

**Minister Hsia: Cross-Strait Negotiations and Official Interaction Continue to Operate as Usual, thereby Building Peaceful and Stable Cross-Strait Relations and Creating More Niches for Taiwan Development and Public Well-Being**

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Mainland Affairs Council (MAC) Minister Andrew Hsia stated today (August 28, 2015) that, since President Ma Ying-jeou took office, the government has maintained the status quo of "no unification, no independence and no use of force" under the ROC Constitution framework, promoted peaceful cross-strait development on the "1992 Consensus" of "One China with respective interpretations," and built up favorable conditions for benign cross-strait interactions, all of which have been beneficial to Taiwan's overall interests and expansion of foreign relations.

MAC Minister Hsia attended the 2015 Southern Taiwan Leadership Institute of Education event held by the Southern Taiwan Joint Services Center of the Executive Yuan to explain the government's current Mainland policy and development of cross-strait relations to participants from the business, government and academic sectors in southern Taiwan. Minister Hsia listened and responded to the concerns and suggestions of the participants during panel discussions and two-way exchanges.

Minister Hsia explained that, in June 2008, the SEF and the ARATS resumed institutionalized cross-strait negotiations on the basis of the "1992 Consensus" of "One China with respective interpretations." The government has adhered to principles of "putting Taiwan first for the benefit of the people" and "respect, reciprocity and mutual benefit," followed guidelines of dealing with "easy issues before difficult ones, urgent matters before non-urgent ones, and economic matters before political ones." It has also given priority to the promotion of issues relevant to the people's livelihood and their rights and interests. In the seven-plus years since President Ma took office, the SEF and the ARATS have held 11 high-level talks and according to provisions in the Act Governing Relations between the People of the Taiwan Area and the Mainland Area, the two sides have signed 23 agreements covering issues such as transportation, economy and trade, food safety, medicine and health, mutual judicial assistance, meteorology, seismological

monitoring, taxation, and flight safety. These agreements have spurred innovative actions in various fields across the Strait, introduced predictability and trust in cross-strait development, and have gained majority public opinion support. Using the agreements signed at the 11th high-level talks as an example, Minister Hsia pointed out that the Cross-Strait Agreement on Avoidance of Double Taxation and Enhancement of Tax Cooperation aims to reduce the burden of double taxation on the people and industries across the Strait and to improve the competitiveness of enterprises. The Cross-Strait Collaboration Agreement on Flight Safety and Airworthiness aims to strengthen flight safety, improve passenger convenience, and promote the development of the civil aviation industry. The signing of these two agreements not only proves that institutionalized cross-strait negotiations are operating as usual, but also the fact that they bring about enhanced security, interests and well-being for people on both sides, enable continued orderly development of increasingly frequent cross-strait exchanges on various levels, and build up favorable conditions for benign cross-strait interactions.

Minister Hsia said that three meetings have already been held between the heads of the cross-strait competent authorities since last year (2014). Through exchange visits and the established regular communication liaison mechanisms, the two sides have pragmatically resolved cross-strait exchange issues, protected the welfare of the people, and deepened mutual trust across the Strait, which have all created more solid conditions for sustainable cross-strait developments. On the other hand, interaction between the two sides has prompted the Mainland's acknowledge of the fact that systems and values differ across the Taiwan Strait, and has urged them to face up to the status quo of separate governance across the Taiwan Strait and to take seriously the Taiwanese people's views concerning cross-strait relations. In the future, the government will continue to promote and strengthen this mechanism.

Minister Hsia stressed that the "cross-strait rapprochement" has consolidated the sovereignty of the Republic of China, strengthened Taiwan, led cross-strait relations in a positive direction, and established long-term peace and stability in the Taiwan Strait. It has significant meaning in opening up Taiwan's international space and building national security, and is a core element in Taiwan's national security iron triangle. It is also the government's greatest contribution to the international community. Facing the future

cross-strait situation, the government will make the utmost effort to maintain peaceful, prosperous and stable cross-strait relations to strengthen Taiwan and gain a foothold in the world.

The participants enthusiastically interacted during the panel discussion, which was joined by about 220 people from the business, government and academic sectors. Minister Hsia individually responded to the many concerns and suggestions raised on cross-strait issues. He expressed appreciation to the participants for their concern about cross-strait affairs and for their many valuable comments. These, he said, would serve as references for the government in future policy planning and promotion.