

## **Opening remarks by President Ma Ying-jeou at his meeting with mainland Chinese leader Xi Jinping**

November 7, 2015

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Today Mr. Xi and I, as leaders of mainland China and Taiwan, respectively, have moved on from the past 66 years, reaching out to share this handshake, to hold the past, embrace the future, and uphold the aspirations for prosperity of the people on both sides of the Taiwan Strait. This carries historic significance.

Twenty-two years ago, in April 1993, Mr. Koo Chen-fu, chairman of Taiwan's Straits Exchange Foundation, and Mr. Wang Daohan, chairman of mainland China's Association for Relations Across the Taiwan Straits, met in Singapore. Four agreements were signed, laying the groundwork for institutionalized cross-strait consultations. Twelve years ago, in October 2003, I met with the founding Prime Minister and Senior Advisor of Singapore Lee Kuan Yew at the East Asia Economic Summit. We both believed then that cross-strait developments must be based on the interests of the people.

At this moment, Mr. Xi and I are sitting across from each other, gathered together in one room. Behind us is the historical backdrop of six decades of separate governance on the two sides of the Taiwan Strait. Before us lie the accomplishments that the two sides have achieved in the past few years through our commitment to replacing antagonism with dialogue and confrontation with rapprochement. We hold in our hands the future objective of sustainable peace and prosperity. At this time, the two sides of the Taiwan Strait are proclaiming loudly and clearly to the rest of the world our determination to consolidate peace in the Taiwan Strait and the message that we will promote peace in the region.

Over the past 66 years, the two sides of the Taiwan Strait have developed under different systems. That we have been able to shift from military confrontation to cooperative exchanges is certainly not an overnight achievement. Over the past seven-plus years, the two sides have concluded 23 agreements, and have created 40,000 student exchanges, 8 million annual cross-strait visits, and US\$170 billion in two-way trade. The foundation for these momentous changes is peace.

History has bequeathed the two sides of the Taiwan Strait an epochal and convoluted issue that, as *Shang Shu (The Book of Documents)* says, is easy to understand but difficult to resolve. Sensitive issues on which each side maintains a firm position must be faced squarely and pragmatically, and handled with wisdom, patience, and good will by both sides. In the meantime, we can devote continued effort, through institutionalized consultations that we have facilitated over recent years, to building rapprochement and cooperation, and to promoting sustainable peace and prosperity. This is a common aspiration of the two sides of the Taiwan Strait as well as the international community.

Today I wish to put forth five points for maintaining the status quo of peace and prosperity in the Taiwan Strait.

**First, consolidation of the 1992 Consensus and the maintenance of peace.** The two sides of the Taiwan Strait arrived at the 1992 Consensus of “one China, respective interpretations” in November 1992. This consensus provides the common political basis for the two sides to promote peaceful development. It is because the two sides share a common respect for this consensus that, over the past seven and a half years, we have reaped many rewards and ensured peace and

prosperity—which includes the conclusion of 23 agreements—leading to the most peaceful and stable cross-strait relations in 66 years. I will elaborate on this point later in our meeting.

**Second, reduction of hostility and peaceful handling of disputes.** The two sides are no longer in a state of confrontation. Both sides should continue to reduce hostility and resolve disputes in a peaceful manner.

**Third, expansion of cross-strait exchanges and mutual benefits.** Efforts should be stepped up to resolve issues such as a trade-in-goods agreement, reciprocal establishment of representative offices, and flight transfers in Taiwan for mainland Chinese travelers, so as to create a win-win situation for both sides.

**Fourth, establishment of a cross-strait hotline to handle important or urgent matters.** A liaison mechanism is already in place between the heads of the Straits Exchange Foundation and the Association for Relations Across the Taiwan Straits, as well as between the deputy heads of the Mainland Affairs Council and the Taiwan Affairs Office. A hotline between the heads of the MAC and the TAO should be set up to deal with important or urgent issues.

**Fifth, joint cooperation for cross-strait prosperity.** The people of both sides are Chinese, descendants of the emperors Yan and Huang. The two sides should cooperate to promote cross-strait prosperity.

These five points are not aimed at achieving selfish goals or unilateral gains, but a better future for coming generations. Both sides should accord great importance to the values and way of life that our people cherish, maintain cross-strait peace, and ensure mutual benefits and

success for both sides with the wisdom embedded in Chinese culture.

Cross-strait relations are at their most peaceful and stable since 1949. In the past few years, I have often seen students from the two sides talking, taking part in sports, playing music, and enjoying themselves together on university campuses around Taiwan. This natural gathering of students is very touching. They show passion and creativity, with no enmity or historical burden. They are able to build friendships at an early stage of life; this will certainly cement a strong foundation for sustainable cross-strait peace. We must cherish and expand on this foundation.

As Northern Song dynasty scholar Zhang Heng-qu advised: Devote your heart to heaven and earth, devote your life to the people, uphold the wisdom of past sages, create peace for generations to come. For the people of both sides of the Taiwan Strait, let us work together, devote our lives to our people, create peace for generations to come, and open a new chapter of peace and a glorious future.