

MAC: Public Opinion in Taiwan Affirms Policy Course and Plans for Promoting Reciprocal Institutions Establishment by SEF and ARATS; Nearly 80% of the Public Support Government Efforts in Securing Travel Document Issuance and Humanitarian Visiting Functions

June 18, 2013

No. 39

The Mainland Affairs Council (MAC) today (June 18, 2013) announced the results of its latest special survey of public opinion on the establishment of reciprocal institutions between the Straits Exchange Foundation (SEF) and the Association for Relations Across the Taiwan Straits (ARATS). The survey found that over 70% of the public endorsed the government's policy to promote reciprocal institutions establishment between the SEF and ARATS to directly serve and assist the people on both sides (71.1%) and feel that this would be beneficial to mutual understanding and would reduce hostility across the Strait (75.4%). Moreover, nearly 80% (78.7%) of the public think that functions of the SEF institutions in the Mainland should include issuing travel documents, notifying the Taiwan side of and enjoying visiting rights to Taiwanese people whose freedom have been restricted through coercive measures in the Mainland.

Regarding the government's actions of formulating the draft "Statute Governing the Establishment of Branches in the Taiwan Area by Mainland Area Institutions Handling Affairs Related to Contact between People across the Taiwan Strait" based on the Act Governing Relations between the People of the Taiwan Area and the Mainland Area and having it submitted to the Legislative Yuan for review, survey results indicated that nearly 70% (67.9%) of the public endorsed the formulation of this bill to act as the basis of authorization and management for future ARATS institutions established in Taiwan. Furthermore, 72% of the public supported the act of submitting the draft statute to the Legislative Yuan for review in advance so that future negotiations between the administrative

agencies and the Mainland will have already undergone congressional oversight. Additionally, provisions of the bill stipulate for competent authorities to heed overall national interests and the reciprocity principle in the processing of the Mainland's application to establish ARATS branch institutions in Taiwan has gained support from 82% of the public, whom of which believe the bill to be sufficient in maintaining national security and safeguarding social stability.

Survey results also showed that 64% of the public endorsed direct appointment of government officials from either side to carry out business operations in their reciprocal institutions under the principle of reciprocity. At the same time, the majority of people hoped that the institutions will prioritize the issue of providing necessary assistance in emergencies, followed by legal advisory services, issuance of travel documents, notification to the Taiwan side of and enjoying visiting rights to Taiwanese people whose freedom have been restricted through coercive measures in the Mainland, cooperation among and services provided in economic, trade and other exchanges, and document notarization and authentication. The government's efforts to secure guarantee and convenience measures for the SEF institutions and staff are supported by 84% of the public, while 80% of the public believe that regulating respective staff dispatched to SEF-ARATS institutions on either side with codes of conduct would be conducive to protecting social security in Taiwan. Furthermore, over half (51.6%) of the public think that the ARATS institutions' establishment in Taiwan would have a good influence on Taiwanese society, while 62% of the public think that the SEF-ARATS reciprocal institutions establishment would have positive influence on Taiwan's foreign relations.

Since early this year, the government has actively promoted work related to the establishment of SEF-ARATS reciprocal institutions in hopes of carrying out the national vision of "Golden Decade, Cross-Strait Peace", meeting demands rising from people's exchanges across the Strait, and safeguarding the rights and interests

of the people. The public opinion survey fully reflects the fact that the great majority of the public supports the government's policy course, acknowledges its related planning and substantive actions, and believes the policy to be beneficial to the development of both cross-strait and external relations. In the future, the MAC will progressively promote SEF-ARATS reciprocal institutions establishment in accordance to the principle of parity, dignity and orderly development. It will also duly announce to the public the consensuses reached at every phase, gather public opinions and reactions and use them as an important reference for the government's promotion of this policy.

The MAC commissioned the Center for Public Opinion and Policy at the Taipei Municipal University of Education to conduct a telephone survey of adults aged 20 and over in Taiwan from June 5 to 8, 2013. A total of 1,077 valid samples were collected, with a sampling error of plus or minus 3% at a 95% level of confidence.