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Request for the inclusion of a supplementary item in the agenda of the sixty-third session

Need to examine the fundamental rights of the 23 million people of the Republic of China (Taiwan) to participate meaningfully in the activities of the United Nations specialized agencies

Letter dated 14 August 2008 from the representatives of Belize, Burkina Faso, El Salvador, the Gambia, Honduras, the Marshall Islands, Nauru, Nicaragua, Palau, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Sao Tome and Principe, Solomon Islands, Swaziland and Tuvalu to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Upon the instruction of our respective Governments, we have the honour to request, pursuant to rule 14 of the rules of procedure of the General Assembly, the inclusion in the agenda of the sixty-third session of a supplementary item entitled "Need to examine the fundamental rights of the 23 million people of the Republic of China (Taiwan) to participate meaningfully in the activities of the United Nations specialized agencies". Pursuant to rule 20 of the rules of procedure, we attach an explanatory memorandum (annex I) and a draft resolution (annex II).

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Annex I

Explanatory memorandum

I. Foreword

In order to effectively address issues related to the welfare of mankind in the era of globalization, cooperation among all members of the international community is imperative. Such issues cover the areas of economics, culture, education, health, transport, finance, telecommunication, environmental protection, sustainable development, human rights, anti-drug-trafficking, counter-terrorism etc. Being the most important multilateral platforms for dealing with global issues, the specialized agencies of the United Nations system should open their arms to the participation of all members of the international community based on the principle of universality.

The Republic of China (Taiwan) has been denied participation in the conferences, mechanisms and conventions of the United Nations and the specialized agencies since 1971, thereby creating a major breach in the operations of the United Nations system.

It is our hope that the international community fully understands that Taiwan's meaningful participation in the specialized agencies is of benefit to all humankind, and will therefore render Taiwan necessary support. While both sides of the Taiwan Strait are stepping up efforts to improve relations, we hope that the People's Republic of China will also understand the aspiration of the 23 million people of Taiwan to participate meaningfully in the United Nations specialized agencies and show its goodwill and flexibility in this regard.

II. Reasons for Taiwan's participation in the specialized agencies

A. Participation in the specialized agencies is the fundamental right of Taiwan's 23 million people

According to the Charter of the United Nations, the mission of the United Nations is to "reaffirm faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person, in the equal rights of men and women and of nations large and small". Similarly, Article 2 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights states, "Everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms …, without distinction of any kind … no distinction shall be made on the basis of the political, jurisdictional or international status of the country or territory to which a person belongs …". On the basis of these declarations, the 23 million people of Taiwan are entitled to the same fundamental human rights as all peoples under the auspices of the United Nations.

B. There is a need for Taiwan to participate in the specialized agencies

The global issues tackled by the specialized agencies are closely connected to the well-being of all mankind. As Taiwan cannot attend the conferences, mechanisms and activities of the specialized agencies, the welfare of its people as well as the interests of all humankind have been seriously jeopardized.

For instance, Taiwan has been campaigning for participation in the World Health Organization (WHO) for years, but has been unable to establish direct access to and communication with WHO regarding disease prevention. In addition, Taiwan is restricted from attending WHO technical conferences and activities. As a result,

Taiwan can neither acquire the latest medical and health updates nor receive timely assistance when epidemics occur, as was the case with SARS. Furthermore, as early as May 2006, Taiwan announced its decision to comply voluntarily with the International Health Regulations (IHR 2005) that entered into force on 15 June 2007. Although Taiwan has repeatedly submitted updates to WHO about various diseases, WHO has never responded. This has been detrimental to the health rights of the 23 million people of Taiwan and foreigners residing in and travelling to Taiwan. It also creates a weak spot in the global epidemic surveillance network which will harm the international community.

The Taipei Flight Information Region lies at the heart of East Asia, with 12 international and 4 domestic routes covering its 176,000 square nautical miles of air space. Tourists on average make 40 million trips to Taiwan, and around 1.7 million tons of air cargo are shipped to Taiwan annually, making it a key link in global aviation security. However, Taiwan remains unable to participate in meetings held by the International Civil Aviation Organization. Therefore, Taiwan lacks access to crucial information with which to formulate domestic civil aviation rules and measures that conform to international regulations. This creates a dangerous rift in global aviation security.

With the world's tenth largest shipping capacity, Taiwan has no access to the meetings of the International Maritime Organization and cannot acquire information at first hand. To make matters worse, the validity of Taiwan seaman's certificates has been frequently challenged, thereby hampering the development of Taiwan's shipping industry.

C. Taiwan is ready, willing and able to contribute to the international community

Being the world's eighteenth largest economy and twentieth largest outbound investor, Taiwan possesses significant economic strength. Taiwan hopes to share its development experiences with many developing countries. Taiwan is also willing to give back to the world through humanitarian assistance and technical cooperation. Three areas of interest can be further illustrated as follows:

1. Technical cooperation and assistance

Taiwan has made great efforts to help realize the elimination of poverty and hunger as set in the United Nations Millennium Development Goals. Besides sharing its development experience with the global community, Taiwan assists its diplomatic allies and friendly countries with their public projects and their social, agricultural and private sector development. Taiwan's development aid is mainly handled through the Taiwan International Cooperation and Development Fund, which currently sponsors 34 long-term technical missions in 29 partner countries.

2. Medical relief

Despite the fact that Taiwan is excluded from most international organizations and denied participation in the majority of international cooperation projects, Taiwan makes its best endeavours to help countries in need through the remaining available channels. If the specialized agencies of the United Nations system could accept Taiwan's participation in international cooperation, many of their projects would prove to be even more effective.

Taiwan also plays an active role in providing humanitarian assistance. Each year, Taiwan amasses some 100,000 tons of rice reserves earmarked for overseas humanitarian assistance. In addition, Taiwan's public and private sectors have boosted their participation in international relief and post-disaster reconstruction activities. Major examples of their assistance in the last two years include the following:

(a) In December 2006, when serious flooding hit Kenya, Taiwan sent an emergency medical team and donated 24,000 mosquito nets to people in the affected areas.

(b) On 6 March 2007, the Sumatra region of Indonesia was hit by a strong earthquake. Taiwan immediately sent medical teams to the disaster areas to provide emergency medical assistance.

(c) On 2 April 2007, an earthquake hit the Solomon Islands, causing a tsunami. The Taiwan Government immediately dispatched a medical mission with 200 kilograms of medical supplies to the disaster areas, and enlisted the help of Taiwanese fishing boats in the vicinity to transport the medical mission to the outlying islands of the Solomon Islands.

(d) On 4 May 2008, a cyclone hit Myanmar, and International Headquarters Search and Rescue Taiwan immediately dispatched a mission to assist in the rescue efforts. The Taiwan Government also donated US$ 200,000 for post-disaster reconstruction.

(e) On 12 May 2008, a strong earthquake hit Sichuan Province in the People's Republic of China. The Taiwan Government set up an emergency rescue task force the next day to send a team to the area to assist in the rescue work and provide food and relief materials. The total amount of donations from the Government, business community and private sector reached approximately US$ 220 million.

(f) On 14 June 2008, a strong earthquake hit Japan. The Taiwan Government donated ¥3 million (approx. US$ 25,000) each to the prefecture governments of Miyagi and Iwate.

3. Epidemic prevention

When avian flu was spreading rapidly throughout the world, Taiwan donated 600,000 Tamiflu capsules to Viet Nam in July 2005 and sent medical experts to Burkina Faso, Indonesia and Chad to assist in fighting the epidemic.

On 19 December 2006, Taiwan also sent a team of medical experts to Kenya when Rift Valley Fever broke out in that country. The team stayed there until 5 February 2007, after the outbreak was contained.

D. Taiwan's international participation encourages cross-strait dialogue

From 12 to 14 June 2008, Taiwan's Straits Exchange Foundation and the Association for Relations across the Taiwan Strait of the People's Republic of China resumed talks in Beijing on issues surrounding weekend charter flights and the opening of Taiwan to more mainland Chinese tourists. The agreement reached by the two sides is a good sign for future cross-strait interaction. In addition, the People's Republic of China has shown some goodwill regarding Taiwan's

participation in international organizations. If the People's Republic of China translates its goodwill into action by helping Taiwan participate meaningfully in the specialized agencies, it will create a more favourable atmosphere for cross-strait dialogue and opportunities for cooperation.

Furthermore, with increased cross-strait exchange and interaction, the two sides will have to work closely together to determine flight routes and exchange information on disease prevention and so forth, to protect the interests and welfare of their peoples. If Taiwan could participate in international organizations to acquire the latest information available, it would help the two sides reach a consensus on issues of mutual concern affected by international regulations.

E. Taiwan's meaningful participation in the specialized agencies would help promote peace and cooperation in the Asia-Pacific region

Globalization has deepened interdependence among countries. As a result, neighbouring countries have been forming regional organizations so as to better coordinate on functional and technical issues. The issues that the specialized agencies of the United Nations system handle tend to be functional and technical in nature. Therefore, allowing Taiwan's participation would be helpful for the two sides of the Taiwan Strait to set aside differences and strengthen cooperation on issues of mutual concern, thereby reducing misunderstanding and friction gradually. Accordingly, Taiwan's meaningful participation in the specialized agencies would help prevent conflicts and promote stability and prosperity in the Asia-Pacific region.

III. Conclusion: filling the gap to ensure regional peace and prosperity

Cross-strait relations have been warming up since May 2008, and leaders of both sides have openly shown a willingness to shelve disputes so as to create a win-win situation. This development has been warmly welcomed by the international community.

It is time for the United Nations system to find a solution to the exclusion of Taiwan from this most important global forum. Only by allowing Taiwan to participate meaningfully in the specialized agencies can the principle of universality be fulfilled, and regional peace and prosperity be ensured.

Annex II

Draft resolution

The General Assembly,

Considering, with concern, the fact that the exclusion of the participation of the 23 million people of the Republic of China (Taiwan) from the United Nations and its specialized agencies since 1971 has deviated from the principle of universality upheld in the Charter of the United Nations,

Noting that, being the most important multilateral platforms for dealing with global issues in the era of globalization, the specialized agencies of the United Nations system should accept Taiwan's participation based on the principle of universality,

Acknowledging that Taiwan is ready, willing and able to participate in international cooperation and give back to the rest of the world and that the international community suffers losses from Taiwan's continued exclusion from the specialized agencies,

Recognizing that Taiwan's meaningful participation in the activities of the specialized agencies is conducive to cross-strait dialogue and peace and cooperation in the Asia-Pacific region,

Decides to recommend to the specialized agencies of the United Nations system to accept the meaningful participation of the 23 million people of the Republic of China (Taiwan) in their activities.