

Implementation of Mainland Tourist Transits in Taiwan is a Successful Achievement due to Cross-Strait Communication

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Regarding the official implementation of Mainland tourist transits in Taiwan, the Mainland Affairs Council (MAC) stated that the two sides have already conducted communication for many years and that significant progress was achieved through the cross-strait leaders' meeting. The public announcement by both sides made on January 5 this year (2016) of allowing Mainland residents in trial cities of Nanchang, Kunming, Chongqing to transit at Taiwan Taoyuan International Airport, and the launch of such transits on February 1st were both achievements made through continuous contact and communication between the MAC, SEF, and the Mainland side.

The MAC has always fully grasped the details of cross-strait contact and communication, preparation progress of cross-strait relevant agencies for transit promotion, and status of Mainland tourist airline reservations. Before the launch of transit operations on February 1st, the MAC was informed of the number, names and flights of passengers transiting in Taiwan, it then immediately contacted relevant agencies such as the Ministry of Transportation and Communications, Ministry of the Interior, SEF, and airlines, to confirm and ensure all preparations on the Taiwan side were completed so as to facilitate a smooth official launch.

During communications between the SEF and the ARATS, the two sides set February 1 as the target date for official implementation of the policy, and aimed for competent authorities on both sides to complete all relevant preparatory work and launch operations by the official set date. However, since actual transit operations involve market factors and passenger reservations through travel agencies, the two sides were unable to fully grasp operation details. Once the actual number of Mainland transit passengers through Taiwan was confirmed in the afternoon before

launch date and flights were confirmed to take off as scheduled without delay from weather conditions on the morning of launch date, the SEF, ARATS and MAC immediately made a public announcement and issued a press release to explain relevant circumstances.

Long before the January 5 announcement of the first trial cities, the SEF and the ARATS had held three work meetings and agreed on the details concerning the reception operations, supporting measures, and contingency handling for Mainland tourist transits in Taiwan. It was decided that Mainland tourists transiting in Taiwan were no longer required to apply for Taiwan entry documents before departure, and in accordance with general aviation convention, Mainland tourist transits in Taiwan shall enjoy the "no entry, no inspection, and no stamp" treatment as all other international passengers; and were Mainland passengers needed to stay overnight in Taiwan due to flight delays or weather factors, Taiwan airlines shall look after and arrange for their stay according to regulations. The SEF and the ARATS discussed and reached a consensus on the said matters and confirmed them in writing by means of a supplement after January 5.

Taiwan currently receives over 3.8 million transit passengers per year; reception operations and management capacities have become normalized. As Mainland transiting tourists from the trial cities are limited during the initial period, there is yet any need to increase human resources in handling Mainland transit operations. However, prior to the addition of Mainland tourist transits in Taiwan on February 1, relevant units enhanced related preparations and established internal contact windows. They will also continue to closely monitor related developments, accumulate experience, strengthen related management measures, and increase equipment and manpower so as to satisfy future operational demands when Mainland tourist transits in Taiwan are fully implemented and normalized.

The MAC stressed that the opening of Mainland tourist transits in Taiwan is mutually beneficial to both sides. If Mainland tourist transits in Taiwan were to be fully implemented and normalized in the future, it will facilitate passenger travel and also help industries related to connecting airports to generate revenue and create employment. It will also spur expansion of Taiwan's international long haul route network and push Taiwan's development as a regional hub. This initial stage is just a small step that requires attention and care. It is hoped that all parties may view this matter positively in perspective of Taiwan's overall development, show goodwill, and

build an environment friendly to foreign travelers so that Mainland tourist transits in Taiwan may soon be fully implemented and normalized.