

Media Reception Speech by Minister Chen

May 17, 2018

Friends in the Media, Good Afternoon.

In a few days, President Tsai will complete her first two years in office. Under her leadership during this time, the government has striven to maintain the status quo of cross-Strait peace and stability. It has also firmly safeguarded the nation's sovereignty and dignity and the welfare of the people without the slightest compromise. Our policy positions have been affirmed by the people of Taiwan and the international community.

Although mainland China has yet responded positively to our goodwill and has even intensified diplomatic suppression and military intimidation against Taiwan in a bid to force our acceptance of its unilaterally established political preconditions. However, we have full strategic focus. We will never bow or back down to momentary pressure, we will of course not revert to the old path of confrontation.

I would like to take this opportunity to brief you on the major work recently promoted by the Mainland Affairs Council (MAC), as well as the goals and directions of our future efforts.

I. Major Work

1. Closely following cross-Strait developments and endeavoring to maintain the status quo of peace and stability in the Taiwan Strait: The MAC has been closely watching developments in the Asia-Pacific region and the changing

dynamics among Taiwan, the US, and China to prepare risk controls. In keeping with President Tsai's policy thinking of maintaining peace and stability in the Taiwan Strait and the principle of no provocation and no surprises, we are committed to defending Taiwan's democracy and dignity and to minimizing the potential impact and influence of Beijing's actions against Taiwan.

2. Duly responding to Beijing's attempts to absorb Taiwan and safeguard national interests and the people's rights and interests: In conjunction with various ministries, the MAC has continued to track, study, and analyze Beijing's politically motivated and planned united front actions to absorb Taiwan, as well as the expansion of the Mainland's propagandistic public opinion war. It has also reminded the public to be vigilant to the risks involved in relevant Mainland policies and measures in order to safeguard best interests of the country and the public's interests and well-being.

3. Providing emergency assistance and protecting the rights and interests of Mainland people in Taiwan and Taiwanese people in the Mainland: The MAC and the Straits Exchange Foundation (SEF) provide immediate notification and assistance during major cross-Strait emergencies. In keeping with the principles of humanitarianism and reciprocity, the MAC also cares for the living, education, and tourism conditions of Mainland spouses, students, and visitors in Taiwan, as well as the difficulties encountered by Taiwanese people living in the Mainland.

4. Strengthening the legal system for cross-Strait exchanges and contact and easing regulations on the Mini Three Links: The MAC encourages normal cross-Strait contact and exchanges. To strengthen the legal system for managing cross-Strait affairs, we have drafted amendments to the Act Governing Relations between the People of the Taiwan Area and the Mainland Area

regarding adoption (Article 65) and strengthening management regulations on entry to mainland China by civil servants (Article 9). We will also propose draft amendments on the management of Mainland capital. In addition, the minimum number of Mainland nationals that can comprise a tour group traveling via the Mini Three Links has been reduced from five to three, and fees for visas on arrival for travel via the Mini Three Links have been lowered. We also expect the proof of financial ability threshold for individual travel to Taiwan by Mainland tourists to be reduced soon.

5. The public affirms cross-Strait policy and believes that the two sides should resolve differences through dialogue: The people of Taiwan widely support the government's prudent policies. According to the latest MAC-commissioned public opinion survey conducted in early May by Taiwan Real Survey, more than 70% (73.3%) of the public support the government's approach over the past two years of firmly defending the nation's sovereignty and dignity and the well-being of the people; its commitment to maintaining the status quo of cross-Strait peace and stability; and its efforts to participate in the international community. Moreover, nearly 90% (88.1%) of the public approve the government's position both sides of the Strait share a duty to maintain positive interaction and should engage in healthy and regular contacts and exchanges. About 80% of the public agree that the two sides should show mutual respect and resolve differences through communication and dialogue without preconditions (83%). In addition, nearly 80% of the public support the government's defense of Taiwan's democracy and the right of the people of Taiwan to choose their future (76.5%). The public opinion survey also indicated that people adhere to and support the government's defense of national sovereignty and Taiwan's dignity.

II. Future Work Emphasis

1. Managing risk in the cross-Strait situation and maintaining a "balanced" status quo in the Taiwan Strait: Cross-Strait developments have been greatly affected by external influences. Beijing's manipulation of public opinion and psychological deterrence against Taiwan is an inevitable response to the external pressures it faces at this time. The government has been intensively collecting information and developing measures to counter the Mainland China's carrot and stick approach. It is analyzing situation trends to assess follow-up developments in the Taiwan Strait and prepare risk management measures. It is also closely watching cross-Strait personnel contacts and exchanges, strengthening communication and risk alerts, and working to maintain a "balanced" status quo of peace and stability in the Taiwan Strait.

2. Continuing to create an atmosphere conducive to cross-Strait benign interaction and promoting dialogue and communication: Pragmatic, face-to-face communication is the only way to enhance understanding between the two sides. Emotional intimidation will only cause misjudgment and build hostility. Although there is room for improvement in the current cross-Strait atmosphere, we will continue to show goodwill and create a good atmosphere for cross-Strait interaction. However, Taiwan's goodwill does not mean making endless concessions. If our national security and social stability are threatened or attacked, the government will continue to "do the right thing" and respond as needed.

III. Conclusion

Taiwan must respond with wisdom and flexibility to the changing global and Asia-Pacific regional landscape and an increasingly powerful mainland China that has never relinquished the threat of using force against it. President

Tsai's cross-Strait policy of maintaining the status quo is a correct and feasible path. With a firm footing, I trust we can weather any storm.

Around the world, we see again and again that peace and dialogue are the best options for resolving conflicts and differences. For example, the Korean Peninsula was once on the brink of war, but recently the leaders of North and South Korea crossed the divide and joined hands to discuss a vision for peace. While new variables illustrate the difficulty of peaceful reconciliation, the choice between conflict and peace actually lies in the minds of the leaders and allows for no misinterpretation or misjudgment. I hope that the past invaluable experience of turning animosity into friendship in the international community and the Taiwan Strait can bring new inspiration and impetus. As President Tsai recently said, the two sides cannot stand in distant corners and try to guess each other's intentions. This is dangerous. I hope that the two sides can sit down and talk on the basis of reciprocity and dignity and without political preconditions to further resolve their differences.

Two months have passed since I came into office. I will continue to work with my colleagues at the MAC to promote cross-Strait affairs in line with President Tsai's cross-Strait policy and the related provisions of the Constitution of the Republic of China, Act Governing Relations between the People of the Taiwan Area and the Mainland Area, and related laws and regulations. We will do our utmost to maintain peace and stability in the Taiwan Strait, to ease tensions between the two sides, and to work hard to make Taiwan a beautiful island where the people can live and work together in peace, happiness, and good fortune. Thank you.