

**Committed to working with the world to contain COVID-19,
Taiwan seeks inclusion in the World Health Organization**

This year, COVID-19 has posed a serious threat to the health of all human beings. The successful Taiwan Model for combating COVID-19 has earned it global attention and recognition. This has also won Taiwan unprecedented international support for its bid to attend the World Health Assembly (WHA). High-ranking officials from Canada, Japan, Australia, New Zealand, and the US have publicly declared support for Taiwan. Furthermore, prominent political figures from 43 countries, including more than 600 members of national parliaments and the European Parliament, have expressed strong support for Taiwan in myriad ways. More than 60 media outlets around the world have published over 2,100 reports, commentaries, columns, and letters to the editor in support of Taiwan's participation in the World Health Organization (WHO).

Taiwan is willing to share its experience combating COVID-19. It has provided four waves of international antipandemic humanitarian assistance. WHO has continued to call on the world to work together to fight the pandemic and work toward recovery. No one should be left behind. However, for political considerations, WHO has refused to invite Taiwan to attend the WHA as an observer or to allow Taiwan's full participation in meetings, mechanisms, and technical meetings related to COVID-19. This has not only deprived the 23.5 million people of Taiwan of their right to health, it has also been unhelpful in the global struggle to defeat COVID-19.

Taiwan has not been invited to attend the WHA as an observer since 2017. However, Taiwan's proactive attempts to obtain participation in WHO have gained the support and assistance of an increasing number of nations. Taiwan will continue to press forward, as only by becoming a formal observer to the WHA can Taiwan participate in a systemic fashion in WHO, and ensure Taiwan's right to participate in the WHA and the technical meetings, mechanisms, and activities of WHO.

- **Taiwan's participation in WHO remains severely restricted**
 1. After confirming its first COVID-19 case on January 21 this year, Taiwan immediately notified WHO through channels under the International Health Regulations (IHR). However, to date, WHO has yet to include the contact information of Taiwan's IHR National Focal Point—i.e., Taiwan's Centers for Disease Control—on the IHR intranet (Event Information Site), nor has it provided information on Taiwan's situation to related countries. This has caused many nations' IHR National Focal Points to be unable to make direct reports to Taiwan about confirmed cases of COVID-19 that have the potential to affect the people of Taiwan, and prevented them from receiving important disease information provided by Taiwan to WHO, impacting the timeliness and effectiveness of cooperation on epidemic prevention and control.
 2. WHO did not invite Taiwan to send participants to emergency committee meetings. Despite Taiwan's efforts to seek participation in WHO COVID-19 Reference Laboratory Network, it has not been invited to join.

3. Taiwan is the responsibility of the WHO Western Pacific Regional Office (WPRO), but the WPRO continues to refuse to contact or interact with Taiwan. As a result, Taiwan is unable to obtain information on disease or border control measures put in place by other countries throughout the region served by the WPRO, affecting antipandemic efforts. It also means that Taiwan is unable to participate in meetings organized by the WPRO. This is detrimental to Taiwan's exchanges and interaction with the competent authorities in charge of public health in other countries throughout the region.
4. Taiwan applied to attend 187 technical meetings between 2009 and 2019, but was only accepted to 57, for a high refusal rate of 70 percent. Other than WHO's political considerations, China's obstruction has been the primary reason for this. This year, with continued pressure by diplomatic allies and like-minded nations on WHO to allow our experts to participate in COVID-19-related meetings and discussions serving as backdrop, WHO did make some flexible arrangements. This has meant that of 12 technical meetings Taiwan has applied to attend, it has been admitted to seven. Overall, however, there remains room for improvement as Taiwan's participation continues to be restricted.
5. Therefore, the WHO statement that "we have Taiwanese experts involved in all of our consultations, clinical networks and lab networks and all those so they are fully engaged and fully aware of all the developments" is factually incorrect. The experience of SARS in 2003 and of COVID-19 today are reminders to all the world not to overlook the improper deprivation of the right to health of Taiwan's people.

- **Taiwan Model for combating COVID-19**

Despite its exclusion from WHO, Taiwan continues to proactively combat COVID-19. As of September 28, only 513 cases had been confirmed in Taiwan, showing that antipandemic efforts have had brilliant success. Thanks to a rapid response and advance preparedness, Taiwan's per-million cases and deaths are very low. Taiwan was ranked first among 75 countries on three major indices concerning public health, economic activity, and policy by Bloomberg Economics.

- 1. Taiwan's response measures**

- 1.1. Central Epidemic Command Center:** The Central Epidemic Command Center (CECC) was activated on January 20, 2020. With Minister of Health and Welfare Chen Shih-chung serving as Commander, the CECC works in accordance with the principles of professionalism and transparency, holding daily press briefings on containment measures and new cases in Taiwan.

- 1.2. Border controls:** Taiwan implemented stringent border controls and border quarantine measures at the beginning of the pandemic. Management of and support for people undergoing home quarantine/isolation have also been implemented. To date there has been no widespread local transmission in Taiwan, meaning that most people live normal lives.

- 1.3. Preparation of supplies:** Taiwan quickly made an inventory of medical equipment (including surgical masks, surgical gowns, full-body protective clothing, and forehead/ear thermometers, etc.) needed to fight the pandemic. It increased its surgical mask production capacity, established contact points for manufacturers and associations,

and improved logistics for antipandemic supplies. A project counseling team was also established to bring antipandemic supplies to market more quickly to satisfy domestic demand and provide assistance to other countries.

1.4. Measures to prevent community outbreaks: To reduce the risk of community outbreaks and help people and industries gradually return to normal, the government has gradually relaxed restrictions on all kinds of venues. While regulations are being relaxed, the government has also encouraged individuals and enterprises to practice social distancing of 1.5 meters indoors and 1 meter outdoors. Where social distancing cannot be practiced, people should wear surgical masks. Companies are encouraged to install partitions for seating and take temperatures of patrons both indoors and outdoors. People are encouraged to wash their hands. Enterprises are asked to provide handwashing facilities or products at their entrances or on their premises, to keep a record of patrons' names and contact information and overall crowd flow, and to regularly disinfect the environment. These antipandemic efforts will reduce the risk of community transmission even when Taiwan reopens for international exchanges in the future.

2. Successful implementation of digital technology

In response to the spread of COVID-19, Taiwan rapidly tapped its expertise in digital technology to use big data and many information platforms effectively in its antipandemic efforts on three major fronts:

2.1. Comparing the National Health Insurance (NHI) database with information provided by other government agencies, the NHI

MediCloud began recording travel history, contact history, and occupational status to help frontline medical personnel diagnose patients' risk of infection and employ relevant control measures. This has also allowed hospitals to implement sorting at their entrances, allowing both hospitals and clinics to establish an effective antipandemic firewall.

2.2. To assist with keeping track of the epidemic, analysis is made of the medical history of suspected cases. They are contacted daily by the CECC so that their health condition may be monitored. Big data analysis of NHI information on the rate of infection in various populations is also done and the results provided to the CECC as reference for determining antipandemic policies on monitoring and controls.

2.3. Taiwan has established a name-based mask rationing system to help manage the sale of surgical masks across the nation. In cooperation with private groups, an online platform was established where members of the public can check the stock of masks available. At a time when masks are in short supply all over the world, Taiwan's name-based mask rationing system has been a global first in allowing all people to purchase masks.

- **Taiwan's contributions to global COVID-19 prevention and containment efforts**

Through the Taiwan Model, in addition to protecting the health of its people, Taiwan has helped its diplomatic allies and friendly nations fight the pandemic. Thus, Taiwan has promoted the health and

wellbeing of the international community, demonstrating that Taiwan can help, and Taiwan is helping. This has won great praise from the international community. Among Taiwan's major accomplishments are the following:

- 1. Donation of antipandemic supplies:** To help other nations in the fight against COVID-19, after ensuring enough supplies to look after its own people, Taiwan's government has provided 54 million surgical masks, 35,000 forehead thermometers, 227,000 sets of protective clothing, 600,000 isolation gowns, and other items including PCR test devices, rapid testing kits, and medical gloves to more than 80 countries around the world.
- 2. Sharing experience:** Taiwan has shared the successful Taiwan Model by holding 77 videoconferences with officials, hospitals, universities, and think tanks of 32 nations.

- **Creating a better postpandemic era**

The successful Taiwan Model can help other countries combat the pandemic. To recover better together, WHO needs Taiwan. Our economy has proven resilient: the Asian Development Bank forecast that Taiwan's economic performance in 2020 would be the best among the Four Asian Tigers—the only one to show positive growth.

Taiwan is a staunch partner in the global fight against the pandemic. But even as the epidemic has spread worldwide, WHO has continued to allow political considerations to restrict Taiwan's direct contact and communication with WHO and the health professionals of various

nations, which will harm global antipandemic cooperation. Only by including Taiwan in WHO can the world cooperate against the pandemic; only by abandoning political interference can the world quickly end the pandemic and work toward a better postpandemic era.

- **Conclusion**

Taiwan previously attended the WHA as an observer for eight years in a row. It made proactive contributions to the global health network. This was brought to a halt for political reasons, which was completely unfair to Taiwan. This also set an unfortunate precedent for rules-based global governance. Taiwan is not a part of the People's Republic of China. Only the democratically elected government of the Republic of China (Taiwan) can represent Taiwan at WHO and protect the health rights of its 23.5 million people. Taiwan again calls on WHO and all nations to pay due attention to the health rights of Taiwan's people. Given the importance of Taiwan's participation in WHO to international health cooperation and global governance, Taiwan should be fully admitted to the meetings, mechanisms, and activities of WHO.