

# **Response to Hong Kong Government's Remarks on the Temporary Suspension of Operations of the Hong Kong Economic, Trade and Cultural Office**

News Reference Material

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1. The Hong Kong Economic, Trade and Cultural Office (HKETCO) was established in 2011 based on an exchange of letters between Taiwan and Hong Kong on the subject of setting up respective representative offices. According to the spirit of the exchange of letters, the purpose of setting up representative offices was for providing services for the people of both sides and handling general administrative affairs. It did not touch upon political issues such as the "1992 Consensus." The Hong Kong government's deliberate distortion of the fact is clearly aiming at specific political objectives. Taiwan strongly disagrees with this maneuver.

2. Over the past years, Taiwan has upheld the principle of reciprocity and prioritized people's livelihood and well-being in our endeavors to promote Taiwan-Hong Kong relations and support the operations of the HKETCO. We have done this without ever requiring any personnel of the HKETCO to sign any documents with additional conditions before taking office. However, since July 2018, the Hong Kong government has imposed unreasonable political preconditions on our personnel stationing at the Taipei Economic and Cultural Office (TECO) in Hong Kong. This has not only interfered with the normal staff rotation and office operations but also disregarded the rights and welfare of people on both sides. This has violated the content of letters exchanged between the two sides in 2011, and has severely undermined Taiwan-Hong Kong relations.

3. In spite of the concerns and warnings of countries around the world, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) authorities reneged on its promise to the Hong Kong people by pushing through the Hong Kong National Security Law. The Hong Kong government's submission to and endorsement of Beijing's move cause Hong Kong's democracy and human rights to plunge into the worst abyss since the city's handover in 1997. Taiwan, along with other major democracies, has voiced our support for the people of Hong Kong in their fight for democracy and freedom based on the universal values we believe in. Meanwhile, under provisions of the Act Governing Relations with Hong Kong and Macau, Taiwan provides humanitarian aid and necessary services to Hong Kong citizens entering Taiwan through legal channels. Regretfully, the Hong Kong government has misinterpreted these actions as a provocation. Such mindset that belittles democracy and the rule of law further reflects the guilty conscience of the Hong Kong government.

4. Taiwan is a democratic and pluralistic society, where people have the right to assemble and parade in accordance with the law. When civil organizations launched protests in front of the HKETCO, our government ensured that the law enforcement personnel were deployed on site to maintain order, and also made phone calls to the office to follow up on the situation after the events. In contrast, when demonstrations were staged outside TECO in Hong Kong by pro-China activists, the Hong Kong government not only was indifferent and aloof, but even adopted a laissez-faire approach when the pro-China media outlets created fake news smearing Taiwan. Exactly who is strictly abiding by the bilateral consent and going all lengths to safeguard the other side's stakes and rights under its jurisdiction is clear as day.

5. The MAC hereby restates that, despite the challenging external circumstances, the TECO in Hong Kong will still hold fast to our position and provide services to the public. As far as the Hong Kong government's temporary suspension of operations of the HKETCO, it must bear all the ensuing consequences of affecting the rights of the public on its own.