

Appendix 129 – President Chen Shuibian New Years Speech (2002)

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January 1, 2002 President Chen Shui-bian

A happy New Year to you all!

Today is the first day of the 91st year of the Republic of China; it also ushers in the second New Year of the 21st century. Over the past year, each of us has worked hard and weathered many difficulties. When we remove the old calendar from the wall and greet a new beginning, we should also embrace new hopes and, with a humble attitude and steady strides, achieve our ideals in creating a bright future for our nation.

In the past year, we have experienced more adversities and tribulations than advantages and comforts both at home and abroad. Nature's challenges and human conflicts lead us to ponder our situation. I believe that the traditional wisdom of "deferring to the mandate of Heaven and the wishes of the people" can be construed to mean replacing "exclusive antagonism" with "constructive cooperation." This belief applies not only to the relationship between human beings as well as between man and nature, but also to international, cross-strait, and interparty relations.

The September 11 terrorist attacks and the ensuing international campaign against terrorism solemnly remind us of the value of peace and the meaning of cooperation. At the beginning of this new century, man is still not free of cultural or military conflict. However, mutual respect and tolerance among nations and peoples is the only way to prevent confrontation, and international cooperation without narrow self-interest will strengthen the bastion of peace.

During the Cold War era, Taiwan, Penghu, Kinmen, and Matsu were an "anti-communist bastion." However, the era of bipolar antagonism has long passed. Through constructive cooperation, the Republic of China is willing to play a more active role in the international community in this new century. Today, Taiwan's accession to the World Trade Organization as its 144th member marks a highly significant milestone. We will not only fulfill our obligations as a member of the global community, but also view future cross-strait relations from a perspective of cooperation.

In my last New Year's Eve address, "Bridging the New Century," I especially mentioned that the two sides of the Taiwan Strait should pursue the same goal of peaceful coexistence and mutual prosperity, and neither side should harm or destroy the other. If the Chinese mainland can renounce military intimidation and respect the people's free will, the two sides can begin with integration in the cultural, economic, and trade fields, before further seeking a new framework for permanent peace and political integration. We are pleased that the two sides have acceded to the WTO in succession, and are prepared to make more active efforts to promote a "constructive cooperative relationship" in cross-strait economics and trade for the greatest benefit

and welfare of all people.

After the intense political campaigning at the end of last year, the people democratically elected their county magistrates, city mayors, and national legislators. We are especially gratified that both domestic and foreign opinion considered this election as Taiwan's fairest and cleanest, and that democratic development in Taiwan has become even more stable and mature. In the future, we expect that a relationship of constructive cooperation will be established between the central and local governments, the executive and legislative branches, and among the governing and opposition parties. With the people's trust, together we will strive for the nation's future.

At this moment, the challenges our country is facing are severe. The people eagerly expect political stability and economic revitalization. A revitalized economy will come about only by the concerted efforts of the governing and opposition parties and all citizens. I would like to propose that in the coming year, the government uphold the administrative principle of "more economics and less politics," and make it our top priority to implement the consensus points of the Economic Development Advisory Conference as well as major policies related to national development and people's livelihood. Although the governing party has now become the largest party in the Legislative Yuan, consensus on several controversial political issues should still be reached through proper and careful negotiations, so as to prevent conflicts between the governing and opposition parties or political instability.

Over the past year, the government has carried out quite a number of major reforms, such as financial restructuring, and a crackdown on "black gold" politics and vote buying. Although we have achieved immediate results, the work must continue. As the proverb goes, a boat sailing against the current must forge ahead or it will be pushed back. We must persevere in our efforts in order to succeed in the end. During the elections, many private groups proposed parliamentary reform measures, which are broadly supported among political parties and the public. The executive branch is willing to set an example by beginning the task of government restructuring and downsizing.

I believe that both parliamentary reform and government restructuring are milestones for national progress and democratic reform. The opinions of the governing and opposition parties, as well as the general public, should be incorporated during the process to improve the efficiency of the executive and legislative branches at the same time. The eventual implementation of such reform may involve some amendments to the Constitution and thus we should proceed with caution and restrict ourselves to this task. As for other proposals for constitutional amendments, given their complicated and controversial nature, we must not act in haste, but wait until the governing and opposition parties and the public have gone through a more thorough discussion on the issues and reached a consensus.

I believe all of you, like myself, expect that in the coming year our country will enjoy stability and prosperity and everyone will live a life filled with hope and happiness.

Before we begin the new year, we should also remember with gratitude the hard-earned achievements of the past. We have only one country and one government. Under the current government system, the Executive, Legislative, Judicial, Examination, and Control Yuans are like the five fingers of a hand; each has specific duties, yet all are inseparably linked. Only when they work together can they display their greatest strength. Over the past year, the hard work of the members of the five Yuans has been witnessed by all citizens, and I would like to extend to them my heartfelt thanks. In addition, before the new legislative and cabinet members take office in the coming month, I would like to express, on behalf of the people of the country, the highest recognition and sincerest thanks to the members of the Fourth Legislative Term as well as the administrative team led by Premier Chang.

Some people predict that the new cabinet will be a "cabinet in battle." I believe what the people really expect is a strong and powerful administrative team that is able to meet all challenges and move forward courageously. Under the driving force of public opinion and the supervision of the Legislature, this administrative team will be able not only to charter a new course for the development of our nation, but also resolve smaller issues that people encounter in their daily lives. I promise that the new cabinet will continue to abide by the principle of choosing people for their ability and not for their partisanship. I also promise that we will do our best to implement responsible party politics and political accountability.

The new year has begun, and many new resolutions are waiting for us to fulfill. No matter how difficult the environment is and how formidable future challenges will be, we must meet the challenges and move forward with unwavering confidence. Dear colleagues, friends, and fellow countrymen, let us struggle together and work hand in hand.

In closing, I would like to wish the Republic of China great success and a happy New Year to all!