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On Taiwan's United Nations Membership

Summary: In October 1971, the UN General Assembly recognized that the Peoples's Republic of China would be the only lawful representative of China to the UN and expelled the representatives of Chiang Kai-shek from the UN. Since then there has been no representation of Taiwan's millions of people in this so called 'Worldwide' institution. Thirty six years have passed and nothing has changed. The article offers a few arguments for the UN to accept Taiwan as a 'real' member of the international community.

Beginning of the End of Apartheid

Taiwan is not only well known as the 'kingdom of computers' but also a democratic nation upholding the principles of freedom of expression and religion, rule of law, human rights, peace and other universal values. However, due to the fact that Taiwan is not accepted as a member of the United Nations, it is harshly excluded from most of the important international organizations, such as UNESCO, UNICEF, World Bank, IMF, Red Cross, and many others. To end such unfair apartheid and solve the question of representation of its 23 million citizens, Taiwan has been continuously appealing to the United Nations since 1993. But all efforts were in vain.

This year Taiwan's representation issue was raised again. The United Nations General Assembly, on September 21, spent 4 hours and 15 minutes debating Taiwan's application for the UN membership. During the debate 126 nations voiced their opposition to Taiwan's membership, and 14 nations supported Taiwan's rights. Again Taiwan, the world's 18th largest economy, and its 23 million people have to continue to linger outside this so-called

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international family. But at least Taiwan's voice is loud and clear this time both inside and outside the conference hall.

What is Beyond a Need for Promoting Taiwan's United Nations Membership

Taiwan is Entitled to UN Membership

Taiwan has a population of 23 million, and a democratically elected government with jurisdiction over the islands of Taiwan, Penghu, Kinmen and Matsu. It also maintains diplomatic ties with 23 UN members and one observer (the Holy See). Since Taiwan has all the qualifications (a permanent

population, a defined territory, government, capacity to enter relations with other states) for a sovereign state as laid out in the *Montevideo Convention on the Rights and Duties of States*, it has the right to apply for full UN membership as per Article 4 of the UN Charter.

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Taiwan Needs to Become a Member of the United Nations

Membership universality is one of the fundamental principles of the United Nations. Taiwan people clearly have the right to participate on an equal footing in UN affairs. Moreover, Taiwan currently ranks as the world's 18th largest economy,

the 16th largest trading nation and stands as one of the top 20 sources of foreign investment. There is no doubt that Taiwan has become an important player in the international community. The United Nations, as the most important forum dealing with global issues, should accept Taiwan as a full member in order to avoid creating a weak link in the global collaborative network.

Taiwanese People's Right to Well-Being

Excluding Taiwan from the United Nations not only deprives Taiwan of its right to participate in and contribute to the work of the UN and its specialized agencies, but also infringes upon the basic human rights of the 23 million people of Taiwan. UN specialized agencies cover a variety of areas closely related to the well-being of humankind, including economics, culture, education, health, social affairs, communication, environmental protection,

human rights, drug control and anti-terrorism. In this era of globalization, many issues can only be effectively resolved through the collaboration of all nations. No country should be excluded from important matters that influence the development and well-being of all humankind. The United Nations, as the most important forum dealing with global issues, should accept Taiwan as a member.

It Is Not the Name

Applying for UN membership under the name Taiwan does not change the status quo. According to our country's Constitution, Taiwan's official name is the 'Republic of China'. Yet, the majority of nations refuse to recognize Taiwan's official name owing to pressure from China. Since the international community often refers to us as 'Taiwan', our choice to use the name 'Taiwan' to apply for UN membership conforms to international custom. It also reflects the wish of Taiwan's 23 million people, and has absolutely nothing to do with changing our official name or the status quo across the Taiwan Strait.

Resolution 2758 and the Future of Taiwan

UN Resolution 2758 did not resolve the issue of the representation of Taiwan's 23 million people in the UN. In 1971, the UN General Assembly adopted Resolution 2758, allowing the People's Republic of China (PRC) to become a member of the United Nations. Meanwhile The United Nations and its specialized agencies have since barred Taiwan's government, NGOs and even citizens from participating in UN meetings and activities. However, Resolution 2758 addresses only the issue of the representation of China in the United Nations and its specialized agencies. It by no means grants the PRC the right to represent the 23 million people of Taiwan in the United Nations and its affiliated organizations.

Taiwan's Willing to Contribute

Taiwan is ready, willing and able to participate in international cooperation and to share its successful experiences in economic and democratic

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development with the rest of the world by engaging constructively in various foreign assistances, humanitarian and relief programs. Although excluded from international organizations and unable to fully participate in various international cooperative efforts, Taiwan still does its best to use all possible channels to contribute significantly to the development of peoples in many countries all over the world. Taiwan's endeavors would be much more effective if they could be coordinated with international efforts spearheaded by the United Nations and its specialized agencies.

Sovereignty Resides in the People

In order to further express the general will of Taiwan people, two UN related referenda will be held on March 22, 2008, together with the presidential election. One referendum question is as follows: "In 1971 the People's Republic of China was admitted into the United Nations, replacing the seat once held by the Republic of China (Taiwan). Since then Taiwan has

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become an international orphan. In order to strongly express the will of Taiwan's people as well as promote Taiwan's international status and participation, do you approve that our government joins the United Nations under the name 'Taiwan'?" Another referendum question states: "Do you approve that our country applies for readmission into the United Nations and joins other organizations, through pragmatic and flexible strategies in regard with the name of our country. In other words, do you approve that our country

applies for readmission into the United Nations and joins other international organizations under the name of 'the Republic of China', or 'Taiwan', or other names that will contribute to both success and dignity?"

According to current polls, more than 75 percent of Taiwanese voters in combination will tick 'yes' on either referendum proposal. That will be the incarnation of the idea of 'sovereignty residing in the people'.

The Plow and the Sword

Since 1949 the two sides of the Taiwan Strait have been governed separately, with neither side having any control or jurisdiction over the other. This is

an objective fact. However, China has consistently refused to give up using military force against Taiwan and has deployed nearly 1000 tactical missiles along its coast aimed at Taiwan. That is the only cause of disturbing the so-called 'status quo' across the Strait.

To protect Taiwan's political and economic development, as well as peace and security, the government has no other choice but to join the United Nations, which was created precisely to maintain peace and security throughout the world. Were the United Nations to accept Taiwan, both sides of the Taiwan Strait would be able to interact on an equal footing under the UN framework, thereby harmonizing cross-strait relations.

Taiwan truly loves peace, but not at all cost. Facing with China's repeated threats to resort to non-peaceful means if Taiwan dares to hold a UN referendum in next March, Taiwanese Minister of Defense Lee Tien-yu admitted recently in the Parliament that the Chinese military would win if it attacks Taiwan on condition that no foreign allies come to help Taiwan. But Minister Lee also remarked that Taiwan's military would be able to destroy 60 to 70 percent of the Chinese troops during the war.

In conclusion, it will be the end of all human history if a war should start just because of a democratic practice of referendum concerning UN membership.