

MAC on International Human Rights Day Urges the Mainland to Respect and Protect Human Rights and Holds International Symposium on its Human Rights Development

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In observance of the 65th anniversary of International Human Rights Day, the Mainland Affairs Council (MAC) entrusted National Chengchi University to hold an international symposium on "Mapping International Engagement in China's Human Rights: An Interdisciplinary Dialogue" on December 9 and 10, 2013. Domestic and foreign scholars and experts were invited to jointly discuss developments related to human rights in mainland China. Nearly a hundred participants joined the symposium and reflected a broad spectrum of concerns on issues related to human rights in the Mainland.

The MAC presented opening remarks at the symposium on the topic of "Let Democracy, Freedom and Human Rights Become Core Values Shared by Both Sides of the Taiwan Strait" and pointed out that, the Third Plenary Session of the 18th Central Committee of the Communist Party of China proposed actions such as the abolition of the "reeducation through labor" system and improvements to the judicial systems for the protection of human rights as an initial step to respond to demands from all sectors to improve human rights in the Mainland. The MAC also expressed hopes for the Mainland, during this critical juncture of planning major internal reforms, to more pragmatically face the actual demands of the people and treat well civil rights activists, dissidents and political prisoners of conscience in a rational and peaceful way to enhance trusting and harmonious relations between the government and people of the Mainland. The MAC emphasized that the two sides should engage in benign competition in areas such as respective constitutional systems, freedom, democracy, human rights and the rule of law, and not

the vicious competition in the military and diplomatic spheres. It is hoped that through healthy and institutionalized competition, mutual elevation, interaction and exchange of universal values could be strengthened across the Strait, and thereby deepen mutual understanding between the two sides.

The MAC stated that, participants invited to the symposium included New York University School of Law Professor Jerome A. Cohen, U.S.-Asia Law Institute at New York University Deputy Executive Director Ira Belkin, Head of the Beijing Office of Sweden's Raoul Wallenberg Institute of Human Rights and Humanitarian Law Merethe Borge MacLeod, Danish Institute for Human Rights Senior Research Fellow Hatla Thelle, Senior Researcher at the Asia Division of Human Rights Watch Nicholas Bequelin and other internationally prominent experts on human rights issues, as well as domestic scholars and experts. The participating scholars noted that international attention is a driver for progress in the Mainland, and also a pillar of support for human rights activists. Taiwan's experience in human rights development provides as a good model for the Mainland. During the symposium, the participants also engaged in broad and in-depth discussions on issues of "International Participation in Human Rights Capacity Building in Mainland China," "Human Rights Issues in Mainland China's Foreign Relations," and "Comparison and Dialogue on Human Rights Development across the Taiwan Strait."

The MAC pointed out that domestic and international views and related achievements presented at the symposium would serve as a policy reference for the government and hopefully also facilitate human rights development in the Mainland. The MAC also emphasized that freedom, democracy, human rights, the rule of law and other universal values are important elements and core values in the interaction and development of cross-strait relations. The ROC government hopes that through participation in international human rights organizations, the Mainland

may carry out more progressive reforms to improve human rights. The government will also continue, through cross-strait exchanges and negotiations, to convey Taiwan's concerns on human rights development in the Mainland, call on the Mainland to respect and protect human rights and create a more favorable environment for the well-being of the people.