Upholding the Values of Democracy and Freedom, Creating a Vision of Cross-Strait Peace

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Chairman Tian, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,
Good morning!

I would like to thank the Institute for National Policy Research (INPR) for its efforts in holding this international conference on "Opportunities and Challenges in Cross-Strait Relations and East Asia." On behalf of the Mainland Affairs Council (MAC), I wholeheartedly welcome all of the scholars and experts here today to join us in this event and participate in the discussions.

Over the past more than three years, the ASEAN Plus Three, the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP), the Free Trade Area of the Asia-Pacific (FTAAP), bilateral economic agreements between Asian countries, and other mechanisms have steadily advanced economic integration in the Asia-Pacific region and enabled East Asian countries to jointly play a pivotal role on the global economic stage. Faced with this trend, the United States has solemnly declared its returning to Asia. Taiwan has also seized
the historic opportunity presented by improved cross-strait relations to actively develop bilateral economic and trade relations with its neighboring countries. These changes have captured the international spotlight. Another issue highly worthy of attention is the relationship between internal political changes and regional development among the key players in the evolving terrain of East Asia, including the United States, Japan, ASEAN, mainland China, and Taiwan. Scholars and experts have gathered here today to probe and exchange views on these very important issues. It is also the purpose that the MAC and the INPR would like to achieve by jointly holding this conference.

The improvement of cross-strait relations over the past more than three years has been a critical factor for the regional security and stable development in East Asia. Since President Ma Ying-jeou came into office in May 2008, the government of the Republic of China (ROC) has firmly maintained the status quo of "no unification, no independence, and no use of force" in the Taiwan Strait under the framework of the ROC Constitution. It has also resumed institutionalized cross-strait negotiations based on the "1992 Consensus" of “one China with respective interpretations." Our position is that "one China" stands for the "Republic of China." To date, the Straits Exchange Foundation (SEF) and the Association for Relations Across the Taiwan Straits (ARATS) have held seven high-level talks, signed 16 agreements, and reached one consensus, which have laid an important foundation
for progressively building cross-strait mutual trust and maintaining peace in this area. These fruitful results have also contributed enormously to regional security, stability, and prosperity. I would now like to speak about the major significance and achievements of the ROC's Mainland China policy, as well as the prospects for the future of cross-strait relations.

1) Actively establishing peaceful and stable cross-strait relations in keeping with the constitutional democracy of the ROC

The Republic of China was established a century ago as the first democratic republic in Asia. The founding ideals of the ROC have taken root and grown strong in the land of Taiwan. Here, different ethnic groups coexist, with feelings of identify influencing each other and converging to form the shared values we cherish in Taiwan today, which are—freedom, democracy, human rights, and the rule of law. The institution that holds these values together is the constitutional democracy of the ROC.

The experience obtained from the past more than three years has demonstrated that an overall environment of cross-strait peace and a stable status quo have been steadily ensured and established. Under the principles of reciprocity, and dignity, the two sides can carry out benign interactions. They have shelved disputes over sovereignty and accepted a mutual non-denial of authority to
govern, enabling government officials of the two sides to sit down and negotiate. At the same time, widening exchanges and deepening interactions between the societies on the two sides in various fields have gone a long way to dispelling the past hostility between the two sides. Taiwan's values—freedom, democracy, human rights, and the rule of law—and its attitude towards life have led to the healthy development of cross-strait relations in the course of dialogue and exchanges between the two sides. Over the past more than three years, the sovereignty and the democratic system of the ROC have not only remained intact in the course of cross-strait interactions, but in fact grown stronger.

2) Creating a peaceful and stable external environment for Taiwan to become a stabilizing force amidst changes in East Asia

The ROC’s Mainland policy is to create an external environment for Taiwan to develop stably. We are pragmatically aware that the two sides must discard the cold war mindset in our relations and jointly create a win-win outcome. In short, as our ancestors said, we must 'bury the hatchet and beat swords into ploughshares.' We respect the facts that different historical experiences of the two sides over the past more than four centuries have created diversities, and that more than six decades of estrangement and misunderstanding will need to be resolved one step at a time.
Internally, the ROC’s Mainland policy needs to reconcile the different views of the ruling and opposition parties, while externally safeguarding national sovereignty and the rights and interests of the people. By sticking to our position and principles, we are steadily cultivating the confidence of the people of Taiwan in exchanges with the Mainland, not letting the Mainland's rising political and economic power shy us from dialogue and exchanges. With this confidence, Taiwan can continue to improve cross-strait relations on a sure footing, and turn the Taiwan Strait from an East Asian flash point into a force for stability in the East Asian region. It can also enable the two sides to treat each other rationally and work jointly for lasting peace. This is a sure-footed road and the right path to peace — one that we are absolutely committed to taking.

3) Implementing signed agreements so the fruits of institutionalized negotiations can be jointly shared by all

Over the past more than three years, the government has promoted institutionalized cross-strait negotiations under the principle of "putting Taiwan first for the benefit of the people" and the national development strategy of "strengthening Taiwan, connecting with the Asia-Pacific region, and positioning globally." It has placed priority on issues related to the livelihood of the people in order to resolve specific problems faced by the public. The major contributions of this approach to the welfare of
the people on both sides of the Strait as well as to benign development of cross-strait relations include the following:

- Opening direct cross-strait sea and air transport links, implementing direct cross-strait postal service links, and building solid infrastructures for cross-strait contacts.
- Allowing the Mainland people to visit Taiwan for tourism and permitting Mainland investment in Taiwan to promote a two-way balance and mend the previously lopsided flow of personnel, capital, and technology from Taiwan to the Mainland.
- Carrying out cross-strait cooperation in various fields of finance, quarantine and inspection of agricultural products, and standards, metrology, inspection and accreditation to resolve problems obstructing the promotion of cross-strait financial exchanges, trade in goods, and investment.
- Promoting cross-strait cooperation on food safety, medicine and health, joint crime-fighting and judicial mutual assistance, and protection of intellectual property rights to bring order to exchanges and ensure the health, safety, humanity, intellectual property rights, and other rights and interests of the people on both sides.

Among the 16 cross-strait agreements, I would particularly like to single out the Cross-Strait Economic Cooperation Framework Agreement (ECFA), which was signed on June 29 last year, and its importance both to Taiwan and the development of cross-strait relations. The ECFA’s significance for Taiwan lies not only in its
construction for institutionalized cross-strait economic and trade dealings, or the cutting of tariffs on items in the early harvest lists. Its even greater significance is the signal of cross-strait peace that it sends out to the world, prompting other governments to more actively consider negotiating and signing economic cooperation agreements with Taiwan, which is vitally important for preventing Taiwan from the threat of economic marginalization and bringing Taiwan’s economy further into alignment with world markets, a crucial step to “bring the world to Taiwan and take Taiwan into the world.” Following the signing of the ECFA, Taiwan is now in talks with Singapore over an economic partnership agreement. The Philippines, Indonesia, India, New Zealand, Japan, the European Union, and other major economic and trade partners have also expressed willingness to sign related economic agreements with Taiwan.

On September 22 this year, Taiwan and Japan signed an investment agreement covering promotion, protection, and liberalization of investment. It is the first comprehensive investment agreement that Taiwan has signed with a major trading partner. It also marks a new milestone in the development of relations between Taiwan and Japan. As such, it is a highly significant development for the ROC in its active efforts to expand Taiwan's foreign economic and trade relations as well as space in the international economy.
These examples of Taiwan's reconnection to the world economy demonstrate that improved cross-strait relations have given Taiwan greater latitude on the international stage. The results of cross-strait negotiations have created mutually beneficial win-win cooperation between the two sides, reduced the tension from long-term confrontation in the past, and ushered in an unprecedented new era in the history of cross-strait relations. They have also laid a solid foundation for the prospects of harmony and prosperity in the East Asian region.

4) Institutionalizing and continuing the peaceful status quo in the Taiwan Strait, creating lasting cross-strait peace

President Ma Ying-jeou recently presented his overall strategic objectives rooted in the vision for "peace across the Taiwan Strait" under the "Golden Decade" blueprint. These objectives are to consolidate the sovereignty of the ROC, uphold Taiwan's subjectivity, and create an overall environment for lasting cross-strait peace. I would particularly like to note that, considering and promoting the signing of a cross-strait peace agreement is not something we need to do today, but a task that we cannot avoid in the future. It actually means to institutionalize and continue the status quo of "no unification, no independence, and no use of force" in the Taiwan Strait: a position supported by 90% of the people in Taiwan. We will not plan the agreement content in accordance with the framework and thinking of the
Mainland side, and we will not talk about unification. Rather, we will firmly uphold the rights and interests of Taiwan's 23 million people, and we will build lasting peace between the two sides. I believe this is a wise move by a responsible national leader.

The government has never set a timetable for negotiations on a peace agreement. Rather, it will cautiously proceed based on consideration of domestic, cross-strait, and international factors. In particular, the people of Taiwan are still deeply suspicious of and unsettled by the political system in mainland China. Moreover, there is no way to fully establish mutual trust between the Taiwan Strait when the Mainland has not yet abandoned its policy on using force against Taiwan. The government attaches much importance to the potential risks and uncertainties, so it is still premature to promote the signing of such an agreement.

Most importantly, related premises and conditions must be met before the two sides can negotiate and sign a peace agreement, which can be summarized and categorized as "ten major assurances," including "one framework, two premises, three principles, and four guarantees." The "one framework" means maintaining the status quo of "no unification, no independence, and no use of force" under the framework of the ROC Constitution. The "two premises" are that there must be a strong consensus in domestic public opinion and that the two sides must have built up sufficient mutual trust. When lacking either, no
agreement will be promoted. The "three principles" are that the agreement must be weighed and promoted based on "national need, public support, and legislative oversight." The “four guarantees” are the guarantee of the sovereign independence and integrity of the Republic of China, that of Taiwan's security and prosperity, that of ethnic harmony and cross-strait peace, and that of a sustainable environment and the welfare of society. The government has no timetable for promoting a cross-strait peace agreement, and the future decision on whether or not to sign a peace agreement will be made by the people of Taiwan through a referendum.

A peace agreement is an extremely serious issue. Based on the above-mentioned premises and conditions, we will carefully and prudently weigh the negotiation and signing of a cross-strait peace agreement from Taiwan's perspective and position and with a view to consolidating the peaceful status quo. This is not about changing the status quo in the Taiwan Strait, nor is it a matter of ultimate unification. More importantly, we would like the world to see that, regarding the issue of a peace agreement, we hold a national position and will define the preconditions for promoting an agreement based on our interests and needs. The ROC government will rely on the will of the 23 million people of Taiwan in facing the complexities of cross-strait relations, and we will determine the process for advancing based on conditions favorable to Taiwan.
The theme of today's conference, "Opportunities and Challenges in Cross-Strait Relations and East Asia," is highly instructive in terms of understanding the current situation in the region. Although recently there have been periodic disputes in the region on the South China Sea issue, all of the sides have exercised restraint, showing that peace and stability are the greatest common values among countries in the region. As a responsible member of the region, Taiwan will continue to contribute and exercise its influence to maintaining cross-strait peace and stability in the Asia-Pacific region.

In closing, I would like to wish for the full success of the conference, and I thank you all for your attention. Thank you!