

**Minister Lai: The ROC's democratic constitutional system and the mainstream public opinion in Taiwan society form the important foundation for determining the development course of cross-strait relations**

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Mainland Affairs Council (MAC) Minister Lai Shin-yuan presented a keynote speech titled "The Republic of China's Democratic Achievement is the Core Force for Building Lasting Peace in Cross-Strait Relations" today (February 6, 2012, US EST) at the invitation of the Fairbank Center for Chinese Studies at Harvard University, United States. In her speech, Minister Lai emphasized that the democratic constitutional system of the Republic of China (ROC) and the mainstream public opinion in Taiwan society have formed the important foundation for determining the development course of cross-strait relations. The election process and outcome demonstrate the highly mature democratic quality and wisdom of the people of Taiwan. Through the election, they have expressed their expectations and persistence: namely, to uphold Taiwan's identity, to promote the peaceful and stable development of cross-strait relations, and to maintain the status quo of "no unification, no independence, and no use of force" in the Taiwan Strait under the framework of the ROC Constitution.

Minister Lai also noted in her speech that the Mainland policy spearheaded by President Ma Ying-jeou over the past three years and

eight months has kept the pulse of public opinion and the prevailing expectations of Taiwan society firmly in mind. The process of promoting cross-strait relations in Taiwan's society has heightened belief in President Ma's position that "democracy is the yardstick for measuring the distance between the two sides." We also believe that a Mainland that progressively identifies with democratic values will bring positive impacts on enhancing regional and global peace and well-being. Minister Lai stated that the stable conduct of Taiwan's Mainland policy has received affirmation around the world as well as met the common expectation of the international community. Moreover, Taiwan's strengths lie in its democratic constitutional system and the universal values of democracy, freedom, and peace it defends. This is the force at the core of Taiwan in piloting the development of cross-strait relations and creating lasting peace across the Strait.

Minister Lai amply elaborated on the significant implications and practical achievements of the ROC's Mainland policy. After her speech, the participants enthusiastically asked questions on follow-up developments in cross-strait relations, negotiations, and political dialogue. Minister Lai responded that, in view of the new cross-strait situation, the government would in the future continue to maintain the status quo of "no unification, no independence, and no use of force" in the Taiwan Strait under the framework of the ROC Constitution. However, the development of cross-strait relations and the respective internal conditions on each side have not sufficiently matured for negotiations on political and military issues to begin. Minister Lai emphasized that the political dispute between the two sides is a chronic problem which has no easy short-term solution, and mutual trust must be gradually built up. She

indicated that the ROC is a sovereign and independent country, and the Mainland must understand that the ROC is the root of the life for the people of Taiwan and on which they depend their feelings and identity in the international community. Facing the needs for the long-term development of cross-strait relations and the promotion of further interactions, Taiwan calls on the Mainland side to pragmatically face up to and respect the reality of the ROC and cross-strait relations and interact in good spirit with Taiwan in the international arena.

There was a lively discussion at the end of Minister Lai's keynote speech at Harvard. Attendees were from academic and other sectors in the United States and Taiwan. Minister Lai was invited to attend the National Prayer Breakfast, and she also visited U.S. officials, think tanks, senators and congressmen, and overseas Chinese groups in Washington, D.C. and Boston to explain the major achievements of the government in promoting the development of cross-strait relations. Various parties in the U.S. sincerely congratulated and highly affirmed the democratic achievement of Taiwan's presidential election results as well as the success of President Ma's Mainland policy.