

**Leaving no one behind:
Calling for Taiwan's meaningful participation in the UNFCCC**

September 2016

We will “fulfill our duty as a citizen of the world and contribute towards global issues. ... We will also not be absent on the prevention of global warming and climate change.”

“We will regularly review goals for cutting greenhouse gas emissions in accordance with the agreement negotiated at the COP21 meeting in Paris. Together with friendly nations we will safeguard a sustainable earth.”

-----2016 Inaugural address, President Tsai Ing-wen of the Republic of China (Taiwan)

I. Taiwan should be included in the UNFCCC

➤ *Indispensable partner*

Like any other country, the Republic of China (Taiwan) has a tremendous stake in combating climate change. It aims to contribute to related efforts through the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). After the 17 sustainable development goals (SDGs), which replace the millennium development goals (MDGs), were agreed on in New York in 2015, UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon stated that “this is the people’s agenda, a plan of action for ending poverty in all its dimensions, irreversibly, everywhere, and leaving no one behind.” And yet Taiwan, a democratic and peace-loving country with a population of 23 million and the world’s 22nd-largest economy, is being left behind through its unwarranted exclusion from UN specialized agencies and mechanisms, specifically the UNFCCC.

➤ *Shared responsibility*

As Pope Francis quite rightly reminds us, “We are one single human family. There are no frontiers or barriers, political or social, behind which we can hide.” Climate change knows no boundaries. It is a cross-border issue that requires across-the-board cooperation. Taiwan’s absence from the UNFCCC undercuts this important concept and weakens the ability to act as one. Taiwan therefore urgently calls on the international community to support its bid to participate in the upcoming 22nd session of the Conference of the Parties (COP22) in Marrakech as an observer under the name of its Environmental Protection Administration. Taiwan’s

inclusion in this crucial conference would offer a tremendous boost to the global fight against climate change and be in line with the simple reality of one earth.

II. Taiwan has set ambitious GHG reduction target

➤ *Greenhouse Gas Reduction and Management Act*

Last year, when the parties to the UNFCCC were still negotiating a legally binding 2015 agreement, Taiwan took the concrete step of passing the landmark Greenhouse Gas Reduction and Management Act. This act, which marks 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.

Passed in June 2015, the act officially enshrines 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. Representatives from the European Union, the United States, Germany, the United Kingdom, and other friendly countries have all recognized this significant milestone.

The key to the success of any climate talks, whether at the national or international level, is whether stakeholders have the political will to commit to taking action. That political will, as demonstrated by the Greenhouse Gas Reduction and Management Act, exists in Taiwan, and could be used to inject momentum into COP22. The huge strides that Taiwan has already made should be recognized and put to good use through the UNFCCC.

➤ *Voluntary announcement of INDC*

Taiwan supported efforts to reach a new, strong, and effective global climate change agreement in Paris in December 2015. In response to the Lima Call for Climate Action, Taiwan vowed to present its Intended Nationally Determined Contributions (INDC) in line with the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities in light of different national circumstances, and with a view to achieving the ultimate objective of the UNFCCC as set out in Article 2 of the

convention.

Although not yet party to the UNFCCC, Taiwan announced its INDC on September 17, 2015, committing itself to reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 50 percent from the business-as-usual level (from 428 million tonnes of CO₂ equivalents to 214 million tonnes) by 2030. This INDC target is more ambitious than that of similarly sized economies in Asia, is based on the precondition of phasing out nuclear energy, and was formulated while Taiwan was denied access to the Kyoto Protocol and UNFCCC mechanisms.

Taiwan's INDC target serves as a legally binding short-term goal that is part of its 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.

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 this poses, Taiwan is determined to move towards a low-carbon economy and help keep global warming to within two degrees Celsius of preindustrial levels. Taiwan calls on all parties concerned to recognize the concrete steps it has taken to fulfill its shared responsibility, and to support Taiwan's meaningful participation in the UNFCCC.

III. Taiwan is ready and willing to contribute more to the UNFCCC

➤ *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 to the UNFCCC, not just in terms of technology sharing and transfers, but also financial support and capacity building. We could assist countries in updating their national commitments and strengthening their ability to face climate change. Especially, as an island state, the experience Taiwan has gained in the process of rapid economic development, industrialization, and environmental management could be extremely valuable to island states and developing countries that face similar challenges associated with climate change. By using Taiwan's advanced

technologies and experiences, these nations could modernize their economies without causing unnecessary harm to the environment.

➤ *Assistance to 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.

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 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.

➤ *Inclusion in UNFCCC financial mechanisms*

Due to its geographic location, Taiwan is particularly vulnerable to the impact of extreme weather and natural disasters. This has forced it to learn to adapt, and in this process it has gained tremendous expertise.

Through bilateral cooperation with developing countries, Taiwan has demonstrated its willingness and ability to share financial resources and expertise. Its contributions in this regard could be further enhanced through participation in UNFCCC financial mechanisms such as the Green Climate Fund and Global Environment Fund. This would allow Taiwan to implement more efficient projects in Central America and the Pacific islands concerning the application of geographic information systems and global positioning systems to strengthen environmental monitoring and disaster prevention.

➤ *Multilateral cooperation on technology transfers and sharing*

Taiwan is one of the environmental leaders in the Asia Pacific region and has established the close relationship with partners in the Asia Pacific, Latin America, and Africa for sharing experience and expertise with each other. For instance, Taiwan and U.S. have worked to manage the environment and reduce pollution through projects, research, and knowledge exchange. In 2014, Taiwan Environmental Protection Administration has officially launched the International Environmental Partnership (IEP), a network of experts from around the world working together to strengthen capacity for addressing environmental issues including 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, with about 800 currently in operation. Given the vulnerability of Pacific island nations to climate change, Taiwan has offered training to meteorological personnel and dispatched experts to those countries, so as to assist them in improving weather forecast systems.

IV. Taiwan's participation is a matter of climate justice

➤ *United global efforts*

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 vulnerable 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.

Challenges posed by climate change continue to grow. No country is immune to its impact, and it is therefore extremely important that challenges are dealt with in unison, so as to ensure our planet's sustainable development.

➤ *Minimization of temperature increases*

According to the 2015 Key World Energy Statistics published by the International Energy Agency, Taiwan ranked as the world's 22nd-largest emitter of carbon dioxide in 2013, accounting for 0.77 percent of the total. This makes Taiwan the 21st-largest emitter of carbon dioxide per capita, at 10.63 tonnes.

At present, 190 parties have formally submitted their INDCs to the UNFCCC, covering 98.8 percent of global emissions, and 27 parties—representing 39 percent of global emissions—have ratified the Paris Agreement. Nevertheless, it will remain a challenge to limit the increase of global surface temperatures to below two degrees Celsius.

So far, Taiwan has not been allowed to submit its INDC to the UNFCCC Secretariat for purely political reasons. By excluding Taiwan, an important part of global emissions remains unaccounted for. Conversely, Taiwan's inclusion in the UNFCCC would enhance cooperation and help close the gap between projected and desired temperature increases.

➤ *Compliance with the spirit of the UNFCCC and UN Charter*

Currently, Taiwan can only participate in the UNFCCC as an NGO observer under the name Industrial Technology Research Institute. This NGO status allows Taiwan to take part in peripheral events, but not in the conferences of the parties, in which only a very limited number of NGO participants are permitted to attend. This is neither appropriate nor effective.

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.

V. 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 meaningful participation in the UNFCCC.