

PRESIDENT MA YING-JEOU'S (ROC-TAIWAN) REMARKS IN MEETING WITH MAINLAND CHINESE LEADER XI-JINPING

A Report

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Since 2008, the two sides have created peaceful and stable conditions in the Taiwan Strait, winning widespread approval and support from the people of both sides, as well as from the international community. This is an important milestone in the development of cross-strait relations. In the process, resolving disputes peacefully has been the core value, while institutionalization of negotiations has been the method. Both sides should work to protect this hard-won mechanism and historic achievement.

Next, I would like to elaborate on the five points I brought up a moment ago.

(1) Sustainable peace and prosperity is the common goal in the development of cross-strait relations, and the 1992 Consensus is the fundamental basis for achieving this goal.

On Aug. 1, 1992, our National Unification Council passed a resolution on the meaning of “one China,” which said that both sides of the Taiwan Strait insist on the “one China” principle, but they differ as to what that means. The consensus reached between the two sides in November 1992 is that both sides of the Taiwan Strait insist on the “one China” principle, and each side can express its interpretation verbally; this is the 1992 Consensus of “one China, respective interpretations.” For our part, we stated that the interpretation does not involve “two Chinas,” “one China and one Taiwan,” or “Taiwan independence,” as the Republic of China Constitution does not allow it. This position is very clear, and is accepted by the majority of the people of Taiwan.

The accomplishments of the two sides in institutionalizing relations on the basis of the 1992 Consensus include the beginning of institutionalized negotiations between the Straits Exchange Foundation and Association for Relations Across the Taiwan Straits 22 years ago, the resumption of cross-strait talks over seven years ago, meetings between the heads of agencies in charge of cross-strait affairs in the last two years, and now this meeting between the leaders of each side. The two sides have together created a model for the peaceful resolution of disputes that should be further consolidated until it becomes the normal state of affairs.

(2) Reduction of hostility and peaceful handling of disputes

The two sides are no longer in direct confrontation, as they were in the past. For our part, in 1991, we ended the Period of Mobilization for the Suppression of Communist Rebellion and repealed the Mobilization for the Suppression of Communist Rebellion Provisional Act. From that point, we stopped viewing the Chinese Communist Party as a rebel group. The following year, under the Additional Articles of the ROC Constitution, we passed the Act Governing Relations between the People of the Taiwan Area and the Mainland Area, creating a basis in law for cross-strait ties.

We reduced our military presence on Kinmen and Matsu, and demilitarized Dadan and Erdan Islands. We allowed for transportation links from Kinmen across the Jinxia Strait to Xiamen's Liuwudian. The mainland side stopped shelling Kinmen and Matsu on January 1, 1979, and later incorporated the Fuzhou Military Region into the Nanjing Military Region. Areas which in the past were battlegrounds for tens of thousands of soldiers are today booming tourist spots. Peacefully handling disputes has borne fruit, as now, tens of thousands of mainland tourists visit Kinmen every year. Comparing this to 1958, when tens of thousands of artillery shells rained down on Kinmen, it is like two different eras. A souvenir commonly purchased by these tourists is a cleaver made from a shell casing. The 23 cross-strait agreements, having peace as both their foundation and their goal, can all be seen, broadly, as peace agreements.

I would like to bring up with Mr. Xi an issue that the opposition party often uses as a pretext to criticize cross-strait relations, that of the continuing deployment of missiles at the Zhurihe base, which has featured in media reports of late. Were it possible that you could take some friendly, concrete measures concerning this, it would help reduce this type of unnecessary criticism.

Taiwan's people are particularly concerned about security and dignity vis-a-vis developing cross-strait relations, and the mainland side ought to be particularly mindful that the achievements we have seen in developing this relationship over the past seven years—the 13-fold growth in mainland tourists visiting Taiwan, the 42-fold increase in mainland students coming to Taiwan, the 800-fold increase in cross-strait flights—these major improvements are based in peace. The two sides ought to use peaceful measures to resolve disputes in all areas, whether political, military, social, cultural, or legal. This will bolster good will on both sides.

We suggest participation by both sides of the Taiwan Strait in international activities as a starting point, as the people of Taiwan want to participate meaningfully in the international community. We have implemented viable diplomacy for seven years, and created a virtuous circle involving international participation and cross-strait ties. The virtuous circle, however, has not reached its full expression, as Taiwan's people, especially civic leaders, have a negative impression from situations such as our tourists being refused admission to the United Nations Headquarters because of their passport, frustrations our experts have had in participating in NGO meetings, and interventions we have faced when engaging in bilateral or multilateral cooperation on trade. The two sides ought to begin by reducing hostility and confrontation on these fronts, as those participating in these activities are mostly intellectuals or members of our middle class, and this cannot but affect our work pertaining to cross-strait ties, and these people's impressions of the mainland.

(3) Expansion of cross-strait exchanges and mutual benefits

The two sides should move quickly to deal with issues that are currently still under negotiation, including the trade-in-goods agreement, reciprocal establishment of representative offices, and flight transfers in Taiwan for

mainland Chinese travelers. During the 66 years the two sides have been under separate rule, considerable differences have emerged in the political and economic systems, as well as the ways of life, on each side. We need sufficient time to allow the people of the two sides to engage in deeper exchanges and enhance mutual understanding. The 23 agreements we have signed so far can be regarded as individual bridges of friendship. If we build more and more such bridges, we can create a network of exchanges and interactions, and finally establish a fully fledged platform for mutual engagement.

The two sides should quickly negotiate to resolve such issues as the trade-in-goods accord, reciprocal establishment of representative offices, and flight transfers in Taiwan for mainland Chinese travelers, and properly deal with cross-strait friction in the international arena. Judging from the past few years, if high-level officials from the two sides cannot come to a decision on these issues, working-level officials will continue to stick to their own positions and remain reluctant to move forward, thereby making it impossible to further enhance the welfare of the people of the two sides.

With regard to historical and cultural aspects, we have taken an open-minded attitude toward the proposal put forward by Mr. Xi two months ago of “sharing historical materials and coauthoring history books” concerning events in the War of Resistance. We are willing to engage in civil-sector cooperation on this matter based on the principles of equality and reciprocity, open archives, unrestricted access, and no restrictions on research topics. We believe that, if the two sides face history in a sincere manner, we can bring the people of the two sides closer together and forge a common historical memory, which will benefit the peaceful development of cross-strait relations.

Meanwhile, with regard to cross-strait economic collaboration, regional economic integration is a global trend. As there are differences in the size and strengths of our economies, the benefits and co-prosperity generated by cross-strait economic links will certainly be further boosted if the two sides simultaneously participate in regional economic cooperation. I believe Mr. Xi knows we are currently applying to join the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP), and hope to join the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP) in the future. Because these two mechanisms would account for approximately 70 percent of our external trade, we cannot afford not to participate in them. We believe there should be no issue as to which side joins first and which side later.

Also, we should actively foster economic cooperation with other countries, to complement and parallel our other efforts. The two sides should find an appropriate way of jointly contributing to international economic and trade activities. We discussed economic cooperation when we signed the Cross-Straits Economic Cooperation Framework Agreement (ECFA) five years ago, and we could further unleash the potential inherent in this cooperation.

[In addition, when Xi Jinping, during the closed-door meeting, raised the issue of cross-strait academic and educational exchanges, President Ma stated the following:

Mr. Xi, you just mentioned exchange students. Currently, many of the mainland students in Taiwan are in undergraduate or graduate programs. The first batch of mainland undergraduate students in Taiwan already graduated in June of this year, and half of them have stayed in Taiwan for graduate studies. We previously discussed vocational college graduates, of whom there are very few at this moment. As a result of the low birth rates in Taiwan, many of our polytechnic universities, which offer high quality education, have a significant shortage of students. I believe this offers an opportunity for cooperation. Vietnam, Thailand, India, and Indonesia have been funding graduate studies by university lecturers at polytechnic institutes in Taiwan. I have consistently strived to promote the issue of mainland vocational college graduates in Taiwan, but so far we have seen limited results. Perhaps Mr. Xi can inject new momentum in this matter. I know there is a lot of demand for these students—the more than one million of them. However, we can offer them many good opportunities. In fact, we are in the process of reviewing our overall higher education system. Because of the low birth rates, there are an excessive number of universities. I believe this presents a very good opportunity. We hope to transform Taiwan into an Asia-Pacific center for higher education. Before I took office, we had about 30,000. This year, the figure has increased to above 100,000. These numbers may sound small to the mainland, but to Taiwan they represent a positive development. We hope you can look into this matter.]

(4) Establishment of a cross-strait hotline to handle important or urgent matters

As we have just mentioned, 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. But there is no contact mechanism between the heads of MAC

and TAO. We could take this opportunity to establish one. Of course, further adjustments could be made to raise the level of contact should the need arise in the future. It will be beneficial for both sides to be able to promptly handle important unexpected or crucial matters.

(5) Joint cooperation for cross-strait prosperity

I want to reiterate that the people of both sides are Chinese, descendants of the emperors Yan and Huang, sharing a common lineage, history, and culture. The two sides should cooperate to promote cross-strait prosperity.

Our meeting today is aimed at demonstrating to the rest of the world that cross-strait relations can be handled peacefully by the two sides and also develop on the basis of an institutionalized system. History has bequeathed the two sides a convoluted relationship, and cross-strait exchanges have led to new problems. These issues cannot be resolved overnight. In exchanges and consultations, the two sides need to face the issues squarely, move forward step by step, and build mutual trust.

In reality, the two sides have not completely steered clear of political issues in the course of interaction. For example, the cross-strait agreement we signed five years ago on joint combat against crime and mutual judicial assistance involves issues of a political nature, regardless of how we look at it. Yet it was concluded in a very short time and has been very effective. Our joint efforts have led to the arrest of more than 7,000 criminal suspects. These activities alone have reduced fraud losses in Taiwan by 82 percent, from NT\$18.6 billion to some NT\$3 billion. This is the sort of work that most impresses the people of Taiwan. Such efforts should be bolstered. Although legal, judicial, and sovereignty matters are a bit sensitive, we were able to conclude the agreement quickly and efficiently.

While serving as minister of justice, I often publicly discussed the accomplishments of such cross-strait cooperation. We have been able to not only work in cooperation with mainland China but also with countries in Southeast Asia. We would like to thank the mainland China side for these many conveniences. The two sides face many political obstacles at this time. Mutual recognition is out of the question. However, aside from this, we should be able to find solutions to some issues. For example, the one China issue cannot be easily resolved within a short period of time.

Nevertheless, the 1992 Consensus emerged more than 20 years ago, as the two sides finally found a modus vivendi for shelving disputes. Back then, the consultations in Hong Kong were initially inconclusive when the delegations each returned home. Taiwan later put forth three proposals in a fax sent to the Association for Relations Across the Taiwan Straits, not suspecting that an agreement would then be reached within one or two weeks, and a new chapter in history written. Looking back, more and more people in Taiwan feel that the 1992 Consensus constitutes the best political basis for liaison at this time.

Lastly, the peace and prosperity achieved over the last seven years is proof that the two sides have beaten their swords into plowshares, becoming models for stability in the East Asia region as a whole. The two sides should cherish this. Properly maintaining the peaceful and stable direction in which cross-strait relations are developing is the mainstream view in Taiwan society. The two sides need to be confident of this. How cross-strait relations develop in the future will have to take into account the direction of public opinion. We hope the mainland Chinese side fully understands this, and realizes that cross-strait relations should be built on the foundation of dignity, respect, sincerity, and good will, for only this will lead to deeper mutual trust, and enable us to go the distance.

In just seven short years, the cross-strait peace and prosperity that the two sides have worked hard to bring about has already surpassed the achievements of the previous 60 years. Even though I only have a little over six months left in office, I will continue to firmly promote cross-strait relations. I will continue to push forward, and I will not stop. Both sides should have the courage to face up to and shoulder their responsibilities. We should think positively about policy measures for the sustainable development of cross-strait relations to deliver major achievements that the people can see in the near future. We should build and then maintain a positive atmosphere across the Taiwan Strait, so as to bring health and happiness to the people of both sides.

Mr. Xi, modern Chinese history is heavily scarred by the chaos and turmoil of war. Today, however, the Chinese people can be proud of how mainland China's political and economic influence has risen, as well as of Taiwan's democratic development and accomplishments. I particularly

remember you mentioning to honorary KMT chairman Wu Poh-hsiung over two years ago that the two sides are of one mind. This is similar to what I often say about shortening the psychological gap. The two sides want peace, not war. Of this we should be certain and confident, and prove it to each other. Only when both sides work together will we be able to create an even better life for future generations on both sides of the Taiwan Strait.