

Benefits from strengthening engagement with Taiwan
Sinopsis Workshop on Practical Engagement with
Taiwan

Ladies and gentlemen, Dobrý den!

Thank you very much for the introduction, Katerina. And many thanks to everyone who has helped in the process to bring together Sinopsis, Czech Academy of Sciences, and American Embassy in Prague to make this conference possible. I am extremely delighted and deeply honored to participate in today's session with many friends from both sides of the Atlantic on a topic highlighting my country, Taiwan.

As a former political scientist studying democratization, I have always wanted to visit late President Havel's motherland, to see the people, to breathe the air, and to feel the culture that produced this great democracy.

While his accomplishments as a statesman have made him a legend to all of us, what I have cherished the most are

our shared values and inspirations.

The pursuit of freedom and democracy has always been the most important reason why our two countries are closely connected, even though we live thousands of miles away from each other.

We just celebrated what would have been late President Havel's 85th birthday and are approaching the 10th anniversary of his passing. However, we still have to fulfill certain obligations that, in my mind, are crucial to our discussions today about the future of democracy. We have seen many changes over the past 10 years, especially with the outbreak of the pandemic. The combination of new technologies and social media has empowered citizens everywhere to voice their views with a breadth, immediacy, and volume never before possible.

Along the same way, democracy's enemies have become increasingly bold and outspoken. They have turned to sophisticated new tools, such as hacking, disinformation, and online trolling, to undermine our confidence in

democratic institutions.

We might describe this as an information war, and friends of democracy seem ill-prepared. That's in part due to the fact that, since the end of the Cold War, we have grown too complacent. We have been too confident that the democratic tide will continue to rise simply because history has been on our side.

Seeing this, it seems to me the best way for us to honor Havel's legacy would be to renew our commitment to defending our shared principles around the world. Fortunately, his legacy is being carried forward not only in his homeland but also worldwide by people inspired to pursue freedom and democracy.

One of them is Czech Senate President Miloš Vystrčil, who led a delegation to Taiwan last year despite tremendous pressure brought upon him. His message in Taiwan is loud and clear: we are connected by our shared values.

Moreover, our two countries chose to take the path of democratization virtually at the same time. Students in Prague set off a series of demonstrations against harsh authoritarian rule, igniting the world-renowned Velvet Revolution in 1989. Meanwhile, Taiwanese students engaged in a movement calling for democratic elections. The “Wild Lily Student Movement,” as it is popularly called, quickly grew to a mass movement that eventually led the Taiwanese government to reform itself into a full democracy, with a direct presidential election in 1996.

Today, you and I can proudly say that our democracies have grown more mature and stable. Thanks to our freedom- and democracy-loving people, we struggle along the way without looking back.

To consolidate our democratic accomplishments, they need to be underpinned by determination and principles. This is especially true in times when authoritarianism continuously seek to undermine the values and institutions that we all cherish.

Look at the part of the world where I am from, the dominant authoritarian power is a neighbor. It has put millions in concentration camps because of their religion and ethnicity. It clamps down on Hong Kong with a National Security Law, which has taken away the freedom and openness people there used to take for granted.

Now authoritarianism has been expanding its power through military, and has been threatening Taiwan with war. And before there is any actual war, we are going through disinformation campaign, influence operation, hybrid warfare, grey zone tactics, you name it. All these are designed by authoritarianism to destroy our democracy. We have to bear in mind that authoritarianism has become undeniably more powerful since the pandemic broke out.

As long as authoritarianism considers its way of governance superior to democracy, Taiwan is a living proof otherwise. And this is the reason why Taiwan is on the front line constantly facing the onslaught of authoritarianism. Many European countries face similar situation, and there is no need for me to lecture you what

you are going through in Central and Eastern Europe.

Nevertheless, we need to be vigilant to authoritarianism who has weaponized trade. Your fellow EU member Lithuania is going through it now. But I want to salute the courage of its leaders for upholding the principle that freedom loving people should look out for each other. And to reciprocate, our trade and investment delegation will also be visiting Lithuania. We are also working with the United States to offset the impact caused by authoritarianism.

Under the situation that democracy in different parts of the world has been threatened, we need to work with and support each other. United we stand, and divided we fall. It is that simple.

We can always go back to the history to look for good lessons. When Adolf Hitler attempted to annex Austria in 1938, he rationalized his behavior by claiming that Germany and Austria shared similar ethics, languages, cultures, and historical backgrounds. He used the same

excuse to annex the Sudetenland in western Czechoslovakia. His scheme was realized with the signing of the Munich Agreement and the appeasement policy of the powers.

That dark part of the history gave us a key take away: we should come for each other at the time any of us is in need of assistance when facing challenge posed by authoritarianism. We don't let our democratic partners dangling alone to face threat, sanctions or coercion.

This is a poem written by Martin Niemöller on the outcome of the appeasement policy, and has become popular in Taiwan.

First they came for the Communists;
And I did not speak out, because I was not a
Communist.

Then they came for the Socialists;
And I did not speak out, because I was not a Socialist.

Then they came for the trade unionists;
And I did not speak out, because I was not a trade

unionist.

Then they came for the Jews;

And I did not speak out, because I was not a Jew.

Then they came for me;

And there was no one left to speak out for me.

Taiwan feels strongly about the possibility of being annexed. Our authoritarian neighbor claims that Taiwan is a part of it and has to be taken back, by force if necessary. It also tries to cut off our friends and our participation in international organizations to force us to be alone. I know this gets a little sentimental, but I want to let you know that, facing with coercion and isolation, Taiwan is not alone. And I want my European friends to know that you are not alone, either.

As the threat gets more serious, we are pleased to receive more support throughout the world. With the leadership of the United States and Japan, we now hear the word “Taiwan” often being mentioned in high-level joint statements, from US-Japan 2+2 and summit, US-Korea summit, QUAD ministerial meeting, AUSMIN 2021, G7

summit, and US as well as Japan EU summits. We have also been supported by the parliamentarians throughout Europe and America. This level of international support strengthens our resolve to defend our shared values. It reassures Taiwan that it is not dangling alone to face coercion. And it gives us the courage to say to authoritarianism with our chin up: democracy will prevail.

We are also pleased to see the growing common vision of a free and open Indo-Pacific. It is not just a concept proposed by Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, and it is not just a strategic report by the United States. It is now a joint pursuit of QUAD members. Even EU and some of its member states are not equipped with Indo-Pacific strategy, to connect with the region where Taiwan is located.

Since Taiwan and Europe face similar challenges posed by authoritarianism in areas such as disinformation campaign and hybrid warfare, we are also working ever more closely with each other on how to cope with them.

Because of the Indo-Pacific strategy of EU and a growing

number of European countries, Taiwan finds more space to work with you. Please trust me, I am here to connect our two countries and to work with you.

Now, I would like to share with you how Taiwan can be a reliable partner on global issues through its bilateral partnership with the United States. For decades, Taiwan and the US have enjoyed a robust and comprehensive relationship. We have developed close cooperation on a range of issues, including sanctioning North Korea, countering terrorism, and promoting democratic governance and religious freedom. In fact, we have been working so closely with the US on international issues that we are described by the US as a “force for good in the world.” We appreciate it, and it propels us to contribute more to the world.

Among all areas we work with the US, I would like to highlight Global Cooperation and Training Framework, or GCTF, as a platform that has the potential to include more European partners. It was established in 2015 for our two governments to set up training workshops for regional

officials and experts on subjects such as public health, environment protection, women's empowerment, E-commerce, and so forth. It has been growing since then. Japan and Australia are now full partners. We also have a number of European countries co-hosting some workshops. We now have training sessions on non-traditional security areas such as cyber security, disinformation, energy security, HADR, maritime safety, etc. We will do whatever we can to make a contribution, and that is our commitment. We are not deterred even by the pandemic.

Taiwan and the US share the belief that strong bonds should be established among all democracies so that we can jointly defend our common values. For this purpose, we launched a strategic dialogue in 2020 on developing the resilience of V4 countries against authoritarian coercion and penetration. We also organized a seminar this year to discuss the importance of foreign direct investment screening procedures with friends from Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania.

Democracies over the world should cultivate solidarity and shared vigilance. Doing so, we can better protect ourselves from being bullied by authoritarianism. As a reliable partner and an economic and technological success story, Taiwan is able and willing to play a proactive role in this long-term effort, and is willing to cooperate with all EU member states, particularly V4 and Baltic states.

Among European countries, I am both grateful and pleased that the Czech Republic and Taiwan have long been committed friends, and that our comprehensive partnership has been built upon a foundation of freedom and democracy. Moreover, it has flourished greatly in recent years. The Czech Senate has continuously supported Taiwan's international participation. The Czech Republic is now Taiwan's fourth-largest investment destination in Europe. Our bilateral trade also grows continuously.

I would also like to thank the government and people of the Czech Republic for welcoming our trade delegation so

warmly. I believe this delegation will provide us with more opportunities to cooperate in many fields including smart machinery, electric vehicles, cyber security, and smart cities.

In closing, I would like to once again pay tribute to late President Havel, also to late Senate President Kubera and Senate President Vystrčil. Thank you for your firm belief in freedom and democracy and your dedication to the strengthening of our bilateral relationship. I am glad that Taiwan and the Czech Republic are building on this strong foundation, working together to craft our world into one that we will jointly defend.

Thank you.