

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

May 8, 2020

Dear _____ :

As the world works to combat the spread of the COVID-19, a novel coronavirus first identified in Wuhan, China, it has never been more important to ensure all countries prioritize global health and safety over politics. We therefore urge your government to join the United States and a growing number of countries in calling for an end to the Government of the People's Republic of China's (PRC) efforts to exclude Taiwan from international organizations, especially the World Health Organization (WHO).

Taiwan's long record as a reliable partner on global health and its significant resources and expertise are assets from which the world could and must more fully benefit. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, Taiwan provided humanitarian and medical assistance to combat diseases such as AIDS, tuberculosis, Ebola, and dengue fever in countries around the world. At home, the effectiveness of Taiwan's response to COVID-19 thus far is worthy of emulation. As of May 7, 2020, Taiwan has reported only 440 confirmed COVID-19 cases, a significant achievement given the rapid spread of the pandemic and Taiwan's proximity and transit linkages to China. After the situation in Taiwan stabilized, Taipei generously extended a helping hand and donated more than 10 million facemasks in efforts to help combat the spread of the pandemic.

From 2009 to 2016, Taiwan was regularly invited to participate in annual World Health Assembly (WHA) meetings. However, since the inauguration of President Tsai Ing-wen as Taiwan's democratically-elected leader, the Chinese government has expressed its displeasure with her and her political party by pressuring the WHO—as well as other international organizations—not to include Taiwan in their meetings, including the annual invitation to participate in the WHA. Such blatant prioritization of Beijing's political interests over the health and safety of Taiwan and the rest of the world has grave consequences.

Although we are aware that the WHO has maintained some technical and working-level cooperation with Taiwan—including during the COVID-19 pandemic—Beijing's bullying tactics have effectively barred Taiwan from crucial discussions related to public health and safety. Such treatment has undermined Taiwan's ability to contribute to international response efforts and also endangered the health and safety of the island's 23 million people. In a globally connected world, delays in exchanging sensitive health and safety information with Taiwan put all of us at risk.

The WHO's interactions and communication with Taiwan have been more constrained after Beijing and the WHO negotiated an arrangement on the implementation of the International Health Regulations (IHR) with respect to Taiwan—an agreement which went into effect in 2010 while the WHO was under the leadership of a PRC national. Moreover, the WHO has on multiple occasions refused to accept monetary donations directly from Taiwan or to identify a mutually-acceptable third-party organization to act as an intermediary. The WHO, given its vital role in global public health, should be open to accepting contributions from any source that can provide advanced medical capacity, including Taiwan.

In addition to pressing for Taiwan's invitation to the WHA, we encourage your government to join the United States in requesting a review of the 2010 arrangement on the application of IHR to Taiwan, Taiwan's participation in meetings at all levels, and the WHO's internal processes for accepting or rejecting donations from Taiwan.

The United States has consistently supported Taiwan's appropriate participation and membership in international organizations where possible and observer status when membership is not possible. The United States rejects Beijing's attempts to impose its position regarding Taiwan upon other United Nations (UN) Member States. United Nations General Assembly Resolution 2758 does not address the issue of representation of Taiwan and its people in the organization, nor does it give China the right to represent the people of Taiwan. No Member State, China included, should be allowed to manipulate UN materials, statements, or positions in ways that do not accurately reflect UN policy and are inconsistent with the policies of many UN Member States.

Diseases know no borders. We urge your government to join us in addressing the pressing issue of Taiwan's inclusion in global health and safety organizations. Given what the world has endured as a result of COVID-19, UN Member States joining together to insist that Taiwan be invited to the upcoming virtual WHA session in May 2020 is the right place to start.

Sincerely,



ELIOT L. ENGEL
Chairman
House Committee on Foreign Affairs



MICHAEL T. McCAUL
Ranking Member
House Committee on Foreign Affairs



JAMES E. RISCH
Chairman
Senate Committee on Foreign Relations



ROBERT MENENDEZ
Ranking Member
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