

Position Paper Regarding the Referendum on Joining the United Nations under the Name of Taiwan

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I. Preface

To ensure the fundamental human rights of the 23 million Taiwanese people and to pursue joining the international community's collective security and rights safeguarding system, Taiwan has been promoting its participation in the United Nations (UN) since 1993, and over the past 14 years, Taiwan's bid to join the UN has been blocked by China and never placed on the General Assembly agenda. This is the first year that Taiwan has applied for UN membership under the name of Taiwan and President Chen Shui-bian has on many occasions written to the UN Secretary General demanding processing of Taiwan's application to join the UN; because China has again and again peremptorily thwarted and ruined the process, the UN has been unable to fairly and impartially deal with Taiwan's application in accordance with its due procedures.

Several opinion polls in Taiwan indicate that over 80 percent of the people surveyed hope to join the UN, and that over 70 percent approve of applying to join the UN under the name of Taiwan, indicating that this issue has the consensus of the entire population in Taiwan, regardless of which political party—ruling or opposition—one supports, and regardless of whether one advocates unification with China or independence. A democratic process of spontaneous proposal, petition and referendum by the Taiwanese people has concretely demonstrated our steadfast determination to join the UN. International society ought to keenly understand Taiwan's long-term isolation caused by China, the unreasonable suppression exerted by China, and China's violent predilection to use military force to antagonize democracy.

II. Political Obstacles to Taiwan's UN Bid

According to the 1993 Montevideo Convention on the Rights and Duties of States, Taiwan meets all the requirements for sovereign statehood, including a permanent population, defined territory, government with effective governing capability, and the fact of having entered into relations with other nations. However, Taiwan can not join

the UN because:

1. *China does not recognize the fact that Taiwan is an independent sovereign country and that Taiwan and China have no jurisdiction over each other.*

When examined from the perspective of the history of cross-strait relations, political reality or international law, Taiwan has never been a part of the People's Republic of China, nor has it ever been under the governance of China. Taiwan and China have no jurisdiction over each other. This is the status quo. China's unwillingness to acknowledge the fact that Taiwan is sovereign and independent, and that Taiwan and China have no jurisdiction over each other is the most fundamental obstacle to cross-strait relations. For a long period, China has relentlessly invoked the "one China" principle to create cross-strait tension, carry out hegemonic diplomatic relations against Taiwan internationally and thwart the concerns of international society regarding the Taiwan Strait issue. Its objective is to serve its political stance with the intention of isolating Taiwan internationally and attaining the goal of exterminating and annexing Taiwan.

2. *China continues to exert political military and diplomatic pressure and coercion against Taiwan's democracy*

China rejects completely Taiwan's democratic development with a unilateral definition of "*de jure* Taiwan independence," and continues every year to expand dramatically its military budget by double-digit growth rate. Beijing has deployed over 1,000 missiles aimed at Taiwan, thus destabilizing the cross-strait balance of power. Moreover, in response to Taiwan's planned referendum on its UN bid, which is a manifestation of domestic consensus and a demonstration of collective will, Beijing has fabricated an excuse for "using military force to unify" by drawing the "red line" under its "anti-separation law". Over the past two years, there have been more than 60 cases involving China's suppression of Taiwan in the international arena. Together with its continued military, political and diplomatic high-handed methods toward Taiwan, China has unilaterally changed the status quo, causing severe damage and threat to the fundamental human rights as well as the life and property of the Taiwanese people, while turning Taiwan to face the urgent crisis of China's "*de jure* annexation." This is the major factor that causes regional instability.

3. China utilizes its own military and economic trump cards to manipulate international politics

China is utilizing its surging economic and military power to entice and form strategic alliances via intra-regional trade benefits, intent on dominating development of the region within and without, and actively carrying out manipulation in the international political arena. For example, China actively uses strategic alliances with other countries on issues of concern to the international community, manipulating the internal issues in North Korea, Iran, Sudan, and Zimbabwe and the others to create international problems and conflicts, and even inciting regional tension to gain benefit. And while strengthening its own military capabilities, China has overtly carried out an anti-satellite missile test, and has boosted its naval and air force capabilities, actively carrying out several large-scale military exercises with related countries, with the ambition of attaining regional hegemony and gaining geo-strategic advantage. After we promoted the plan to hold a public referendum on joining the UN, China has used myriad strategies to encourage dozens of countries to proclaim their opposition to our action. If the international community allows China to forcefully suppress Taiwan's international participation, then this will not only harm the fundamental human rights of the Taiwanese people, but it will also severely affect the global and regional balance of power and stability.

III. Significance of a referendum on joining the UN under the name of Taiwan

A referendum is an embodiment of direct civil rights, and a referendum on joining the UN under the name of Taiwan is a method for reflecting the reality of public opinion, with the following aspects of significance:

1. Safeguarding national sovereign status and refuting China's erroneous "one China" principle

Taiwan has never been a part of the People's Republic of China—the facts attest to this; UN General Assembly Resolution #2758 did not deal with the issue of who represents the 23 million Taiwanese people. Taiwan functions as an independent sovereign nation, and China's peremptory suppression can never change the fact of Taiwan's existence. China has long been bent on using its so-called "one China" principle to exert pressure internationally to snuff out any chance of Taiwan's survival and

development. China's such actions are absolutely unacceptable to the Taiwanese people. The referendum on joining the UN under the name of Taiwan has no connection with changing the name of the country, nor does it violate any promises made by President Chen. It is the most effective way for the popular will to refute and reject China's erroneous "one China" framework. This approach can help break through China's suppression against Taiwan internationally, and ensure that the cross-strait status quo is not unilaterally changed by China's use of military force, while demonstrating to China that the Taiwanese people are steadfastly determined to safeguard their sovereignty with dignity.

2. Respecting mainstream public opinion and showcasing the collective will of the Taiwanese people

Taiwan's peaceful appeals regarding its participation in the international community and its pursuit of international collective security guarantees are the mainstream of current public opinion. Taiwanese government respects the concrete demands of the entire population's will expressed via a referendum. Promotion of the referendum on Taiwan's entry into the UN is initiated by our civil society, and the candidates of both major political parties for the presidential election in March of next year support this approach. Since the referendum is not being led by the government, no one has the right to stop this activity; it is the will of the people and is the very nexus of democratic values. A public opinion poll conducted by the Mainland Affairs Council in August 2007 indicated that 77.6 percent of the people surveyed express that they cannot accept China's position that "Taiwan is a part of China and is not qualified to join the UN." And over 66.5 percent believe that China's suppression has obstructed Taiwan's participation in international activities. In addition, the results of recent public opinion polls uniformly indicate that over 70 percent approve of joining the United Nations under the name of Taiwan. Currently, both ruling and opposition political parties have reached sufficient consensus on Taiwan's UN bid, and approved of spontaneous public participation via a referendum to express the Taiwanese people's collective will and wishes for seeking survival and development, to give Taiwan an effective voice internationally, and to gain greater identification and support.

3. Deepening the democratic values of Taiwan and complying with international mainstream values

The establishment of a referendum system will allow Taiwan, in addition to representative politics, to head straight forth into the era of using direct expression of popular will to deal with major national issues. The referendum will also help realize the genuine meaning of the concept that sovereignty resides in the people, allowing our democratic political system to be even more complete, and deepening the major processes of Taiwan democracy. Over the long term, Taiwan's democratic reform and the peaceful transition of political power accord with the international mainstream values and have consistently been affirmed internationally. Taiwan adheres to its belief in democratic values and will absolutely not give in to China's peremptory and dictatorial hegemony, and our determination to continue promoting democracy will never change. We call on the international community to understand Taiwan's stance and actions in terms of Taiwan's democratic development and the current cross-strait situation; squarely face up to the unreasonable treatment suffered by the Taiwanese people internationally, and collectively assist Taiwan in its participation in the world community.

IV. Conclusion

China has long adhered to an antagonistic mindset toward Taiwan, aiming to change the cross-strait status quo through its so-called "*de jure* annexation" and "non-peaceful means." On the one hand, China has engaged in military saber-rattling to suppress Taiwan's peaceful democratic activities and has caused tension in the Taiwan Strait region; on the other hand, it has done everything conceivable to distort and mislead Taiwan's efforts internationally, maliciously deprecating our legitimate appeals regarding the referendum on Taiwan's UN bid. In view of this, Taiwan must directly demonstrate to the world the collective will of the Taiwanese people and denounce China for imposing international political apartheid on the Taiwanese people as well as for its outrageous and peremptory actions in threatening violence against Taiwan's democratic development. We urge that the international community squarely pay attention to China's hegemonic propensities, uphold the principles of fairness and righteousness to fully understand the fact of Taiwan's democratic development and its need for safeguarding the fundamental human rights and for safeguarding security, and demand that China renounce the use of military force against Taiwan's democratic development, so that peace and stability can be maintained in the Asia-Pacific region.