

## **The “Lunar New Year Charter Ferry Program for Kinmen and Matsu”: Maiden Voyage of Kinmen-Xiamen Route Took Place on January 7**

MAC Press Release No. 001

The Mainland Affairs Council (MAC) issued the following press release to mark today's maiden voyage of the Kinmen-Xiamen route under the “Lunar New Year Charter Ferry Program for Kinmen and Matsu” (hereinafter the “Charter Ferry Program”). MAC Minister Chiu Tai-san visited Kinmen for an inspection and participated in the maiden voyage ceremony held by the Kinmen County Government. The maiden voyage went smoothly, thanks to the collaboration between the central and local governments, and successfully facilitated the homecoming and family reunion for the first group of 37 Kinmen residents and their mainland Chinese spouses for the Lunar New Year holiday.

At the ceremony, Minister Chiu said that today's maiden voyage symbolized the beginning of the resumption of the “Mini-three-links” passenger service and orderly cross-Strait exchanges. In response to the voices calling on the government to further relax the scope of passengers and number of trips permitted under the Charter Ferry Program and quickly restore the “Mini-three links” in full, Minister Chiu said that there would be interagency rolling reviews of the “Mini-three-links” passenger service with detailed consideration of factors including the operation of the Charter Ferry Program, the COVID-19 pandemic situation, and other relevant developments. Meanwhile, he called on the public to cooperate with the government's policies and measures pertaining to COVID-19 pandemic prevention, African swine fever prevention, etc., to create favorable conditions for the next stage of re-opening.

Minister Chiu reiterated President Tsai's statement in her New Year's Day Address that, only through dialogue, cooperation, and joint efforts could we help

more people enjoy security and happiness. Through the Charter Ferry Program, the MAC sought to gradually restore Taiwanese people's confidence in resuming cross-Strait exchanges and rebuild trust between relevant agencies across the two sides. The government hoped that the reciprocity of goodwill and sincerity would serve as a foundation for the step-by-step resumption of healthy and orderly people-to-people exchanges and benign interaction between the two sides across the Taiwan Strait.

Today's maiden voyage departed for Xiamen at 10 am, with the Taiwan-registered ship carrying 25 passengers, including Kinmen County Magistrate Chen Fu-hai, elected public representatives of Kinmen, and some reporters. The ferry returned at 12 pm, carrying 37 Kinmen and Matsu residents and their mainland Chinese spouses, whose saliva-based PCR tests and on-site CIQS (customs, immigration, quarantine, security) clearance went smoothly. Officials including MAC Deputy Minister Chiu Chui-Cheng and Director-General Yeh Hsieh-lung of the Maritime Port Bureau, Ministry of Transportation and Communications, were also present at the scene with their respective staff to care for the passengers, inspect the CIQS process, and learn about people's perceptions and relevant inquiries, which would be used as a reference for the subsequent review and implementation of the Charter Ferry Program.