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President Chen's Address to the CSIS Taipei Roundtable 2002

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Ambassador Jeffrey Koo, Ambassador Richard Fairbanks, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen, Good morning:

I feel honored and privileged to attend the CSIS Taipei Roundtable 2002, which is jointly sponsored by Chinatrust Commercial Bank and the Center for Strategic and International Studies. Firstly, I would like to express my highest respect for your longtime concern over peace in the Taiwan Strait and stability in this region.

When this new century began, people at first harbored a high expectation regarding establishing a "new world order," but the terrorist attacks on the United States on September 11 last year prompted the international community to re-examine the definition of "security." As the conference theme "Challenges and Implications of a New Strategic Environment in the Asia-Pacific Region" suggests, the influences resulted from the September 11 incident go beyond national borders. Either on the political or economic front, none of the Asia-Pacific countries can be exempted from the ensuing effects.

As a faithful defender of international order, Taiwan has saved no effort in supporting the international campaign against terrorism and in such programs as providing humanitarian relief to Afghanistan refugees. For we recognize that a country's international obligations increase in proportion to the growth in its national strength.

Taiwan's strategically important location and its status as a foreign aid receiver during the past have led to our active attitude toward contributing to the world community and fulfilling our international obligations. We wish the world would understand that Taiwan has strong willingness and capability to share the responsibility of maintaining peace, security and prosperity in the Asia-Pacific region, and that Taiwan is a cornerstone for reconciliation, progress and stability in this part of the world.

Admittedly, the September 11 incident had added new thinking to the United States regarding its foreign policy. President Bush's visit to East Asia in February has shown the vital role of the Asia-Pacific region in the U.S. global strategic deployment. Therefore, besides seeking to strengthen the partnership between the U.S. and its East Asian allies, President Bush specifically invited Beijing to join in the efforts to combat international terrorism.

It is my belief that based on sharing the universal values, such as democracy, freedom and human rights, Taipei and Washington have long established a very close "relationship of

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democratic alliance." And this is the major reason why President Bush has repeatedly mentioned during his visit to East Asia that the U.S. would never forget its commitment to the Taiwanese people, and that the U.S. is willing to provide Taiwan with necessary protection in accordance with the Taiwan Relations Act. This is because the pursuit of a "balanced cross-strait relationship" is not only in line with the U.S. interests in the Asia-Pacific region, but also is conducive to the normalization of cross-strait relations.

The establishment of a balanced of cross-strait relationship entails political, economic and military implications. The attainment of "political balance" lies in putting aside differences and seeking consensus, setting no premises, resuming contact and dialogue as soon as possible, and replacing "exclusive antagonism" with "constructive cooperation."

"Economic balance" is to seek a win-win solution for prosperity of the two sides of the Taiwan Strait, and to promote the economic, trade and cultural cooperation between them and economic welfare in the Asia-Pacific region. Both sides of the Strait, particularly after joining the World Trade Organization, should work toward a relationship of "more economics and less politics, more contact and less misunderstandings, and more trust and less stifling." "Military balance" means no military expansion, no arms race and no military intimidation.

At this critical moment when mainland China is experiencing political power transition and economic transformation, the entire world is concerned about how Beijing will demonstrate its manner and fulfill its responsibility as a potential power, how it will smoothly accept the established international norms, and how it will handle its relations with Taiwan in a democratic, peaceful and rational way. In this respect, I would like to reiterate our strong willingness to re-open dialogue with Beijing in order to facilitate the normalization of cross-strait relations.

After the elections on December 1 last year, the peaceful transition of political power in Taiwan has entered an essential stage of democratic consolidation—the institutionalization. In addition to ongoing reforms such as a crackdown on "black gold" politics, corruption and vote buying and financial restructuring at the grassroots level, my government has implemented two defense laws on March 1 to ensure the unification of military command and administrative systems. Meanwhile, our "government restructuring" efforts, which are in close relation with administrative efficiency, have also picked up speed.

Of course, transition of political power cannot change the prolonged structural malpractice immediately. The recent controversies resulted from the deficient monitoring of our national security have demonstrated the defects of the national defense and security systems. However, this will not influence our determination to build an institutional monitoring system, nor will it reduce our efforts in securing the neutralization of the military and the institutionalization of the intelligence establishments. Our firm policy toward safeguarding human rights, freedom of the press and speech, democracy and other civil rights shall never change.

Ladies and Gentlemen, Taiwan is now situated in changes of historic magnitudes, but we have every confidence to find the best possible position to fight the battle. We will engage in bold reforms and democratic consolidation at home, and internationally, we will work to align ourselves with the global political and economic systems, so as to help cultivate cross-strait peace and regional stability. This is our mission and our responsibility.

Again, thank you very much, and I wish the event a great success.

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