

## **One Earth, A Shared Responsibility**

### **Support Taiwan's meaningful participation in the UNFCCC**

October 2015

*"The climate is a common good, belonging to all and meant for all."*

*"We need to strengthen the conviction that we are one single human family."*

*"We must regain the conviction that we need one another, that we have a shared responsibility for others and the world, and that being good and decent are worth it."*

---- Pope Francis

#### **I. Taiwan's continued exclusion from the UNFCCC leaves a gap that must be closed**

##### ➤ *Leave no one behind*

The Republic of China (Taiwan) has as much of a stake in combating climate change as any other country, and wants to do so responsibly through the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). After the 17 sustainable development goals (SDGs), which replace the millennium development goals (MDGs), were agreed on in New York this year, UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon stated that, "This is the people's agenda, a plan of action for ending poverty in all its dimensions, irreversibly, everywhere, and leaving no one behind." And yet Taiwan, a democratic and peace-loving country with a population of 23 million and the world's 22nd biggest economy, is being left behind through its unwarranted exclusion from UN specialized agencies and related mechanisms, specifically the UNFCCC.

##### ➤ *We are one single human family*

Climate change knows no boundaries. It is a cross-border issue that requires across-the-board cooperation. As Pope Francis quite rightly reminds us, "We are one single human family." Taiwan's absence

from the UNFCCC belies this fact and weakens our ability to respond as one. Taiwan therefore urgently calls on the international community to support its bid to participate in the upcoming 21st session of the Conference of the Parties (COP21) in Paris as an observer under the name of its Environmental Protection Administration. Taiwan's inclusion in this crucial conference would offer a welcome boost to the global fight against climate change, and reinforce the conviction that we are one single human family.

## **II. Why Taiwan should be included in the UNFCCC**

### ➤ *Taiwan's Greenhouse Gas Reduction and Management Act*

While the Parties to the UNFCCC are still negotiating a legally binding 2015 agreement to replace the Kyoto Protocol, Taiwan has taken the concrete step of passing a landmark Greenhouse Gas Reduction and Management Act. This act, which is the result of 10 years of dialogue between industry, government, academia, and the public, not only forms the legal foundation for Taiwan's efforts to respond to climate change, but also underlines the government's determination to take part in global initiatives.

Passed in June 2015, the act officially enshrines into law Taiwan's target to cut carbon emissions to 50% of 2005 levels by 2050. Taiwan is proud to be one of the few countries in the world to have written its carbon emission reduction target into domestic law. Representatives from the European Union, the United States, Germany, the United Kingdom, and other friendly countries have all recognized this significant milestone in its efforts to address global climate.

The key to the success of reaching agreement during climate talks, whether at the national or international level, is whether stakeholders have the political will to commit to taking action. That political will, as demonstrated by the Greenhouse Gas Reduction and Management Act, exists in Taiwan, and could be used to inject positivity and conviction into COP21. After all, no consensus on implementation and compliance has been reached among the Parties to the UNFCCC, and yet doing so will play a major role in determining whether a legally binding agreement can be formulated in Paris this year. The huge

strides that Taiwan has already made should be recognized and put to good use through the UNFCCC.

➤ *Taiwan voluntarily announced its INDC in September 2015*

Taiwan supports the reaching of a new, strong, and effective global climate change agreement in Paris in December 2015. In response to the Lima Call for Climate Action, Taiwan vowed to present its Intended Nationally Determined Contribution (INDC) in line with the principle of “common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities, in light of different national circumstances,” and with a view to achieving the ultimate objective of the UNFCCC as set out in Article 2.

Although not yet party to the UNFCCC, Taiwan announced its INDC on September 17, 2015, committing to reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 50% from the business-as-usual level (from 428 million tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> equivalents to 214 million tonnes) by 2030. This INDC target is even more ambitious than that of similar-sized Asian economies. It is not only higher, but also based on the precondition of phasing out nuclear energy, with Taiwan all the while having been denied access to Kyoto Protocol and UNFCCC mechanisms.

Taiwan’s INDC target serves as a legally binding short-term goal as part of its Greenhouse Gas Reduction and Management Act. Calculated on the basis of 2005 levels, this equates to reducing carbon emissions by 20% by 2030. In other words, Taiwan is committed under its domestic legal framework to achieving its INDC.

As an island state with a relatively large economy, Taiwan relies heavily on imported energy, at over 98% of total demand. Despite the challenges this brings, Taiwan is determined to move towards a low-carbon economy and help keep global warming to within two degrees Celsius of preindustrial levels. Taiwan calls on all parties to recognize the concrete steps it has taken to fulfill its shared responsibility, and support Taiwan’s meaningful participation in the UNFCCC.

- *Taiwan's capabilities and expertise can be a part of the global solution to climate change*

Taiwan is known for its expertise in developing green technology, which it is active in exporting to other countries. Taiwan has much to offer the UNFCCC, not just in terms of technology sharing and transfers, but also financial support and capacity building. Not making Taiwan a part of the global solution to climate change would be a terrible waste.

On the contrary, with its technological knowhow and experience, Taiwan could be an important partner. The lessons it learned in the process of rapid economic development, industrialization, and environmental management would be extremely valuable to developing countries that face the challenge of modernizing their own economies without causing unnecessary harm to the environment.

- *Taiwan's contributions to helping developing countries tackle climate change deserve recognition*

Over the decades, Taiwan has undertaken numerous cooperative projects with many developing countries in a wide variety of areas relating to climate change. These include food and energy security, renewable energy, green technology, LED street lighting, biodiversity conservation, natural disaster management, post-disaster reconstruction, reforestation, environmental protection, water resource management, and drought relief.

An organic waste composting project Taiwan carried out in Central America has seen hundreds of tons of vegetable waste recycled, greatly reducing the carbon emissions. In another project, Taiwan assisted Caribbean countries in developing solar energy, improving energy efficiency in the public sector, and promoting the use of LED street lighting, solar energy, and biogas technology.

Taiwan also cooperated with countries in the Pacific to record and classify plant resources, contributing to conservation efforts, and assisted through such other projects as providing solar energy systems for homes, as well as solar street lighting and handheld lights.

- *Taiwan's inclusion in the UNFCCC could help significantly with climate change adaptation*

Located in one of the most meteorologically and geologically unstable regions in the world, Taiwan is particularly vulnerable to the impact of extreme weather and natural disasters. This has forced it to learn to adapt, a process that has imparted a great deal of expertise.

Through bilateral cooperation with developing countries, Taiwan has demonstrated its willingness and ability to share this adaptation expertise, and would be much better placed to do so through the UNFCCC. Projects include capacity building in Central America on the application of geographic information systems and global positioning systems, which have helped countries strengthen their environmental monitoring systems and disaster prevention systems at the national level through the reporting of land use change, emergency monitoring of earthquakes and landslides, and provision of training courses.

- *Taiwan's involvement in the UNFCCC can boost multilateral cooperation on technology transfers and sharing*

Taiwan is globally recognized as a leader in the field of seismic monitoring and has the highest concentration of monitoring stations, with about 800 currently in operation. The system, currently the fastest in the world, evaluates and distributes critical information on earthquakes immediately after they occur.

Given the vulnerability of Pacific Island nations to climate change, Taiwan has offered training to meteorological personnel and dispatched experts to those countries, so as to assist them in improving their weather forecast systems.

In addition, with regard to the establishment of the Warsaw Framework for REDD+ at COP19, Taiwan is willing to share its experience and knowledge in forest carbon sequestration and monitoring, as well as carbon sink monitoring, and cooperate with countries that participate in UN-REDD programs.

➤ *Taiwan's right to help to fight climate change should not be ignored*

Taiwan is a densely populated island that is particularly vulnerable to the extreme weather events and rising sea levels associated with climate change. The increasing frequency of floods, landslides, drought, and heat waves is causing severe human and economic losses, endangering Taiwan's development and very survival. With its exclusion from the UNFCCC and isolation by the international community, Taiwan is being left to deal with the impacts of climate change on its own. The right of the 23 million people in Taiwan to exist has been ignored for too long.

The climate is a common good, and yet challenges posed by global warming and climate change continue to grow. No country is immune to the impacts, and it is extremely important that we address the challenges together to ensure our planet's sustainable development.

➤ *Taiwan's inclusion in the UNFCCC will add momentum to reaching the 2°C goal*

According to the 2014 Key World Energy Statistics published by the International Energy Agency, Taiwan ranked as the world's 24th largest emitter of carbon dioxide in 2012, accounting for 0.81% of the total. This makes Taiwan the 20th largest emitter of carbon dioxide per capita, at 10.95 tonnes, which is even higher than OECD countries.

An October 4 press release from the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs showed that more than 70 countries, including India, Brazil, and South Africa, had submitted their INDCs to the UNFCCC Secretariat within the space of a week, bringing the total number to 146. With these countries representing 85% of global emissions, however, it is still only possible to limit the average global surface temperature increase to below 3°C over the preindustrial average, which falls dangerously short of the desired 2°C that the Paris agreement should be aiming for.

In this context, excluding Taiwan makes little sense. Conversely, Taiwan's inclusion in the UNFCCC would enhance cooperation and help close the gap between projected and desired temperature

increases. And yet, Taiwan to date has not been allowed to submit its INDC to the UNFCCC Secretariat for purely political reasons.

- *Taiwan's inclusion is in line with the purpose and spirit of the UNFCCC, and the universality of the UN Charter*

Currently, Taiwan can only participate in the UNFCCC as an NGO observer under the name Industrial Technology Research Institute. This NGO status allows Taiwan to take part in UNFCCC peripheral events, with a very limited number of NGO participants permitted to attend the conferences of the Parties. This is neither appropriate nor effective.

The people of Taiwan are eager to participate in the global climate regime and to help safeguard our planet. Taiwan's participation in the UNFCCC process would conform to the purpose and spirit of the Convention, which acknowledges "the global nature of climate change calls for the widest possible cooperation," as well as to the universal application of the principles embodied in the UN Charter.

### **III. Conclusion**

The 23 million people of Taiwan have the right, the ability, and the willingness to contribute to efforts to maintain a planet where humans can live sustainably. We dutifully call on all parties to have the decency to accommodate Taiwan's contributions. The need to address climate change as one single human family is emphatic, and we urge all nations to look beyond political barriers and support Taiwan's meaningful participation in the UNFCCC.