

**Leaving no one behind:  
Calling for Taiwan’s professional, pragmatic, and constructive  
participation in the UNFCCC**

September 2017

*As we embark on this great collective journey, we pledge that no one will be left behind.*

—Transforming Our World: The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

Global warming and climate change affect all of mankind and the sustainable development of the world we inhabit. For the past 23 years, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change has called for the widest possible cooperation by all countries in the fight to avoid the devastating consequences. Yet the government of the Republic of China (Taiwan), and the 23 million it represents, still does not have proper access to the meetings of the Conference of Parties.

Ever since the first COP was held in 1995, Taiwan has only been allowed to participate as a nongovernmental organization observer under the name Industrial Technology Research Institute. This NGO status merely affords Taiwan access to peripheral UNFCCC events, which is neither effective nor appropriate. This untenable arrangement has caused Taiwan to miss significant events over the last two decades, such as negotiations leading up to both the Kyoto Protocol and Paris Agreement. Taiwan has, nonetheless, never used this as an excuse to shirk its responsibilities as a stakeholder in the international community.

**I. Taiwan has set an ambitious GHG reduction target**

*The Greenhouse Gas Reduction and Management Act*

In June 2015, Taiwan took the concrete step of passing the landmark Greenhouse Gas Reduction and Management Act. This act, which came about as the result of 10 years of dialogue between industry, government,

academia, and the public, not only serves as 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.

The act officially enshrined into law Taiwan's goal of cutting carbon emissions to 50 percent 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.

#### *Taiwan's INDC announcement*

In response to the Lima Call for Climate Action, and with a view to achieving the ultimate objective of the UNFCCC as set out in Article 2, Taiwan voluntarily announced its Intended Nationally Determined Contribution on September 17, 2015, committing to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 50 percent 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, which is more ambitious than those announced by similarly sized economies in Asia, is predicated on the phasing out of nuclear energy. It serves as a legally binding short-term goal that is part of the Greenhouse Gas Reduction and Management Act. Calculated on the basis of 2005 levels, it equates to reducing carbon emissions by 20 percent by 2030. In other words, Taiwan is committed under its domestic legal framework to achieving its INDC.

Taiwan understands that the issues associated with climate change are inextricably linked to the world's sustainable development, and will therefore also take responsibility for helping achieve the 17 United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. It has just released the first voluntary national review, which will document the concrete progress it has made to this end.

As an island state with a relatively large economy, Taiwan relies heavily on imported energy, at over 98.8 percent of total demand. Despite the challenges, Taiwan is determined to move towards becoming a low-carbon economy, aiming to raise the proportion of renewable energy generated for the country's power supply to 20 percent—five times the current level—by 2050.

*The people of Taiwan must not be left behind*

When the United Nations adopted its SDGs in September 2015, it pledged that no one would be left behind. And yet Taiwan, a democratic and peace-loving country with a population of 23 million and the world's 22nd-largest economy, is indeed being left behind through its unwarranted exclusion from UN specialized agencies and mechanisms, including the UNFCCC.

Climate change knows no boundaries and requires across-the-board cooperation. Taiwan has as much of a stake in combating climate change as any other country. Our absence from the UNFCCC undermines this simple fact and, more worryingly, weakens the world's ability to act as one.

Taiwan therefore urgently calls on the international community to support its bid to participate in the upcoming 23rd session of the Conference of the Parties, in Bonn, as a nonmember government observer under the name of its Environmental Protection Administration.

**II. Taiwan is ready to contribute more to the UNFCCC**

*Taiwan is part of the global solution to climate change*

Taiwan is known for its expertise in developing green technology, which it actively exports to other countries. Taiwan has much to offer the UNFCCC, not just in terms of technology transfers, but also financial support and capacity building. We can assist countries in updating their national

commitments and boosting their ability to face climate change. As an island state, Taiwan's experience with rapid economic development, industrialization, and environmental management would be extremely valuable to other island states and developing countries facing similar challenges associated with climate change. By drawing on Taiwan's advanced technologies and experience, these nations could modernize their economies without causing unnecessary harm to the environment.

#### *Experience assisting developing countries*

Over the decades, Taiwan has undertaken numerous cooperative projects with developing countries in a wide array of fields related to climate change, including 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.

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

Taiwan has also cooperated with countries in the Pacific islands to record and classify plant resources, boost conservation efforts, and provide solar energy systems for homes, as well as solar street lighting and handheld lights.

#### *Multilateral cooperation on technology transfers*

Taiwan is one of the Asia-Pacific region's environmental leaders, and has established close ties with partners in the Asia-Pacific, Latin America, and

Africa that facilitate the sharing of experience and expertise. For instance, Taiwan and the United States have worked together to manage the environment and reduce pollution through projects, research, and knowledge exchange. In 2014, Taiwan's Environmental Protection Administration officially launched the International Environmental Partnership, a network of experts from around the world who work together to strengthen capacity for addressing such environmental issues as climate change, environmental education, electronic waste management, air pollution, mercury monitoring, and contaminated soil and groundwater.

Taiwan is also globally recognized as a leader in the field of seismic and maritime weather monitoring, and has the highest concentration of monitoring stations of any nation, with some 800 currently in operation. Given the vulnerability of Pacific Island nations to climate change, Taiwan offers training to their meteorological personnel and dispatches experts to assist in improving their weather forecasting systems.

### **III. Taiwan's participation is a matter of climate justice**

The Paris Agreement highlights the important concept of climate justice, calling on all states to take action to address climate change. Taiwan is a densely populated island that is particularly exposed to extreme weather events and rising sea levels associated with climate change. The increasing frequency of floods, landslides, droughts, and heat waves endangers Taiwan's development and very survival. It is unjust that Taiwan is excluded from the UNFCCC and left to deal with the impact of climate change on its own.

The threats posed by climate change continue to grow increasingly clear, and no country is immune to the impacts. It is therefore of paramount importance that these challenges are dealt with in unison, so as to ensure our planet's sustainable development. The people of Taiwan are eager to

participate in the global climate regime. Taiwan's inclusion in the UNFCCC process would conform to the purpose and spirit of the convention, which acknowledges that "the global nature of climate change calls for the widest possible cooperation," as well as to the principles embodied in the UN Charter.

#### **IV. Conclusion**

The 23 million people of Taiwan have the right, the ability, and the willingness to contribute to efforts to ensure our planet's sustainable development. We therefore call on all parties concerned to look beyond political considerations, and support Taiwan's professional, pragmatic, and constructive participation in the UNFCCC.