

2023 Lunar New Year Gathering for Taiwanese Businesses

Remarks of the MAC Minister

News Reference Material

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Straits Exchange Foundation (SEF) Acting Chairman Rock Hsu and Deputy Secretary-general Tsai Meng-chun, Minister of Economic Affairs Wang Mei-hua, Deputy Minister of Finance Juan Ching-hwa, Deputy Minister of Transportation and Communications Chi Wen-jong, Deputy Minister of Labor Wang An-pang, Deputy Minister of Health and Welfare Wang Pi-sheng, Vice Chairperson of the Financial Supervisory Commission Hsiao Tsuey-ling, Chairperson of the Chinese National Federation of Industries Miao Feng-qiang, Chairperson of the General Chamber of Commerce of the Republic of China Hsu Shu-po, Honorary President of the Association of Taiwan Investment Enterprises on the Mainland Kuo Shan-hui, Presidents and Representatives of Taiwanese Business Associations, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen, Good day!

New Year's Greetings and Appreciation

Today marks the first Lunar New Year gathering since the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic. After a long three years, I'm finally able to reunite with my good friends; it really hasn't been easy. I would like to express a special thank-you to the SEF for its meticulous arrangements. I also thank our friends in the Taiwanese business community for their enthusiastic participation. I wish you all a happy, healthy, prosperous, and successful Year of the Rabbit.

It has been some 20 years since I first stepped into the circle of Taiwanese business community. I was appointed as deputy minister of Mainland Affairs Council (MAC) in May 2004 and became its minister in February 2021, but

this is my first time participating in the Lunar New Year Gathering for Taiwanese Businesses as minister. I am filled with gratitude for all of my friends in the Taiwanese business community: thank you for your long-time support for the MAC and SEF, and thank you for your contribution to cross-Strait peace.

Lasting cross-Strait peace is a hope we all share and a responsibility I bear. I am well aware that this is a heavy responsibility, and I cannot accomplish it by myself. I am joined here today by many friends both old and new, who have informed me about the latest developments in mainland China, shared with me your vision for cross-Strait relations, and provided me with precious advice on our government's policies on mainland China. I truly appreciate all the first-hand and invaluable input from you. It truly serves as an important reference for our government's policy-making.

Maintaining Cross-Strait Peace and Stability Is the Shared Responsibility of Both Sides

For some time now, mainland China has been escalating its military threats against Taiwan and imposing import bans on Taiwanese agricultural, fishery, and food products. The business groups and businesspeople in Taiwan continue to call on our government to improve cross-Strait relations and reduce potential risks, and we have heard these voices.

"Cross-Strait peace and stability" is a hope shared by the people on both sides of the Taiwan Strait. Our government remains consistent in our policy stance to maintain cross-Strait peace and stability. We will not act provocatively or adventurist. We will firmly defend our sovereignty, dignity, and democratic way of life; we will also work with like-minded countries, enhance self-defense capabilities, and respond to developments of the situation in a rational manner.

We call on the authorities of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) to face up to and respect the Taiwanese people's firm stance on safeguarding national

sovereignty of the Republic of China and dear wish to preserve core values of democracy and freedom. We call on the CCP to improve cross-Strait relations pragmatically, stop military coercion and economic pressure against Taiwan, and replace "confrontation" with "conversation"— these are the only ways for the people on both sides of the Taiwan Strait to enjoy security and happiness. We are willing to work with the Beijing authorities to find mutually acceptable ways to maintain peace and stability across the Taiwan Strait based on rationality, equality, and mutual respect. Moreover, we sincerely hope that the COVID-19 pandemic in mainland China will abate soon so that the people can return to a normal and healthy life, and that people on both sides, with the pandemic under control, can stay safe and happy in the new year.

Gradually Restoring Healthy and Orderly Cross-Strait Exchanges

Over the past three years, the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic has been felt not only on the global economy and people's lives but on cross-Strait transportation and people-to-people exchanges. Taiwanese businesspeople have repeatedly urged the government to fully restore direct flights and passenger service under the Mini-three-links between the two sides across the Taiwan Strait, suggestions that our government has always taken seriously as we conduct various assessments and preparations. However, to ensure the health of everyone in Taiwan, our government must handle this matter carefully, and this has made things hard for the Taiwanese businesspeople.

Our government's policy is that, premised on the COVID-19 pandemic can be kept under control, we will gradually resume healthy and orderly people-to-people exchanges in hopes of de-escalating cross-Strait tensions as a result. The "Lunar New Year Charter Ferry Program for Kinmen and Matsu" was scheduled for the period between January 7 and February 6 to facilitate cross-Strait travel during the Lunar New Year holiday by Kinmen and Matsu residents and their mainland Chinese spouses. The program also serves as a starting point

for the resumption of passenger service under the Mini-three-links and promotion of orderly cross-Strait exchanges. Today is day 27 of the program and all has gone smoothly. The MAC will coordinate with relevant agencies to carry out rolling reviews and promote the normalization of the Mini-three-links passenger service in a step-by-step manner based on the implementation of the program, the pandemic situation, and other developments.

Regarding expanding direct cross-Strait flights and resuming direct cross-Strait ferry routes for passengers, reviews and evaluations are all ongoing. We sincerely hope that both sides of the Taiwan Strait can show goodwill and sincerity with concrete actions so we can lay the foundation for benign cross-Strait interaction.

The Government Continues to Care for Taiwanese businesspeople and Their Children. We also Remind Businesspeople of Risks in Investing in Mainland China

The government maintains a close watch on the schooling of children of Taiwanese businesspeople in mainland China. We have been actively aligning the operations of the three schools launched by Taiwanese businesspeople with that of Taiwan's education system. To reduce the burden of the children of Taiwanese businesspeople regarding having to travel back to Taiwan for examinations, the MAC and SEF have been fully behind the Ministry of Education's efforts to set up new examination halls in mainland China despite obstacles posed by the COVID-19 pandemic over the past three years. This is to provide convenience for the students so that they can take examinations nearby without having to travel back and forth between mainland China and Taiwan. Going forward, we will continue to resolve issues pertaining to the schooling of the children of Taiwanese businesspeople to alleviate the latter's concerns as they conduct business in mainland China.

Our government will resume cross-Strait exchanges step by step, but we would also like to alert Taiwanese businesspeople to the dramatic dynamics underway in mainland China's investment environment. These changes, which have been noted in the international media reports and studies by professional international organizations, will require adjustments. In the past year, mainland China's economy has faced numerous external challenges from the Russia-Ukraine War, looming inflation, and US-China technology war. Domestically, the investment environment has also been affected by tightened regulatory control of the real estate market and online platforms, policy of “Common Prosperity,” policy of “the Public Sector Advances and the Private Sector Retreats,” pandemic control measures, and power shortages. Most importantly, after the 20th National Congress of the CCP, the centralization of power has led to more risks in local policies.

The “Online Registration System for Taiwanese Citizens Visiting Mainland China” Is Live; Taiwanese Businesspeople Are Welcomed to Make Good Use of It

Due to the possibility of rising risks for those living or staying in mainland China, the MAC launched the “Online Registration System for Taiwanese Citizens Visiting Mainland China” on January 16 this year to strengthen emergency services for Taiwanese citizens visiting mainland China. Taiwanese businesspeople, managers, and their family members who travel to mainland China for all purposes can register their personal and contact information, with which our government can get in immediate contact and provide necessary assistance and services.

The MAC and the SEF Are the Home Base for the Taiwanese Business Community and Will Continue to Improve All Relevant Services

Taiwanese businesses play a critical role in promoting economic prosperity and peaceful development across the Taiwan Strait. It is important for our government to ensure quality services for the Taiwanese business community. As the investment environment facing Taiwanese businesses continues to change, services provided by the MAC and SEF must also keep pace with the times. To help Taiwanese businesses respond to the complicated dynamics, our government will continue to strengthen information provision, assistance, consultation services, and other services for Taiwanese businesses.

The MAC and the SEF are the home base for Taiwanese businesspeople. You are all working hard away from home. If you have any suggestions or advice, please let us know. We are more than happy to listen and help find solutions.

In closing, I would like to again thank all of the friends in the Taiwan business community participating today. I wish you all good health, family harmony, and career success. Thank you!