

**Remarks by David Tawei Lee, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the
Republic of China, at the Foreign and National Defense Committee of
the Legislative Yuan**

May 25, 2016

1. Foreword

Honorable chairperson, members of the Legislative Yuan, ladies and gentlemen: Good morning!

It is a great honor to be here today and give my first policy briefing to the esteemed Foreign and National Defense Committee since assuming office as Minister of Foreign Affairs. I would like to thank all members of the committee for your longstanding interest in and support of our diplomatic work. Our nation's international engagement transcends political affiliations, and is marked by continuity and stability. Committed and loyal, all our colleagues at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA), with a strong sense of idealism and mission, will continue to work together in unison to develop the Republic of China's external relations and contribute to Taiwan's future. We hope that you will be generous in offering us your suggestions and support.

The inaugural ceremony of the 14th-term president and vice president on May 20 was attended by foreign delegations comprising more than 700 dignitaries from 59 countries, including heads of state and special envoys. Their presence demonstrated international affirmation of and support for the ROC, and underscored their staunch friendship with free and democratic Taiwan. The firm support that the world has shown is a major propelling force steering Taiwan toward steady progress and development.

I have been engaged in diplomatic work for nearly 40 years, serving in many different positions and facing all types of challenges, giving me a thorough understanding of Taiwan's diplomatic situation—and I have always been proud to be an ROC diplomat. With an enterprising spirit, I will lead our diplomatic personnel in making full use of our nation's strengths to expand and deepen exchanges with other countries in various domains, participate in regional and international activities, and demonstrate a strong commitment to advancing peace and playing a positive role in the international arena, so that the ROC will remain an indispensable and respected member of the international community.

2. The current international landscape and the ROC's diplomatic challenges

In recent years, countries have been embroiled in power struggles and rivalry over global and regional issues. This, in addition to the threat of terrorism and the complexity of cross-border problems, has created a situation in the international arena marked by both competition and cooperation.

In the area of regional security, the Asia-Pacific is faced with sovereignty disputes in the East China Sea and South China Sea, as well as the nuclear threat posed by North Korea. While the US has pushed for a rebalance to Asia to maintain regional peace and stability, parties in the region, such as mainland China, Japan, Vietnam, and the Philippines, have adopted counterstrategies, as a result of which the regional security situation has remained in constant flux.

With regard to the economy, the Asia-Pacific has stepped up efforts toward regional integration. The Trans-Pacific Partnership, for which negotiations

were concluded on October 5, 2015, will have a major impact on economic development in the region. Meanwhile, the ASEAN Economic Community was officially launched at the end of last year, the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank began operating on January 16 of this year, and negotiations for the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership are expected to be completed by the end of this year. These developments have added to the challenges faced by the ROC as it seeks to integrate into the regional economy.

With regard to cross-strait relations, mainland China remains an important factor in Taiwan's development of bilateral and multilateral ties with other countries. Actions taken by the two sides in terms of international engagement could either exacerbate differences or bolster cross-strait ties through positive interactions, thus gradually building mutual trust and further advancing the development of relations. We hope that the two sides can resolve their differences and create a win-win scenario through patience and wisdom.

As President Tsai Ing-wen stated in her inaugural address, her vision of ROC diplomacy is that we “fulfill our duty as a citizen of the world and contribute towards diplomatic and global issues” and “bring Taiwan closer to the world, and the world closer to Taiwan.” In accordance with the current international landscape and the facts on the ground, MOFA will fulfill its responsibilities and strive to create a peaceful and stable international environment for Taiwan.

3. Foreign policy

In the future, MOFA will focus on the following eight aspects of foreign policy:

3.1. Strengthening cooperation with diplomatic allies and building sustainable partnerships

3.1.1. Promoting head-of-state diplomacy: We will actively promote head-of-state diplomacy and consolidate friendships with the leaders of our diplomatic allies. Heads of state and government leaders of several diplomatic allies attended the May 20 presidential inauguration, highlighting the achievements of our head-of-state diplomacy. MOFA will propose that President Tsai make state visits to our allies when the time is appropriate.

3.1.2. Bolstering bilateral cooperation: We will utilize the ROC's advantages in various fields to strengthen cooperation with allies in investment, economy and trade, basic infrastructure, culture, agricultural technology, and green energy. For example, the five innovative industries promoted by our government will be tied in with cooperation programs now underway with allies. We will bolster bilateral trade and technological cooperation, foster personnel exchanges, assist our allies in industrial upgrading, and create mutually beneficial business opportunities.

3.1.3. Using the ROC's strengths to nurture friendships: We will build and enhance friendships by strengthening human resources training and exchanges with our allies in medical care, research on tropical disease vaccines, education, and other areas in which Taiwan excels. For example, a total of 721 students from our diplomatic allies are currently enrolled in higher education institutions under the Taiwan Scholarship program. One of them is the daughter of the president of Nauru, who is studying at Yuanpei University of Medical Technology. Such programs will be expanded to effectively cultivate human resources for, and consolidate

friendships with, our allies.

3.2. Enhancing and expanding relations with countries that have similar values

3.2.1. Relations with the United States

3.2.1.1. Working together to advance peace in the Taiwan Strait and urging the US to support the ROC's international participation:

In recent years, the US has demonstrated its friendship with and support for the ROC through public remarks and concrete actions. Soon after President Tsai assumed office, the US expressed its willingness to cooperate with the new administration and further deepen relations with Taiwan. The US has an enduring interest in maintaining peace and stability in the Taiwan Strait, which is in line with the position of our new administration. We will urge the US to remain supportive of cross-strait exchanges conducted on the basis of dignity and respect. Since President Barack Obama took office, he has signed into law two bills passed by the Senate and the House of Representatives, supporting Taiwan's participation in the International Civil Aviation Organization and Interpol. This means that US support for Taiwan's participation in these two international bodies has become part of US government policy. Moreover, in May this year, the House of Representatives unanimously approved Concurrent Resolution 88, reaffirming the Taiwan Relations Act and the Six Assurances as cornerstones of Taiwan-US relations. This marked the first time that the Six Assurances were incorporated into a US congressional resolution. These moves underscore the firm and consistent support extended to Taiwan by the US administration and Congress. Based on this foundation, we will continue to call on the US to pay close attention to peace in the Taiwan Strait. We will also seek US affirmation of our democratic accomplishments and its assistance in expanding Taiwan's international

participation.

3.2.1.2. Deepening bilateral security and economic partnership: The US is one of the most important security and economic partners of Taiwan. US Secretary of State John Kerry and his predecessor Hillary Clinton have also publicly declared that Taiwan is an important security and economic partner of the US. In the future, we will consult with the US concerning our efforts to enhance asymmetrical and innovative warfare capabilities and reinforce defense strength. We will also expand cybersecurity collaboration with the US. On the economic front, Taiwan is the US's ninth-largest trading partner, while the US is Taiwan's second-largest. Both governments attach great importance to this economic and trade relationship. We are currently organizing a delegation to this year's SelectUSA Summit. We will advance investment cooperation in innovative technologies and, through such platforms as the Trade and Investment Framework Agreement, continue to promote bilateral economic and trade cooperation and urge the US to support our early accession to the TPP.

3.2.1.3. Realizing a comprehensive, enduring, and reciprocal partnership: Through the Global Cooperation and Training Framework, as well as the International Environmental Partnership, MOFA will strive to increase Taiwan-US cooperation on global democratization and human security issues, including counterterrorism, humanitarian aid, climate change mitigation, communicable disease control, energy security, and women's empowerment, as well as on joint efforts to offer assistance to other countries in capacity building. We will endeavor to realize a comprehensive, enduring, and reciprocal partnership with the US, and play a prominent role in the US's rebalance to Asia policy.

3.2.2. Relations with Japan

Japan is the most important neighbor friendly to Taiwan. We have long enjoyed close relations. In public remarks congratulating President Tsai on

her election on January 16 of this year, Japanese Minister for Foreign Affairs Fumio Kishida stated that Japan would strengthen its cooperation and exchanges with Taiwan. Two days later, Prime Minister Shinzo Abe called Taiwan an old friend of Japan during a parliamentary interpellation. Taiwan will take a four-pronged approach in developing a stable and harmonious relationship with Japan, as follows:

3.2.2.1. Launching a maritime cooperation mechanism: The Executive Yuan and the Japanese Cabinet Secretariat each issued a statement on May 23 announcing that Taiwan and Japan have agreed to launch a cooperation mechanism for maritime affairs under the framework of Taiwan's Association of East Asian Relations (AEAR) and Japan's Interchange Association. We anticipate greater cooperation on maritime, security, environmental, and fisheries issues, which will contribute to the positive development of bilateral ties and regional stability. MOFA will facilitate negotiations between the AEAR and the Interchange Association for the establishment of a mutually beneficial cooperation mechanism.

3.2.2.2. Expanding reciprocal and mutually beneficial economic and trade cooperation: In the spirit of equality, reciprocity, cooperation, and mutual benefit, we will resume Taiwan-Japan free trade talks, hold substantive dialogue on Taiwan's TPP participation, promote cooperation in five major innovative industries, jointly develop the Indian, Southeast Asian, and other overseas markets and business opportunities, and further develop our reciprocal and mutually beneficial economic and trade partnership.

3.2.2.3. Diversifying people-to-people exchanges: In 2015, ROC citizens made 3.8 million trips to Japan while Japanese nationals made nearly 1.47 million visits to Taiwan, making for total of 5.26 million, a new high. In addition to expanding tourism, cultural, and economic exchanges, we will encourage collaboration and exchanges in technology and human resources

through Taiwan-Japan business cooperation platforms.

3.2.2.4. Adding momentum to people's diplomacy: We will utilize local government, youth, and business resources to strengthen NGO engagement with and public diplomacy toward Japan.

3.2.3. Relations with Europe

3.2.3.1. Strengthening innovation-driven economic cooperation: The first priority mentioned by President Tsai in her inaugural address was to transform Taiwan's economic structure. Europe can serve as important reference with its experience in innovation, high-tech, green energy, and new agriculture. MOFA will work with the Ministry of Economic Affairs and other related agencies to formulate a plan to open up cooperation opportunities with Europe in these domains, so as to make concrete contributions to the administration's efforts to transform and upgrade the economy.

3.2.3.2. Pursuing an economic cooperation agreement with the EU: On October 14, 2015, the European Commission announced a new trade and investment strategy which specifically stated that the European Union will explore launching negotiations with Taiwan on investment issues. We will build on this foundation and seek the support of the EU, the European Parliament, as well as the governments and parliaments of individual EU member states for the signing of a Taiwan-EU economic cooperation agreement. Through existing high-level and official consultations and dialogues with various European nations, we will also promote talks on a bilateral investment agreement with the EU to help pave the way for an ECA.

3.2.3.3. Promoting substantive cooperation in diverse domains: We will enhance substantive cooperation with Europe through bilateral and multilateral channels and consultation mechanisms involving individual countries and the EU. Continued efforts will also be made to reach bilateral

cooperation agreements with European nations on economy and trade, avoidance of double taxation, customs affairs, agriculture, higher education, youth working holidays, international volunteers, and transfer of prisoners.

3.2.4. Relations with Southeast Asia and South Asia

MOFA will work with countries in Southeast Asia and South Asia to forge a sense of economic community, and undertake related tasks in full coordination with the New Southbound Policy.

3.2.4.1. We will strengthen substantive relations with Southeast Asia and South Asia, boosting mutual high-level visits and diverse and broad exchanges and setting up institutionalized bilateral and multilateral consultation platforms.

3.2.4.2. We will actively expand exports to Southeast Asian nations and India, so as to strengthen Taiwan's economic vitality and competitiveness and reduce risks associated with an overreliance on a single market.

3.2.4.3. We will pursue the signing of more ECAs with key Southeast Asian nations and India. In 2013, Taiwan already signed an economic partnership agreement with Singapore (ASTEP), which has benefited the economies of both countries. Based on this foundation, we will actively promote the preparatory work for the signing of ECAs with other Southeast Asian countries and India.

3.2.4.4. We will encourage promising young students to come to Taiwan as exchange students. For example, currently 15,000 Malaysian nationals are studying in Taiwan, and the accumulated number of Malaysians who have studied in Taiwan over the years has exceeded 60,000. In 2014, the number of overseas Chinese and foreign students from Southeast Asia who came to Taiwan to study was 23,390. Based on this foundation, the new administration will promote a scholarship program for students from ASEAN nations and South Asia, so as to advance our exchanges and talent cultivation with Southeast Asian countries and enhance understanding of

and friendship with Taiwan among Southeast Asian nations and India.

3.2.4.5. We will strengthen our strategic and diverse deployment in ASEAN and South Asian economies, so as to assist our industries in entering these markets and seek new cooperation opportunities in emerging fields.

3.2.4.6. By signing various cooperation agreements, we will fully strengthen our substantive relations with Southeast Asia and South Asia.

3.3. Assisting in the transformation and upgrading of Taiwan's economy; aggressively creating market opportunities overseas

Taiwan's economy must pursue innovation and upgrading, and it must be brought in line with international trends. The government's most important task at this point is ensuring the nation's participation in the TPP and RCEP through transformation and upgrading of domestic industries as well as amendment and relaxation of relevant laws and regulations. In order to achieve this goal as soon as possible, we will strive to observe international rules, boost government efficiency, and simplify investment procedures, so that our market becomes more flexible and competitive, and more attractive to investors. Meanwhile, through a diverse set of measures such as the New Southbound Policy, we will strengthen economic and trade links with ASEAN member countries and India. Economic competitiveness is related to our nation's survival and development, and serves as foundation to further our diplomatic efforts. As the government is introducing steps to revitalize our economy, MOFA will play an even more aggressive role in the future, sparing no effort in fostering an international environment that is friendly and beneficial to Taiwan and creating new business opportunities.

3.4. Ensuring participation in major international organizations and making concrete contributions

As a responsible member of the international community, Taiwan has a right and obligation to actively seek participation in major international

organizations.

From May 23 to 28, Minister of Health and Welfare Lin Tzou-yien is attending the WHA in Geneva, Switzerland, marking the eighth consecutive year Taiwan has taken part in this event. MOFA, in coordination with other related government agencies, will continue to promote the nation's involvement in international organizations. For example, we will seek participation in the 39th Assembly of ICAO—to be held from September 27 to October 7 this year in Montreal, Canada—in line with past precedent. We will also continue to seek participation in the UNFCCC and Interpol as an observer, so as to contribute to the world's sustainable development, prosperity, and security.

3.5. Proactively engaging in communication with parties concerned to safeguard regional peace and stability

Tensions in the South China Sea have been rising in recent years. The Philippines has initiated arbitration against mainland China at the Permanent Court of Arbitration (PCA), drawing significant international attention to issues in the South China Sea. In her inaugural address, President Tsai stressed that dialogue and communication are crucial to accomplish our goals, and that Taiwan will become a proactive communicator for peace. Therefore, we will strive to establish institutionalized communication mechanisms with countries concerned, so as to exchange views, avoid miscalculations, and foster mutual trust, with the purpose of resolving disputes effectively.

MOFA will pay close attention to related developments and take necessary action to safeguard our sovereignty and strategic interests in the South China Sea. We will closely follow the progress of the arbitration between mainland China and the Philippines at the PCA, while aiming to set up

dialogue channels with claimant countries. We will also continue to call on parties concerned to uphold the freedom of navigation and overflight in accordance with the spirit of international law—in particular UNCLOS—and to resolve conflicts in a peaceful manner.

3.6. Continuing to improve Taiwan’s international profile through humanitarian assistance

Taiwan’s most precious asset is its spirit of compassion and solidarity. In the future, MOFA will promote the establishment of an Asia-Pacific humanitarian assistance platform. We will closely track major international events, and push for cooperation with Asia-Pacific countries in such areas as humanitarian assistance, disaster rescue, disease prevention, and climate change mitigation. We will also strengthen our legal framework and expand our operational scope, so as to share our experiences and capabilities with other countries in the region and enhance Taiwan’s visibility and profile in the international arena.

In addition, MOFA will bring together Taiwan and overseas enterprises, as well as domestic NGOs, for the provision of resources for humanitarian assistance efforts. MOFA will also coordinate with disaster prevention and rescue training institutions in order to share Taiwan’s valuable experience and capabilities in handling natural disasters with the international community.

3.7. Exploiting the potential of people’s diplomacy

The soft power demonstrated by Taiwan’s private sector has been more diverse, flexible, and potent than that of the government. In the future, we will take full advantage of the government’s longstanding partnerships with domestic and foreign NGOs to identify even more emerging fields for cooperation. MOFA will assist in the planning and establishment of an international NGO center and deepen collaboration with civic groups, so as

to strengthen Taiwan's professional expertise in international cooperation. This will make Taiwan an important pillar of support for the work done by NGOs in the Asia-Pacific region.

3.8. Serving citizens with even greater efficiency

The purpose of diplomacy is to maximize the national interest and boost citizens' wellbeing. In addition to actively implementing the aforementioned policies, we continue to carry out the government's goal of serving and assisting the people in urgent circumstances, e.g., overseas emergencies, accidents, or fisheries disputes. When dealing with events that affect our nationals' interests, MOFA personnel in Taiwan and overseas will strive to offer timely and efficient service in a spirit of empathy.

4. Conclusion

The diplomatic work of the ROC is fraught with difficulties and challenges. Nevertheless, I believe that, through joint efforts by all our citizens, we will gradually implement our foreign policy initiatives in a pragmatic, steady, and structured fashion. In accordance with instructions given by then President-elect Tsai during a visit to MOFA on April 29, in personnel affairs we select people based on merit without regard for political affiliation, so as to create a young, professional, and efficient diplomatic team that can create new opportunities for our nation with innovative thinking and approaches. At the same time, we will leverage our existing advantages and coordinate with various political parties, groups, civic associations, local governments, enterprises, and people from all generations, in particular the younger generation, to move our diplomacy forward. In the region, we will actively implement a diplomacy for peace and set an example for new Asian values, so as to jointly achieve the goals of deepening democracy, ensuring free choices, promoting sustainable

production, and resolving conflicts peacefully. This will allow us to create an international environment that is friendly and beneficial to us, thereby creating new vistas in our foreign policy and achieving excellent results.

I very much look forward to the Legislative Yuan's continued support and encouragement. Thank you!