

MAC Year-End Press Conference Speech by Minister Chang

Date: January 11, 2017

Friends in the Media, Good Day to You All!

Since May 20 last year, cross-Strait relations have faced numerous challenges. Yet we have been firm in the attitude that "our pledges will not change and our goodwill will not change. We also will not bow to pressure and will not seek confrontation." We have dealt carefully with issues related to cross-Strait exchanges and will continue to promote constructive exchange and dialogue between the two sides to maintain security and stability in the Taiwan Strait. As we usher out the old year and welcome in the new, I would like to take this opportunity to briefly describe the focus of our work over the past seven-plus months, as well as the direction we will endeavor in the coming year.

I. Major Work of the Mainland Affairs Council (MAC)

1. Maintain peaceful and stable development across the Taiwan Strait to win public and international support. In the past recent period, we have consistently held the door for communication wide open in a commitment to maintaining the operation of existing cross-Strait mechanisms. Despite manifold restrictive actions by the Mainland side, we have continued to proactively contact with the Mainland on major interactions and urgent matters to control and reduce potential risks. Domestic public opinion and the international community have supported and affirmed this policy.

2. Maintain the normal operation of enacted cross-Strait agreements to ensure the public's interests and well-being. We are coordinating with the competent authorities on ongoing reviews of the implementation status of the 21 cross-Strait agreements already in force. We are also studying and deliberating issues of concern to the people. Normal contact and interaction continues relative to the great majority of these agreements. The order of cross-Strait exchanges and the rights and interests of the people have been ensured. The government has also responded to the decline in Mainland tourist arrivals by helping businesses innovate and develop new markets. Domestic tourism programs have been expanded to build on economic benefits and help businesses. We are also actively formulating self-initiatives to reduce mainland China's deportation of Taiwan nationals involved in cross-border telecommunications fraud. To prevent such occurrences, we are forming an inter-agency platform to

strengthen the fight against fraud and working with the international community to deter criminal groups from setting up fraud operations in Southeast Asia, Europe, Latin America, Africa, and other regions.

3. Strengthen cooperation with county and city governments to enhance the rights and interests of Mainland students and spouses. We actively call on county and city governments and jointly hold learning activities to give local governments a better understanding of cross-Strait policy, help them to understand the situation of promoting cross-Strait exchanges, and provide assistance in consultations. In addition, we are promoting amendments to the National Health Insurance Act based on humanitarian and human rights considerations. These changes aim to include Mainland students in the health insurance comparable to the treatment of foreign and overseas Chinese students. The Social Welfare and Environmental Hygiene Committee of the Legislative Yuan has completed review of the draft amendment and submitted it for deliberation by the full Yuan session. Moreover, in order to protect the rights and interests of Mainland spouses and accord with the policy of accommodation in humanitarian assistance, the government issued a written interpretation relaxing rules so that Mainland spouses are no longer required to be domiciled in Taiwan for 10 years to serve as temporary staff at various agencies and schools. We also have stepped up efforts to hold explanatory activities and visit various localities to care for the livelihood rights and interests of Mainland spouses and understand their needs.

4. Continue to promote consultations on issues related to Taiwan's cooperation with Hong Kong and Macao. The first review of the draft "Article 29-1 of the Laws and Regulations Regarding Hong Kong and Macao Affairs" and the Taiwan-Macao Double Taxation Avoidance Agreement on Aviation Businesses was completed late last year. Once approved, the law and pact will clarify the legal basis for mutual exemption from sea and air transportation duties between Taiwan and Hong Kong and Macao, supporting the development of Taiwan's air transport industry.

II. Future Work Emphasis

Our goal in the year ahead is to secure Taiwan's best interests and further promote peaceful and stable development across the Taiwan Strait. The focus of this work will include the following:

1. Study and discuss the implementation of new model for cross-Strait interaction with careful consideration to developments at home and abroad. In response to the overall situation under the new US president and the holding of the 19th National Congress of the Communist Party of China in the second half of the year, the MAC will continue to research and collect information to stay abreast of developments in mainland China and strategic moves by the Mainland related to Taiwan. We will also more closely cooperate with various ministries in formulating response measures to developments with the potential to impact cross-Strait relations and the region. Moreover, in a year-end statement, President Tsai Ing-wen called on the two sides to jointly plan a new model for cross-Strait interaction based on new thinking and approaches. We will also deliberate this matter according to the situation.

2. Promote completion of legislation of the Cross-Strait Agreement Supervisory Act. We will maintain contact and interact in goodwill with the Mainland and continue to promote the normal operation and implementation of cross-Strait agreements. In addition, the MAC will actively cooperate with the Legislative Yuan to promote legislation of the Cross-Strait Agreement Supervisory Act. In keeping with the principles of "openness and transparency, public participation, and congressional oversight," we hope that legislation can be promptly completed on an effective and feasible supervisory act that best meets the needs of society. After legislation of the act is completed, we will push to bring the cross-Strait agreements signed into effect and deliberate issues for follow-up negotiations.

3. Strengthen care for Mainland students and spouses and promote cross-Strait youth exchanges. We will cooperate on promoting amendments to the National Health Insurance Act to include Mainland students studying in Taiwan in the health insurance system comparable to the treatment of foreign and overseas Chinese students. We will also work with the Ministry of Education and other competent authorities in the ongoing review of regulations governing Mainland students studying in Taiwan to create a friendly study and living environment. In addition, we will vigorously promote cross-Strait youth exchanges in legal, cultural and creative, civil society, volunteer service, and other areas, to present the advantages of Taiwan's pluralistic and democratic society. The MAC will continue to make visits to care for the living situation of mainland Chinese spouses living in Taiwan, as well as review related laws, as the times and circumstances require, to protect the rights and interests of Mainland spouses.

4. Maintain steady and orderly cross-Strait economic and trade exchanges and strengthen services to Taiwan businesspeople. The government will closely watch the future economic situation

globally, regionally, and in mainland China, as well as developments in regional economic integration. We will review cross-Strait economic and trade policies and round out safety management mechanisms for cross-Strait economic and trade exchanges to safeguard Taiwan's long-term interests. We will also work with related agencies to strengthen linkages with and services for the Taiwan business community to help companies reduce investment and operations risk in the Mainland, as well as provide guidance in transforming and upgrading operations. Moreover, the government is developing response and assistance measures aimed at mainland China's attempts to attract Taiwan's young creative talent, demands that Taiwan businesspeople declare a position, and other actions.

III. Conclusion

2017 promises to be a very important year in terms of Taiwan's democratic process and the development of cross-Strait relations. Thirty years ago, Taiwan lifted martial law, reinstated constitutionalism, and steadily advanced democracy and freedom to truly implement the concept of popular sovereignty. The same year, the government began to allow people in Taiwan to make family-related visits to mainland China, tearing down the barrier of a nearly 38-year freeze between the two sides and starting cross-Strait people-to-people contacts and exchanges. The experience of nearly 30 years of cross-Strait exchange has proven that the two sides have the ability and wisdom to find a way to peacefully coexist.

The objective and subjective situation across the Strait has changed over the past year. But this has also provided an opportunity to pause, calm the mind, and review and reflect on past issues in cross-Strait interactions. By starting out afresh at a new pace, we believe we can build a solid foundation for truly long-lasting cross-Strait relations.

On the road ahead, we will need to strengthen our confidence. The government will carefully and prudently handle cross-Strait affairs based on the Constitution of the Republic of China, the Act Governing Relations between the People of the Taiwan Area and the Mainland Area, and other relevant legislation. We hope the Mainland will think rationally, show wisdom, and keep the livelihood and well-being of the people on both sides in mind. We also hope that the other side will continue to work with us hand-in-hand to build a new model of cross-Strait interaction to enable institutionalized cross-Strait interaction and negotiation mechanisms to operate steadily, expand exchanges and cooperation at all levels and in various fields, and jointly create a new era of cross-Strait harmony and prosperity.

As we welcome the upcoming Year of the Rooster, we will strive to "turn crisis into opportunity" in the hope that both sides can "seize opportunity and develop new ideas" to build on achievements for peace and prosperity across the Taiwan Strait. I would like to take this opportunity to wish the mainland

Chinese people and Mainland students and spouses in Taiwan a happy New Year with joy and good fortune. I also wish our friends in the media good health and peace in the New Year. Thank you!