

## **MAC Holds the 2017 Cross-Strait Exchange Conference for NGOs to Create a Platform for Communication between the Government and NGOs and to Strengthen Sound and Orderly Cross-Strait Exchanges**

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The Mainland Affairs Council (MAC) held the 2017 Cross-Strait Exchange Conference for Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) on September 20, 2017, at the GIS Taipei Tech Convention Center. The theme was "Cross-Strait Exchanges: Reflections and Prospects." NGOs, experts, scholars, and government representatives jointly participated in the conference, creating a platform for two-way communication and exchanges between the government and private-sector groups.

MAC Minister Chang Hsiao-yueh stated in a speech at the opening ceremony that NGOs have played an indispensable role in the development of cross-Strait relations. This year marks the 30th anniversary of lifting the ban on visiting relatives in mainland China by the government of the Republic of China. In the past 30 years of cross-Strait relations, contact and interaction between NGOs on both sides of the Taiwan Strait have produced substantial results. They have also demonstrated that, with mutual understanding and a thinking of setting differences aside to seek common ground, peaceful exchanges and contact are possible between the two sides.

Minister Chang said that the vast majority of the public believe that developing sound and orderly cross-Strait exchanges is an important part of maintaining peaceful and stable development across the Taiwan Strait. Therefore, we hope that the other side will face up to public opinion in Taiwan and jointly promote diverse and benign exchanges and interaction to help advance the development of cross-Strait ties.

The MAC stated that this year's Cross-Strait Exchange Conference for NGOs was organized by the Youth Career Development Association and joined by nearly 130 participants of 95 civic groups long involved in cross-Strait exchanges. Tamkang University Associate Professor Andy Chang presented a keynote speech on "Cross-Strait Exchanges: Reflections and Prospects." Representatives of related ministries and departments were also invited to participate. The government and NGO representatives exchanged views, discussed policy and regulations for cross-Strait exchanges, and shared experience in virtual exchanges during the productive talks.