

"2024 Lunar New Year Gathering of Taiwanese Businesspeople in Mainland China"

Minister's Speech

Date: February 16, 2024

Straits Exchange Foundation Chairman Lee (David), Vice Chairman and Secretary-General Chiu (Chui-cheng), Minister of Economic Affairs Wang (Mei-hua), Deputy Minister of Finance Lee (Ching-hua), Deputy Minister of Transportation and Communication Lin (Kuo-shian), Deputy Minister of Labor Wang (An-pang), Deputy Minister of Health and Welfare Wang (Pi-sheng), Deputy Minister of National Development Council Kao (Shien-quey), Financial Supervisory Commission Deputy Chairperson Hsiao (Tsui-ling), Chinese National Federation of Industries Chairman Miao (Matthew), General Chamber of Commerce of the Republic of China Chairman Hsu (Paul), Association of Taiwan Investment Enterprises on the Mainland Honorary President Chang (Joseph), Presidents and Representatives of other Taiwanese business association, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen, Good day!

Happy New Year and Appreciations

Thank you Chairman Lee and colleagues of the Straits Exchange Foundation (SEF) for organizing this event. Today is the first Lunar New Year's gathering for Taiwanese businesspeople in mainland China since the end of the COVID-19 pandemic. During the pandemic, we jointly weathered and overcame a multitude of new challenges and problems through everyone's hard work. I wish you all every success and good luck in the Year of the Dragon.

My bond with Taiwanese business friends stretches back more than 20 years. As minister, my most important task has always been to care for, serve,

and assist Taiwanese businesspeople. I am grateful to you all for your abiding support to the Mainland Affairs Council (MAC) and the SEF. I would also like to thank you for your long-term contribution and assistance to cross-Strait people-to-people exchanges.

Last year (2023), mainland China hosted three major international sports events: the Chengdu Universiade, Hangzhou Asian Games, and Hangzhou Asian Para Games. Chengdu Taiwan Businessmen's Association President Kao Kin-le, Hangzhou TBA Honorary President Chou Pao-hua, and presidents and vice presidents of Taiwanese business associations in the vicinity of these events worked tirelessly to coordinate local resources and support logistical services for the delegations. They also mobilized local Taiwanese businesspeople and youth to cheer on Taiwan's athletes. The contribution of the presidents and members of Taiwanese business associations was crucial to the successful participation and proud achievements of our delegations. For this I would like to express my most heartfelt gratitude.

Taiwan's democratic achievements have earned international recognition; the CCP should rationally face the new cross-Strait situation

2024 is a year when many countries are due to hold general elections. On January 13 this year, the Republic of China successfully held its eighth presidential election and once again showed the world the profound democratic accomplishments of the Taiwanese people. This achievement was jointly created by the people of Taiwan and is widely praised by the international community. Through its peaceful transition from an authoritarian system to a mature democracy, Taiwan has become a model of democracy for the world.

Vice President Lai has repeatedly emphasized that he will continue President Tsai's cross-Strait policy line of "maintaining the status quo." After winning the presidential election, Lai immediately and clearly stated in his victory speech, "As President, I have an important responsibility to maintain peace and

stability in the Taiwan Strait. I will act in accordance with the Republic of China's constitutional system to maintain the cross-Strait status quo in a dignified manner. Under the principles of dignity and parity, we will use exchanges to replace containment, dialogue to replace confrontation, and pursue cross-Strait exchanges and cooperation with confidence. This furthers the well-being of people on both sides of the Taiwan Strait and achieves our objective of peace and shared prosperity. At the same time, we are also determined to safeguard Taiwan from continuing threats and intimidation from China."

Maintaining peace and stability across the Taiwan Strait is a responsibility shared by both sides. It is also the common expectation of the international community. We urge the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) authorities to face the new cross-Strait situation after the election rationally and with an open mind. We also hope to rebuild goodwill and mutual trust between the two sides, establish a cross-Strait relationship based on positive interaction, and jointly promote stability and prosperity across the Taiwan Strait and in the wider region.

The government is resuming healthy and orderly cross-Strait exchanges and creating conditions for positive cross-Strait interaction

Taiwanese businesspeople have repeatedly suggested that cross-Strait exchanges and contact be resumed after the pandemic. The MAC continues, in conjunction with relevant agencies, to advance towards this goal. On March 25, 2023, the government normalized direct cross-Strait ferry service and passenger travel under the Mini-three-links by expanding passenger eligibility to all Taiwanese citizens, mainland Chinese spouses, mainland Chinese holders of family visit permits, foreign nationals, and residents of Hong Kong and Macao for round-trip travel and transit. On March 9, 2023, direct cross-Strait flight destinations were restored to 15 scheduled flight destinations and 13 charter flight destinations. From August 28, 2023, mainland Chinese businesspeople have been able to apply to enter Taiwan for short-term business exchanges,

including participating in business shows, attending exhibitions, and participating in business training programs. Additionally, the government welcomes mainland Chinese students studying in Taiwan. It also helped facilitate the inclusion of mainland Chinese students in Taiwan's national health insurance system, which the Executive Yuan approved on February 1 this year.

We sincerely hope that both sides of the Taiwan Strait could show more goodwill and engage in sincere exchanges with each other to promote healthy and orderly cross-Strait exchanges and contacts. We also urge the mainland Chinese authorities to promptly resume communication and dialogue with Taiwan without preconditions so that together we can create favorable conditions for positive cross-Strait interactions.

Caring for the education of the children of Taiwanese businesspeople so Taiwanese businesspeople can pursue their careers with peace of mind

The government attaches great importance to the education of the children of Taiwanese businesspeople. It actively assists the operation of three schools for the children of Taiwanese businesspeople in mainland China. It also supports the alignment of these institutions with Taiwan's education system. Furthermore, to provide the children of Taiwanese businesspeople in mainland China with access to nearby testing locations, the MAC, in conjunction with the SEF and the Ministry of Education, continues to establish centers in mainland China for taking university entrance exams and English listening comprehension tests.

Furthermore, for 17 years, the SEF has been organizing summer camps to familiarize the children of Taiwanese businesspeople with Taiwan's diverse culture. During the pandemic (from 2020 to 2023), the SEF also arranged a series of small-scale tour visits to Taiwan. This year, it held its first-ever winter camp, earning rave reviews. In the future, relevant government agencies will

continue to work with the SEF to implement policies caring for the education of the children of Taiwanese businesspeople.

Reminding Taiwanese businesspeople to prepare early for the growing economic and political risks in mainland China

Over the past two years, mainland China has faced a number of internal difficulties, including sluggish consumption, weak investment, a housing bust, and weakening export momentum. Externally, it has felt the impact of the trade and technology war with the United States, as well as other geopolitical factors that have slowed mainland China's economy and steadily increased financial risk. This has made international institutions generally gloomier about mainland China's economy. It has also adversely impacted the operations of Taiwanese businesspeople in mainland China. In addition, the CCP authorities continue to expand enforcement of the National Security Law, using vague definitions to exercise jurisdiction at their discretion. Taiwanese citizens in mainland China should be alert to the threat this poses to their personal safety. We advise our Taiwanese business friends to keep abreast of these developments and prepare early.

The government continues to strengthen services and guidance for Taiwanese businesspeople

The government continues to care for the needs and demands of Taiwanese businesspeople running and developing their businesses in mainland China. On January 10, 2022, the Executive Yuan approved a three-year extension of the "Action Plan for Welcoming Overseas Taiwanese Businesses to Return to Invest in Taiwan" to the end of 2024 to help Taiwanese businesspeople diversify their operations and invest back in Taiwan. As of January 5 this year, the government has approved more than NT\$1.22 trillion in investment back to

Taiwan by 302 companies. The MAC, Ministry of Economic Affairs, and other relevant agencies will continue to strengthen services and guidance for Taiwanese businesspeople in mainland China, provide incentives for Taiwanese businesspeople to invest back to Taiwan, and help companies to expand globally, upgrade, and transform their operations.

Over the past three years, the SEF has arranged widely well-received investment-related visits for Taiwanese businesspeople to various cities and counties in Taiwan. The MAC and the SEF will continue to provide Taiwanese businesspeople with professional service teams, as well as a diverse range of refined and strengthened consulting services. This year, the MAC introduced video consultation services and added seminar activities to its "Teacher Chang for Taiwanese Businessmen" program. It also expanded seminar activities to provide more reference information to Taiwanese businesspeople. In addition, we remind our Taiwan business friends to assess the security and resilience of their supply chains and plan for risks to ensure their continued stable development and profit growth.

Taiwanese businesspeople play a crucial role in promoting economic prosperity and maintaining healthy and orderly exchanges across the Taiwan Strait. We value the observations and suggestions of Taiwanese businesspeople related to cross-Strait relations. We also invite our Taiwan business friends to reach out to the SEF and the MAC at any time to provide their valuable insights.

Lastly, I want to once again thank the SEF for its meticulous planning and arrangements for this event. I also thank our Taiwanese business friends for your enthusiastic participation. I wish you all a happy Lunar New Year and peace, health, wealth, success, and good luck in the Year of the Dragon.

Thank you!