20.6% said the consensus was that "each side respectively declares that it represents entire China"; 20.9% believed that "the two sides [across the Taiwan Strait] are the two areas of the same country yet to be unified"; and 44.4% believed that "the two sides are two different countries."

This set of questions was originally designed by Austin Horng En Wang, a professor [of political science at University of Nevada] in the US, and commissioned, I believe, the Election Study Center of National Chengchi University to conduct [the survey]. I was very much surprised at these public perceptions. So we also conducted one. Since then, *CommonWealth Magazine* has also recently conducted a poll, and now the Cross-Strait Policy Association has one as well. All, in fact, are very similar. I was surprised to see that the majority of the people felt the "1992 Consensus" was "there is one country on each side." It was hard to imagine.

There is quite a bit of confusion nowadays over what the "1992 Consensus" is exactly. The survey continued to ask, "If recognizing the "1992 Consensus" means the 'one China (i.e., the People's Republic of China) principle', leaving no room for the survival of the Republic of China (ROC), would you accept such a consensus?" 84.1% said that they would not accept. In fact, regarding mainland Chinese President Xi Jinping's speech, in which he defined the "1992 Consensus" as "one country, two systems," without the existence of the ROC, President Tsai also clearly responded as such on [January] 2nd that this is absolutely unacceptable to the people of Taiwan.

If [the consensus] is "one China with respective interpretations," the very same "one China with respective interpretations" that the KMT has long stated, and then 54.2% identified with this view and 37.8% did not. This is why that I once said at the Legislative Yuan that I respect the "1992 Consensus" long referred to by the KMT, namely "one China with respective interpretations." But I have also explained that the original policy during the then President Lee Teng-hui's administration was indeed to strive for "one China with respective interpretations."

[Another question on the survey was] When President Tsai came into office, she said she "respects historical facts. The most important thing is mutual understanding, setting aside differences to seek common ground, communicating and negotiating, and shelving disputes." Over half of the public (62.6%) supported this position, while 28% did not.

The survey also asked, "Is accepting the "1992 Consensus" important to cross-Strait development?" [Since] The "1992 Consensus" is once again a hot topic today [many believe] accepting the "1992 Consensus" will allow the "movement of people and goods so all can prosper." Thus the proportion of the public who think it was important to accept the "1992 Consensus" nearly doubled those who felt unimportant.

The poll further asked if people support the statement: "It is unnecessary to know the content of the "1992 Consensus" so long as acknowledging the "1992 Consensus" can bring economic development." A similar concept has existed from the outset: it's OK to accept [the consensus] regardless of the content, so long as it allows the movement of people and goods. This is, after all, the way things have always been, so there's no need to worry about the content. However, people now are gradually beginning to think about the content of the "1992 Consensus" and the numbers of people who do not support it is growing. The percentage who did not support [the consensus] is now 64.1%, doubled the amount who supported it.

The poll also asked: "If the '1992 Consensus' is accepted while promoting economic development, yet in turn it downgrades the sovereignty of the ROC and belittles the ROC to a local government of the People's Republic of China (PRC), would you accept this approach?" This is what Xi talked about yesterday. 81.2% [said they would] "not accept". They do not accept the "1992 Consensus" defines by Beijing as "one country, two systems." This is a very clear with 81.2% [disapproval] from a poll conducted from December 27 to 28, 2018.

On the other hand, 91.7% of the people supported the statement: "The government believes that while promoting economic development, all sectors should protect the nation's overall security and interests." I consider this to be a strong national consensus.

I would like to further explain a bit here. I recently went to Penghu to officiate the handover ceremony of Penghu County magistrate. The topic of the local governments' all-out efforts for the economy [development] naturally came up. I told the Penghu County magistrate that it is an important role for the central government to safeguard sovereignty. This having been said, the central government also works hard to promote the economy. Of course we support local economy [development]. The central and local governments need to cooperate. This is a crucial concept.

We can categorize people into individuals and collectives. Local governments, counties, and cities are examples of collectives. But the central government needs to take care of the [nation's] overall interests. Individuals can pursue their personal interests and local governments can pursue their interests. After all, why else would voters elect them to serve as county magistrates and mayors? They are elected to enhance local interests. The central government, however, needs to watch out for the overall interests. In doing so it naturally needs to find a balance. When individual or local interests affect the overall interests entrusted to the central government's jurisdiction and protection, the [nation's] overall interests definitely have priority.

For example, today there was news that the carcass of a pig washed up in Kinmen from somewhere was tested positive with African swine fever (ASF). ASF is a hot topic these days. I also went to Kinmen, Matsu, and Penghu to promote ASF epidemic prevention. Why did we have to go? Why do central government officials have to go? This has to do with defending the interests of all.

The government now prohibits travelers from bringing in sausages and meat floss egg rolls even as souvenirs. Violators are subject to penalties up to NT\$200,000 for the first offense and NT\$1 million for repeat violations. A lot of people wonder why bringing in egg rolls or some sausages is such a big deal. After all, ASF virus afflicts pigs, not people. People won't die from eating egg rolls and sausages made from infected pork. Why does the government interfere so much? Why does it fine people NT\$200,000 or NT\$1 million? What is the central government doing?

Actually, the central government is working for overall interests. When a person casually brought in sausages and egg rolls made out of pork with ASF virus, although the person won't be affected by eating these things, the problem is with the unfinished portion which was thrown out as kitchen waste and ultimately used to feed pigs. This became a route for infection and resulted in an entire epidemic broke out. You have to consider, the overall interests of those pig farmers was NT\$200 billion. Who will take care of this overall interest of NT\$200 billion? Naturally, it is the central government's duty to take care of this. Otherwise people will wonder if there is government or not. Where is the government? Why does the government allow such a big problem to happen? In this concept, we learn that individuals will naturally pursue their personal interests. However, if an individual, in the pursuit of personal interests, or a local government, in pursuit of collective interests, affects the overall interests, the central government needs to step in and control this. This is our duty, one entrusted to us by the electorate. This role-related behaviour and job distribution needed to be explained here.

Now, turning back to the original point I'd like to make in the beginning. Handouts were passed out to you all already. I feel very much like my old-self now, a university professor.

How do we read this complex public perception? What is this after all? Actually, in 2000, when I was minister of the MAC and surrounded by reporters' microphones, I clearly stated that the other side [Beijing] had rejected our proposal of "one China with respective interpretations," and we refused to accept the "one-China principle" advocated by the other side; which is to say that nothing came out of the "1992 Hong Kong Talks." Thus I have always insisted that there is no "one China with respective interpretations" because the other side does not accept it.

So what happened [back then]? Let me restore [the historical fact] for you all. Does everyone know the theme of the 1992 Hong Kong Talks? Do you? You were all young at the time and may not know. It was about "document notarization." It was not a political negotiation. There were four documents that needed to be notarized. So what is document notarization? It's very simple. Say I'm teaching at a school, and now I . . . Forgive me for this quasi-advertisement.

The Graduate Institute of National Development at National Taiwan University required students to take a second language course. However, if you took the TOEIC and scored 800,

you would be exempted to do so. When the student presented his/her transcript to the school, [our staff] would ask: "Did you print this? Or did [a particular organization] issue it?" It would trace back to the company administering the TOEIC whether or not they issued this document. This is called document notarization.

Social exchanges, especially family exchanges, resumed between the two sides with the restoration of cross-Strait contacts in 1987. This led to issues related to marriage and inheritance. It was thus necessary to prove if a person was a national of the PRC or of the ROC. The simplest example here is property inheritance. We all know the book, *Big River, Big Sea—Untold Stories of 1949*. During the Chinese Civil War, one or two million soldiers and civilians came to Taiwan, married and had children in Taiwan, and later couldn't return to the Mainland. After cross-strait exchanges resumed, soldiers and civil servants who came to Taiwan at that time returned to their hometowns and saw their wives and children left behind in those earlier years. Naturally, all were moved by family bonds and there were tearful embraces. Yet they still needed to return to their families in Taiwan. Not long after, the father passed away in Taiwan and left behind an inheritance. Our constitution protects private property, so his son in mainland China can also inherit property. However, ROC founding father Dr. Sun Yat-sen said that a person's accomplishments depend not only on the individual, but on society as well. The accumulation of personal property also owes to the collective contribution of society. So the rule at the time was that mainland Chinese relatives could only inherit up to NT\$2 million. This amounted to RMB250,000 at the exchange rate of 1:8 then, which was a considerable amount. So [an heir] had to prove that he or she was the person's child. For example, if you lived in Beijing, you needed to go to Beijing Municipal Government and requested a household registration to prove your identity as the person's child and then came [to Taiwan] to claim your inheritance. But this left the question: is this document you hold real or fake? This is what we mean by "document notarization." So the [cross-Strait] discussions at that time involved identifying a person and agency through which one could inquire if this document is real or fake. It was that simple.

Mainland China, however, wanted to mix political matters into this general matter of document notarization. It wanted to define whether this usage of documents between the governments of both sides was a matter of domestic issue or between two countries. Our response was: Why make such a fuss over this? Isn't it enough to just prove whether [the documents] are

real or fake? No! They said that this was out of the question. They stood their ground and the two sides remained deadlocked. But this involved the division and inheritance of property. People were anxious and demanded that the government resolved this matter quickly.

Thus, an approach was conceived at that time. Mainland China said you have to accept the "one China principle." They presented five plans and we presented five. This book I brought contains some of the original documents compiled by former MAC Minister Su Chi after his retirement. I don't know if this was legal or not, but he produced some of the original documents. He published this book. The other one is in simplified Chinese characters. It was published in mainland China. The documents on the "1992 Consensus" were provided by Xu Shizhen, the former director of the Institute of Taiwan Studies, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, whom I know quite well and often exchanged views with in the past, along with Professor Yang Kai-huang. [Professor Yang] is now at Dong Hwa University and was previously at Taiwan Soochow University and later Ming Chuan University. Everything is in simplified characters. But he didn't have the original documents, only the texts. He didn't provide the original documents.

It's very simple. [The Mainland] proposed five plans and we proposed five. The two sides couldn't find common ground. Later we revised three plans according to theirs. The third plan read: "In the process of the cross-Strait effort to seek national reunification, both sides adhere to the one China principle but they differ from each other on the acknowledgement of the meaning of one China. However, in view of the growing frequency of cross-Strait private exchanges, a proper solution should be reached on document notarization to protect the rights and interests of the people on both sides." The matter under negotiation was document notarization. Was this document in fact issued by the government of both sides? This was the focus. But the other side demanded that the two sides define whether this occurred within one country or between two countries. So of course the "one China principle" appeared.

As far as we're concerned, this "one China principle" is a political framework. To understand why, we need to talk about our withdrawal from United Nations (UN). In 1971, we walked out of the UN. Before 1971, frankly speaking, there was only one China in the world, right? Who was this China? The Republic of China. We were in fact the charter member of the UN. But in 1971, we were driven out. This China, as the whole world knows and recognizes, is the PRC,

the "People's Republic of China." So if we accept their "one-China principle," it means accepting the PRC and that "there is only one China in the world, Taiwan is part of China, and the PRC is the sole legitimate government of China." This would mean that they could represent us. On one level it means the elimination of the ROC in international law. If we accepted this and said, "Okay, destroy me," then Taiwan would be represented by the PRC.

Of course, the then President Lee Teng-hui's administration wouldn't do this. So, at that time, he fought for "one China with respective interpretations." That is why I often say the "one China with respective interpretations" that the KMT talks about is true. Restoring the history of that time, they [the ROC negotiators] strove for "one China with respective interpretations." To strive for "one China with respective interpretations," it means that there's a different meaning [for one China]. Following all these discussion, a written agreement needed to be put in place. The focus of this written agreement was the signature inscribed at the end. As you can see here, the Straits Exchange Foundation (SEF) marked the date in ROC *Minguo* Calendar year. We wanted to inscribe the *Minguo* Calendar year date with the signed signature.

Why do I know all these details? Because I had visited both Shi Hwei-yow, then head negotiator, and then MAC Minister Huang Kun-huei [regarding this mater]. So I know all the ins and outs of the 1992 Hong Kong talks. A lot of people talking about these things today have not done their homework properly, but rather speak from their imagination. I asked him earnestly [and learned] that there were two strategies. One strategy was: if you want a written agreement, we will sign with the "Republic of China." In other words, we acknowledged [there was] a different meaning. We wouldn't say it out loud, but we would inscribe the date in the document under "Republic of China" [*Minguo* Calendar year], and you could write in "AD." That was it and the inscription was handled this way.

When Beijing authorities saw that the Association for Relations across the Taiwan Straits (ARATS) head negotiator Zhou Ning (still at the Taiwan Affairs Office), used "AD" and we wrote "Republic of China," they were of course unwilling to sign and left. We issued a press release and stayed for two more days, hoping the he would return. But he wouldn't come back to sign this.

Since Plan A failed, we quickly moved on to Plan B. After all, you always need to prepare various plans when going into negotiations. Plan B was: if you don't want me to inscribe this thing, I suggest stating it orally. In the oral statement, we can directly say that "China" is the "Republic of China." At the time, the SEF issued a press release, and wrote to the ARATS saying that the Taiwan side's statement would follow the meaning of "one China" approved by the National Unification Council (NUC) on August 1, 1992. The main connotation was that: both sides of the Taiwan Strait adhered to the "one China principle," but they differ from each other on the meaning of "one China." The CCP believes "one China" is the "People's Republic of China," while Taiwan believes "one China" should mean the ROC established in 1912 and hitherto exists.

That is, if you want us to make an oral statement, without writing it down, then I will orally say the Republic of China, right? If you want me to sign an agreement, if you want to reach an agreement, this is how we'll do it: the date will be recorded with the "Republic of China." If you want each side to express this orally, we suggest say "Republic of China" in our oral statement. This is very reasonable. This reflects "one China with respective interpretations." So what about the other side? They didn't agree. Instead they said: Okay, if you want to state orally, state those appeared in Plan A. In other words, [Beijing did so to] avoid the appearance of the Republic of China in the document while stress that it was decided [between the two sides] to make an oral statement. Then they said, since each side would make an oral statement, what would be stated was that "both sides of the Taiwan Strait adhere to the one-China principle and strive to achieve national unification. However, cross-Strait negotiations on general affairs will not involve the meaning of one China."

This is called "one China, no interpretation." With you [Taiwan], they say "one China, no interpretation," but to the rest of the world the message is clear, it is "one China with interpretation;" and that is, "there is only one China in the world. Taiwan is part of China. The PRC is the sole legitimate government of China." Very clear, isn't it?

So they use strategic clarity with the world, and strategic ambiguity with us. Accepting this ambiguity, would be like accepting a "password". What would this result? There is a saying in English: paint oneself into a corner, meaning that you get yourself into a difficult situation and

can't extricate. It was like turning off the lights and tried to fish in troubled waters. When the lights were turned back on, what did you find in your hands? A fishing net. You were trapped.

Of course, we did not agree to this [oral statement]. We did not say to the Mainland that it could be done in oral form. Neither did we say we were willing to go back to the original plan (Plan A). Yet [Beijing] repeatedly tried to convince us that this is what we wanted (Plan B). To what end? Nothing. This is the historical truth.

This is what happened at the 1992 talks. But this is [only] Part 1. Now we can move to Part 2. It is clearly evident in the documents I just passed out. Both the statements by the Taiwan Affairs Office and mainland President Xi Jinping are exceptionally clear. What does it mean by "respective interpretations"? It is to eliminate the ROC.

This is why President [Tsai] came out yesterday and said that Beijing's "1992 Consensus" is "one country, two systems." It is about peaceful unification and yet [Beijing] will not renounce the use of force against Taiwan. During an interpellation at the Legislative Yuan, one of our lawmakers said, "don't pay attention to what he [Beijing] says. He can say what he wants and we'll say what we want.", Premier Lai, in response, said that this is a matter of great importance. Thus we can't be ambiguous. Don't think of it [1992 Consensus] as the ultimate "password" to world peace. As I just stated, this involves our overall interests. We've safeguarded so diligently for so many years. Some may ask why didn't I say anything before? Why do I only speak out now?

Frankly speaking, when we [DDP] came to power [in 2016], we also wanted to keep this [maneuver] space. Thus when President Tsai took office, she said that we respect the historical fact of the 1992 talks and [the spirit of] setting aside differences to seek common ground, as well as to shelve disputes. However, in the past two, nearly three years, the other side becomes clearer with each card it plays. We are forced to come out and tell everyone the truth as it is. The truth is in the "Republic of China." He [Beijing] doesn't want to see ROC exists. He [Beijing] wants to eliminate the ROC. Everyone needs to understand this. So I take this opportunity today to tell you all.

In fact, I previously had the opportunity to tell everyone [about this truth]. If you see it in terms of game theory, in a bargaining game of alternating offers, you offer a price and I counter-offer. I offer a price and you counter-offer. In the end, if you assume that you will lose, what would you do? It's simple. Don't step in in the first place.

To a certain extent, I already foresaw this outcome back in Year 2000. Then I was the deputy minister of the MAC. I had an opportunity to come forward and said that they [Beijing] did not accept our proposal of "one China with respective interpretations" and we did not accept their "one China principle." In the end nothing came out of it [the 1992 talks]. If you go and look, you'll see my statement reported by *China Times* on page two. So I know the situation well.

Former President Ma ying-jeou has been talking about "one China with respective interpretations" constantly and even nowadays he is still talking about this. Yet at the Ma-Xi Meeting back in 2015, what did he say to Xi Jinping? He said that the Hong Kong meeting in 1992 reached a consensus on the 'one-China principle,' referred to as '1992 Consensus. At the time, the then MAC Minister Andrew Hsia and my good friend Chao Chun-shan broke out in a cold sweat."

[When questioned] Ma explained that he did say [one country with respective interpretations] when he was in the room [with Xi]. However, if you say something in a room, who knows? But you openly said, the consensus reached in 1992 was on the 'one-China principle.' And Xi Jinping has held tight with this "one-China principle" ever since. Ma gave it to him and he's not about to let it go. To this day, Ma continues to tell everyone that the "1992 Consensus" is "one China with respective interpretations." Why didn't he say so to Xi Jinping? Why not say it publicly? Right?

Frankly speaking, we do accept agreement [signed between the two sides of the Taiwan Strait]. For instance, the 23 agreements [signed during the previous Ma administration], [which were] written in black and white. Also, like the cross-Strait direct flights. In addition, [since we've signed the Cross-Strait Agreement on Cooperation in Quarantine and Inspection of Agricultural Products] we [in accordance to the procedures agreed upon] unilaterally send in our request [to Beijing] asking them to tighten down on disease prevention issues, right? If you have something signed in black and white, we [President Tsai's administration] have to

recognize it. Political parties alternate in power change, but the government is consistent. You can't say you won't accept something from the previous administration, and that you want to overthrow it and restart negotiations. Obviously this is not the way it's done. I'm showing you all this today so that all should be very clear.

There were certainly controversies over "one China with respective interpretations" back then, because without our own statement, the whole world would think that "one China" is the PRC. Then you would just be agreeing to the elimination of the ROC in international law!

This is why I particularly feel that [I have to come out and say something] today, to restore the truth of history. Do we still need to quarrel over this matter that we've argued over for the past 18 or 19 years? This is my explanation. Everyone who has questions on this issue, I welcome you to raise them.