

**Taiwan is an indispensable partner in the global fight against
COVID-19 and pursuit of post-pandemic recovery**

**Support Taiwan's full inclusion in all WHO meetings, mechanisms,
and activities**

The COVID-19 pandemic ravaged the world, exacting a heavy and extensive toll on the health and lives of humankind. Although the entire world has spared no effort in fighting the disease, more than 100 million confirmed cases have been recorded and nearly three million precious lives have been lost. Since World Health Organization (WHO) Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus declared the COVID-19 outbreak a Public Health Emergency of International Concern (PHEIC) one year ago, calls have continued to come loud and clear from all parts of the world stressing the importance of a united fight against the virus. Despite the staunch support of diplomatic allies and like-minded nations, however, Taiwan was again not invited to the World Health Assembly (WHA) as an Observer in 2020, and the slight improvement it saw in its technical participation in WHO falls far short of meeting its practical needs. We sincerely urge WHO to uphold the principles of professionalism and neutrality and include Taiwan in related WHO meetings, activities, and mechanisms.

The Taiwan Model, based on our democratic experience of COVID-19 containment, has come to set an excellent example for the rest of the world. The government of Taiwan has earned global recognition and acclaim for the series of actions it has taken to show that “Taiwan can help, and Taiwan is helping.” The pandemic has further strengthened

international affirmation of the importance and imperative need for Taiwan to participate in global cooperation mechanisms for disease prevention, leading to unprecedented support for its participation in WHO. During the two WHA sessions held in May and November 2020, exhortations for WHO to welcome Taiwan into its fold came from leaders and high-level government officials of numerous countries, including the United States, Japan, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, France, the United Kingdom, Germany, Denmark, the Netherlands, and Sweden, as well as more than 1,700 parliamentarians of more than 80 countries. International media also published more than 3,500 reports and articles backing Taiwan. These developments reflect a significant increase in Taiwan's international visibility and the growing support it has received.

No country can fight an epidemic alone. International cooperation is the only path to epidemic prevention and control. Taiwan is willing and able to serve as an indispensable partner in the international community's recovery efforts. In the spirit of playing a professional, pragmatic, and constructive role, Taiwan remains committed to seeking institutionalized participation in WHO. If it succeeds, many more countries will stand to benefit, and WHO and the international community will be ever more effective in their collaborative efforts to contain COVID-19.

- **Taiwan can help**

- 1. Sharing the Taiwan Model—a successful experience of fighting COVID-19**

- 1.1. Under the concerted efforts of its government and people, Taiwan has relied on its distinctive public healthcare system, cooperative citizens, democratic spirit, and technological prowess to employ smart disease prevention systems as part of the implementation of

numerous innovative policies. This has given rise to and focused the global spotlight on the Taiwan Model, which has effectively contained COVID-19. As of the middle of March 2021, with fewer than a thousand confirmed cases and ten deaths, Taiwan had earned widespread international acclaim for its antipandemic excellence, leading Bloomberg News to name President Tsai Ing-wen one of the 50 most influential people in the world.

- 1.2. Taiwan has proactively exchanged information on antipandemic measures with public health officials, experts, and scholars from other countries by organizing COVID-19 related forums and Global Cooperation and Training Framework activities and by participating in APEC's High-Level Meeting on Health and the Economy and other virtual bilateral and multilateral conferences. It has also taken the initiative to enhance international antipandemic cooperation, having held more than 140 online professional meetings with government officials and experts from hospitals, universities, and think tanks in over 60 countries as of February 2021.
- 1.3. Backed by private-sector resources and a compassionate people, the government of Taiwan has conducted four rounds of international humanitarian assistance to help contain COVID-19, donating 54 million surgical masks and other antipandemic supplies to more than 80 countries. It will continue to share more resources, including surgical masks, medicines, and technology, so as to provide even more assistance as needed by the international community and contribute to global containment efforts.

2. Relying on medical and healthcare strengths: Taiwan's success in containing COVID-19 is attributable to its sound and comprehensive healthcare system and world-class medical capabilities. In 2021, the

crowd-sourced global database Numbeo ranked Taiwan world no. 1 in its Health Care Index for the third straight year. Since the onset of COVID-19, Taiwan's tremendous medical and healthcare capacity and strong research capabilities have been evident. Taiwan quickly developed a rapid test kit that could yield results in 15 minutes, eliciting extensive interest in technology transfer among other Asian countries. It has also actively engaged in vaccine development and procurement, and joined the COVID-19 Vaccines Global Access (COVAX) Facility spearheaded by GAVI, the Vaccine Alliance; the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations; and WHO. In addition, it has encouraged domestic research institutes and biotech companies to expedite vaccine research and production. By coordinating the professional strengths of its ICT, biotechnology, and healthcare sectors, Taiwan is doing its part to forge a brighter future for global vaccine development.

- 3. Participating in the reform of WHO and global pandemic response measures:** To prevent other major global disease outbreaks, WHO is reviewing pandemic response measures and mechanisms. In May 2020, the WHA passed a resolution to establish the Independent Panel for Pandemic Preparedness and Response (IPPR), which is reviewing COVID-19 countermeasures and gathering opinions from experts and stakeholders worldwide. Taiwan supports this review process and wishes to participate in the IPPR's collective efforts to define a better global antipandemic strategy.
- 4. Helping create a more resilient post-pandemic era:** In countries around the world, the COVID-19 pandemic has shaken economic and government systems to their very core and irrevocably altered the future of humankind. Nevertheless, Taiwan saw its GDP climb 2.98 percent in 2020. As a key partner in the restructuring of global supply

chains in the post-pandemic era, it will leverage its industrial competitiveness to promote international cooperation in disease prevention, medicine, and digital healthcare.

- **Taiwan's participation in WHO remains severely restricted**

- 1. WHO must fully accept Taiwan's participation; Taiwan must not**

become a potential gap in the global antipandemic system: Taiwan is a transport hub for the Asia-Pacific region. In 2019, it handled 72 million inbound and outbound journeys. In 2020, despite the impact of COVID-19, it still handled 19 million journeys. The frequency with which travelers arrive and depart Taiwan shows the extent to which Taiwan and other countries are exposed to the threat of communicable diseases. Yet Taiwan is unable to comprehensively participate in the WHO-led multilateral public health system and network, which creates the risk of Taiwan becoming a gap in the global antipandemic system.

- 2. Taiwan should be afforded real-time information exchange with**

the world via WHO's IHR: To fulfill its responsibilities in cooperating on international antipandemic affairs, as the COVID-19 pandemic broke out from late 2019 to early 2020, Taiwan took the lead in reporting information to WHO via the International Health Regulations (IHR) mechanism, and continues to do so. However, to date, WHO has yet to include the contact information of Taiwan's Centers for Disease Control on the IHR intranet (Event Information Site, EIS). As a result, countries have been unable to obtain key information from Taiwan and exchange information with Taiwan via

WHO's IHR in a timely manner, gravely impacting the efficacy of international antipandemic cooperation.

3. WPRO refuses to interact with Taiwan and has improperly listed

Taiwan data under China: Taiwan is situated in the region covered by 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 the pandemic and related data issued by the WPRO, and is unable to participate in meetings organized by the WPRO. Furthermore, WHO and the WPRO continue to improperly list confirmed cases in Taiwan under China in their COVID-19 reports. This improper approach to reporting fails to acknowledge the fact that the People's Republic of China and Taiwan are separate jurisdictions, neither subordinate to the other. It also misleads other countries in terms of how they gauge the spread of the pandemic. Taiwan continues to solemnly request that, on the basis of professionalism, pragmatism, and global public health and welfare, WHO and the WPRO rectify the improper listing of cases as soon as possible and invite Taiwanese experts to participate in all regional meetings and mechanisms on COVID-19 containment.

4. Improvements to be made for Taiwan's participation in WHO

technical meetings: Taiwan actively seeks to attend technical meetings organized by WHO. It applied to participate in 199 technical meetings between 2009 and 2020, but received invitations only to 69 for a high refusal rate of 70 percent. Even with the world focusing on a concerted effort to fight COVID-19 in 2020, Taiwan was able to attend only seven of the 12 meetings it applied to. Its continued exclusion from WHO laboratory networks has severely undermined the health rights of the Taiwanese people and the global efforts against

disease. Other than WHO's political considerations, China's obstruction has been the primary reason for this. WHO and China have time and again declared that Taiwanese experts have been involved in all of WHO's consultations "so they are fully engaged and fully aware of all the developments," and that WHO has been "engaging with technical colleagues on the Taiwanese side over the whole course of this event . . . in all aspects of technical cooperation." These statements are factually incorrect.

- **Conclusion**

The COVID-19 pandemic has again reminded people worldwide that disease knows no borders. Having previously been left isolated and helpless during numerous epidemics, Taiwan all the more realizes the importance of mutual support and wishes to work hand in hand with WHO and other nations to overcome such formidable challenges. We stand by our commitment to participate in international healthcare cooperation and again urge WHO to maintain a professional and neutral stance, renounce improper political considerations, and invite Taiwan to attend the WHA as an Observer. Only the democratically elected government of Taiwan can represent its 23.5 million people at WHO and protect their rights to health. We ask WHO to seek an appropriate avenue for institutionalized and comprehensive participation by Taiwan in all WHO meetings, mechanisms, and activities. Taiwan is also looking to its international friends in all sectors to staunchly support Taiwan's participation in the global health network and facilitate its further contributions in the post-pandemic era.