

The 48th MAC Advisory Committee Meeting: Highlights of Discussion by Advisory Members*

News Reference Material

Date: August 2, 2023

The Mainland Affairs Council (MAC) recently held the 48th Advisory Committee Meeting on the topic of "The 'Year of Civilian Exchange Expansion' Targeting Taiwanese Youth & Students: Strategies of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and Countermeasures by Taiwan." Key statements and discussion points of the participating committee members are as follows:

1. The introductory report presented by the scholars indicated that the CCP has short-, medium-, and long-term goals in its united front strategy targeting Taiwanese youth. The short-term goal is to "tell the China story well" and create a positive image of peaceful development in mainland China. The medium-term goal is to "attract Taiwanese youth to mainland China" and make them see mainland China as the top choice for career development. The long-term goal is to "transform national identity" and achieve the objective of "promoting integration and unification." In terms of tactics, the CCP has adopted a "carrot-and-stick" approach and strategy of "discriminatory treatment": on the one hand, the CCP offers Taiwan "beneficial measures" to lure Taiwanese youth to study and work in mainland China; on the other hand, it seeks to create a chilling effect and subjugate the public to the CCP's rule by resorting to the unilaterally legislated Anti-Espionage Law and ex parte, discretionary actions to carry out arrests, prosecutions, and other actions harmful to their personal safety. The report advised the government to strengthen work on enhancing Taiwanese youth' understanding

*The MAC Advisory Committee Meeting is formed by experts and scholars in related fields. The views and opinions expressed in the meetings or excerpted in this article belong solely to the speakers.

of mainland China's true nature and counter authoritarian expansion by learning from the countermeasures adopted by Western democracies.

2. Some participating members pointed out that, the current unhealthy "unidirectional" exchanges happening between the two sides of Taiwan Strait is the result of the CCP making an all-out effort to attract Taiwanese youth to study and develop in mainland China while unilaterally preventing mainland Chinese students on all levels from studying in Taiwan. This ban was implemented in April 2019 and remains in force until today. Such maneuvers in fostering imbalanced "unidirectional" exchanges tilted towards mainland China are detrimental to cross-Strait interactions and contribute nothing to positive cross-Strait relations. Mainland China should promptly resume allowing mainland Chinese students to study in Taiwan to restore normal two-way exchanges between the two sides.

3. One committee member noted that mainland China has recently organized numerous innovation and creative research competitions, such as the Cross-Strait Youth Entrepreneurship Competition and Cross-Strait Industrial Robot Competition, and encouraged participation by Taiwanese students. However, this entails significant risk of intellectual property infringement and could potentially affect the interests of Taiwanese students/participants given that intellectual property rights protection in mainland China falls far short of that in Taiwan. The experts suggested that the relevant authorities and schools ensure to remind teachers and students to carefully assess the related risks.

4. One committee member observed that the youth entrepreneurship bases set up by mainland China have not implemented the so-called "beneficial measures" to Taiwan, nor have they fulfilled their intended purposes, rendering the impact of any united front efforts on Taiwanese youth short of expectations. This is especially true as mainland China's lackluster post-COVID-19 economic recovery has left most Taiwanese youth seeking employment in mainland China with nothing but short-term contract positions and little due protection. Furthermore, mainland

China has instituted a system of digital authoritarianism that closely monitors the public through a social credit system, digital renminbi, and various surveillance technology systems. This environment poses a high risk of personal data leakage. Taiwanese youth intending to go to mainland China should carefully consider and take precautions against these potential risks.

5. Participating committee members noted that some Taiwanese people, due to insufficient knowledge of the current development of the mainland Chinese society, are more susceptible to the influence of the CCP's one-sided propaganda and likely to develop unrealistic perceptions about mainland China. The committee members advised the government to continue its work on enhancing Taiwanese youth's understanding of the true nature of mainland China and publicize, through various channels, the potential risks of going to mainland China. In addition, in light of recent events— the CCP's escalated military threats to Taiwan, amendments to the Anti-Espionage Law coming into effect on July 1, 2023, and a recent string of unusual cases where Taiwanese citizens traveling to mainland China for all kinds of exchanges ended up with infringement of personal freedom and safety or encountered unfriendly treatment— the government is also urged to strengthen advocacy and raise public awareness to protect the people's personal safety and freedom and safeguard national security.