

Second Meeting between Heads of Cross-Strait Competent Authorities Successfully Held in Taiwan, Turning a New Page in the Institutionalization of Cross-Strait Relations and Laying a Foundation for Sustainable Long-term Development across the Taiwan Strait

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The Mainland Affairs Council (MAC) today (June 25, 2014) stated that the second Meeting between Heads of Cross-Strait Competent Authorities was held today in Taoyuan, during which MAC Minister Wang Yu-chi welcomed Director Zhang Zhijun of the Mainland's Taiwan Affairs Office (TAO) and the two sides exchanged views on important issues related to cross-strait relations. Minister Wang stated that the Mainland should squarely face the fact of 65-year separate governance across the Strait and face each other pragmatically. The exchange visits between heads of cross-strait competent authorities are results of interaction adhering to the principle of "shelving disputes and jointly creating a win-win outcome." Minister Wang expressed hopes for the achievements to be further expanded and deepened through joint efforts by both sides.

Minister Wang emphasized hopes for the Mainland side to understand Taiwan's democratic constitutional system and political ecology, stressing especially the current trend in Taiwanese society concerning civic awareness and civic movement developments, as well as the expectations the Taiwanese people have placed on expanding foreign trade in hope of seeking a way forward. It is also under this

context that the mainstream public opinion in Taiwan identifies with the government's cross-strait policy to steadily promote peaceful and stable development of cross-strait relations.

Regarding the highly concerned issue among the public of deciding Taiwan's future, Minister Wang reiterated at the meeting the government's position, which is to maintain the status quo of "no unification, no independence and no use of force" under the ROC Constitution framework. The consensus of the Taiwanese people is that the future of Taiwan should be determined, in adherence to the ROC Constitution framework, by the 23 million people of Taiwan; it is hoped that the Mainland may respect the people's voice. Zhang Zhijun also responded with the Mainland's views concerning this issue. After the two sides fully expressed their respective positions, the MAC appealed to the Mainland to uphold the spirit of shelving disputes and jointly creating a win-win outcome, to demonstrate more sincerity, and to pragmatically and with priority handle issues such as people's welfare, rights and interests. Only by doing so may there be a new page for cross-strait relations.

Minister Wang indicated at today's meeting that since the official launch of the liaison and communication mechanism between the MAC and the TAO in February this year, communication has operated smoothly and the mechanism has contributed to increasing understanding and reducing misjudgments. It has also facilitated the smooth promotion of cross-strait affairs, enhanced benign development of cross-strait relations, and advanced the institutionalization of official contacts across the Strait. On this basis, the two sides will continue to pragmatically promote following communication and contact.

The MAC stated that both sides also exchanged views on cross-strait economic cooperation and regional economic integration. Minister Wang proposed at the

meeting that, upon the effect of the Trade in Services Agreement, the two sides should promptly begin follow-up consultations according to Section 2, Article 8 on emergency consultations, Article 11 on exceptional measures, and Section 4, Article 19 on regular review under the Trade in Services Agreement. Director Zhang responded positively to this. The two sides also agreed to actively arrange follow-up talks on operational issues related to the Trade in Goods Agreement. Moreover, Minister Wang emphasized that maintaining cross-strait travel quality, enhancing travel safety, and promoting the sound and orderly development of cross-strait tourism industry requires joint efforts by the two sides. He also expressed support for further expansion of Mainland tourism visits to Taiwan.

At the meeting, Minister Wang reiterated Taiwan's hope to accede to the Trans-Pacific Partnership Agreement (TPP), Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (RCEP), and Free Trade Area of the Asia-Pacific (FTAAP). He stated that this is an issue concerning Taiwan's survival and indicated that, if Taiwan were to successfully begin negotiations with other countries on economic and trade agreements, it would help increase the Taiwanese people's confidence and support in promoting cross-strait economic and trade liberalization.

With respect to the issue of humanitarian visit functions for the reciprocal institutions of the Straits Exchange Foundation (SEF) and the Association for Relations Across the Taiwan Straits (ARATS), the MAC pointed out that positive progress has been made in recent operational discussions. At the meeting today, both sides reiterated that humanitarian visits would be an important function of the institutions and expressed a positive attitude to actively deliberate and handle specific arrangements such as the implementation plan for humanitarian visits, and code of conduct, guarantees and convenience measures for the reciprocal

institutions. Only by pushing forward follow-up operational discussions and inputting more dedication to strengthen substantive services of the institutions may the institutions truly, promptly and effectively serve the public.

On issues of further facilitation for people's exchange across the Strait, such as allowing Mainland tourists to transit in Taiwan, the SEF and the ARATS agreed at the second Cross-strait Agreement Result and Review Meeting in late February this year to study feasible measures, and further agreed to arrange the start of communication between relevant authorities on the issue today. The MAC stated that allowing Mainland tourists to transit in Taiwan would help to enhance the willingness of airlines on the two sides to permanently operate routes serving relevant cities in the Mainland. It would also enhance local development in the Mainland and the convenience of external air transport, as well as support the further development of direct cross-strait transportation links.

During the meeting, the two sides also agreed to continue promotion on cross-strait cultural, education, technology, and news exchanges, as well as to encourage the grassroots public and young students on both sides to strengthen exchanges to enhance awareness and understanding. Minister Wang also emphasized that private cross-strait exchanges should still be spontaneously initiated by the private sector so as to not restrict the diversity, vitality and abundant energy of the private sector, while at the same time, also to fully demonstrate the dynamic forces of the Taiwanese private sector in the exchange process.

The MAC stated that, at the 1992 Hong Kong talks, the Mainland demanded a statement on the "one China principle" as a condition for holding negotiations. The two sides were unable to reach a consensus then. In subsequent correspondence between the two sides, the SEF proposed that "Each side could have its own verbal interpretation of the 'one China' principle", whereby the ARATS expressed their

respect and acceptance of this proposal and thus, the two sides reached the conclusion known as the "1992 Consensus." The MAC indicated that this consensus represents the spirit and political wisdom of the two sides in "addressing realities and shelving disputes," as well as an attitude of pragmatically resolving problems. This is the crux of institutionalized cross-strait negotiations, interactions and exchanges. In the future, the two sides should continue to promote mutually beneficial cross-strait relations in adherence to this foundation.

Over the next three days, Zhang Zhijun will make related visits to cities of New Taipei, Taichung and Kaohsiung. Minister Wang expressed hope that this visit would help Zhang Zhijun to more deeply understand the Taiwanese people's way of life, experience the customs, diverse and exceptional vitality of Taiwan in person, and thus come to fully appreciate the beauty of Taiwan. The MAC stated that Minister Wang has invited Zhang Zhijun and members of the TAO visiting delegation to a relaxed tea reception in Kaohsiung on the evening of June 27 for exchanges with MAC colleagues.