

Appendix 122- President Chen Shui-bian's National Day Message (2000)

10 October 2000

Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen:

Today is the 89th National Day of the Republic of China. We are solemnly celebrating our country's birthday with thanks, as this year's national day has particular historical significance.

At the end of the 20th century, the 23 million people on Taiwan achieved, with love and courage, the first peaceful transfer of power through a change of ruling parties in the history of the Republic of China or any other Chinese society for that matter. After many years of living under emergency-decree and authoritarian rule in Taiwan, we finally used ballots to proudly announce to the world: "The people in Taiwan now stand up. Taiwan is now part of the worldwide trend of democracy and freedom."

From the very moment of my inauguration as President on May 20, I have felt not a sense of gratification or elation, but a deep sense of responsibility. Now that the emotional heat generated by the election campaign has subsided, we face not only the serious ills and corrupt practices left by the past authoritarian regime, but also the verbal attacks and military threats from the Chinese mainland, which serve to put the wisdom of the new government to a serious test.

Thus, maintaining a stable, peaceful, and secure environment has become the top priority of the new government. If we cannot immediately ease cross-strait tensions, strengthen our diplomatic front, and boost the morale of the armed forces, it will be impossible for us to implement various domestic reforms, because nothing can be achieved without the guarantees of national security and a secure international status.

We fully understand that all our fellow countrymen have high expectations of the new government. The international community is also waiting to see how the new government will ensure peace in the Taiwan Strait. However, no reform can be achieved in no time. Nor can the backlog of encumbrances that has been accumulated for decades be completely cleared in just a few months. Normalizing cross-strait relations also takes greater wisdom and patience.

Over the past five months or so, the new government has been subjected to severe oversight and criticism from citizens and the opposition. We modestly accept advice and make improvements. After the recent adjustments, the new government, with more experience, is leaving the meandering and rugged mountain path behind and moving onto a smooth highway. The government is now ready to launch at full throttle into its very full agenda. We are confident that the new administration will implement various reforms on a planned basis and efficiently.

In light of the international trends and the domestic demand, we must expedite national development projects and meet the expectations of the people. The following reforms and initiatives will be carried out:

Firstly, we must crack down on money politics and corruption, raise government efficiency, improve law and order, speed up judicial reform, implement educational reforms, and establish a partnership between the government and private enterprises. These actions will strengthen our basis for national development as we face an increasingly competitive world.

With regard to economic development, we will keep abreast of the international trend of developing the knowledge-based economy, and use Taiwan's high-tech comparative advantage to realize our goal of turning Taiwan into a "Green Silicon Island." As we are entering the World Trade Organization, we have to help traditional industries initiate necessary changes and upgrading and remove obstacles to foreign investment. They will then be better able to cope with a more liberalized world.

As to social security, we will strengthen our preparations and defenses against natural disasters. We will also eliminate the narrow-minded and self-centered mentality and the habit of passing the buck. We must instead forge a community sense of lending a hand to those who suffer. Lastly, we will guarantee social justice, ensure the rule of law, and safeguard the welfare of the disadvantaged groups so as to establish a safe, stable, and secure society.

In the field of national security, we will upgrade essential military equipment, strengthen civil defense and psywar preparedness, and continue to carry out the military downsizing and enhancement program. Furthermore, as a contributor to regional peace, we support security in the Asia-Pacific region and world peace.

In cross-strait relations, we are sincere and patient in seeking "goodwill reconciliation, active cooperation, and long-lasting peace." We call on the leaders of the other side to join us in returning to the "spirit of 1992", put aside disputes, and resume dialogue and exchange as soon as possible. Thus, we can break the deadlock and achieve a "win-win" situation. Meanwhile, we reiterate our position that the resolution of cross-strait issues and the future of Taiwan must respect the will of the 23 million people in the Taiwan area.

Ladies and gentlemen, during its 89-year history the ROC has experienced an initial period of trials and tribulations, received assistance from foreign nations and become self-reliant, undergone colonial and authoritarian rule, and won worldwide acclamation with an economic miracle. Finally, before the end of the century, Taiwan has accomplished a democratic change of political parties in power, a "political miracle" that gives impetus to our entry into the new century.

Despite a difficult survival amid internal worries and foreign threats, the ROC still stands on its feet and strides forward. This demonstrates the unyielding and unswerving spirit of the people on Taiwan. We can proudly stride forward on the world stage because of our economic and democratic record.

On the threshold of a new era, our new government, based on the solid foundation that has been laid, commits itself to a series of reforms, which will instill uplifting energy into the ROC. At the turn of the century, I sincerely urge all our citizens to place the interests of the nation and our people above those of any political party or individual. Together, we take upon ourselves the lofty duty of enhancing the welfare of our descendants.

On this glorious day, I invite my 23 million compatriots to join me in wishing the Republic of China the best of everything. May the Republic of China enjoy a long and prosperous future and all my compatriots peace and happiness.