

Appendix 156 – Joint Statement of President Chen and Chairman Soong (2005)

Source: Office of the President, Republic of China (Taiwan)

Date: 2005 February 24

In order to safeguard the national interests of the Republic of China and to ensure the rights of the people of Taiwan to pursue freedom, democracy, peace and prosperity, it is crucial that we confront the situation and find viable solutions to the issues of importance, that being: permanent peace across the Taiwan Strait, and the normalization of cross-strait relations.

Both the governing party and the opposition must transcend partisan agenda. Our perspective and approach must be all-encompassing and farsighted with historic perspectives, in dealing with the vital issues of cross-strait peace, national defense and security, and ethnic harmony. Both President Chen and Chairman Soong hold to the view that forging a consensus on national development through consultation and dialogue between the governing and opposition parties is the only way we can create a new and stable environment for the future of Taiwan.

After a candid exchange of views, we have concurred on a ten-point conclusion, as follows:

Cross-Strait Peace:

According to the Constitution of the Republic of China, our country's status and position is defined as the de facto and de jure status quo existing between the two sides of the Strait; both sides of the Strait, and the international community, must recognize and respect this designation.

These principles should be the present basis for cross-strait relations: "adherence to the Constitution, maintenance of status quo, and cooperation in promoting peace." On the premise of cross-strait peace, President Chen commits to the following pledges that: during his term as President, he will not declare independence, will not change the national moniker, will not push forth the inclusion of the so-called "state-to-state" description in the Constitution, will not promote a referendum to change the status quo in regards to the issue of independence or unification. Furthermore, the abolition of neither the National Reunification Council nor the National Reunification Guidelines will be set forth as an issue. Chairman Soong has expressed his consent and support for the position stated above.

To bolster national competitiveness and enhance governmental efficiency, it is necessary to garner consensus among the governing and opposition parties regarding constitutional reform. President Chen and Chairman Soong both agree and pledge that the constitutional reform project will not involve issues of national sovereignty, territory, or status quo across the Strait; and that the reform project will follow due procedure as set forth in the Constitution.

Military intimidation or actions to suppress Taiwan's international space are not conducive to the improvement of cross-strait relations. To promote normalization of cross-strait relations and to establish a "peace and stability" framework for interactions, we must consolidate consensus from the governing and opposition parties, and expedite the establishment of a

mechanism and legal basis for cross-strait peace and development.

Reinforcement of cross-strait economic, cultural, and academic exchange. Moreover, based on the successful Lunar New Year model, which marked the initiation of direct chartered passenger flights, we will, through consultation and negotiation with the other side, phase in additional measures to facilitate convenient and efficient chartered cargo flights, eventually leading to the realization of three-links. We realized that more than three years have passed since the Economic Development Advisory Conference took place, and that it is time to make adjustments on regulations that affect the development of our industries and our national competitiveness, if we are to carry out the consensus reached during the Economic Development Advisory Conference: "Cultivating Taiwan while reaching out to the world."

Any change to the status quo of the Taiwan Strait must come with the consent of the twenty-three million people of Taiwan. On the basis of goodwill from both sides, we would not exclude any possibility to establish future relations between the two sides, in any form whatsoever.

National Security:

Taiwan needs sufficient national defense capabilities to ensure peace across the Taiwan Strait. In the future, with "security of the nation, stability across the Taiwan Strait, peace throughout the region" as our strategic objectives, Taiwan will substantiate necessary arms and military equipment for our national defense.

In order to ease tensions in the Taiwan Strait, Taiwan will not engage in an arms race with the other side; furthermore, Taiwan will proactively seek to establish a "military buffer zone" as well as a consultation mechanism for building confidence in military security across the Taiwan Strait.

Ethnic Harmony:

In the spirit of ethnic equality as laid out in our Constitution, any form of language or behavior which constitutes discrimination or aggression toward any ethnic group shall be subject to punishment according to law. Both parties will advocate for legal mechanisms to protect the rights of various ethnic groups and promote harmony and equality amongst them.

President Chen and Chairman Soong have made a joint commitment to prioritize the easing of ethnic tension, and, to actively promote harmony and solidarity amongst ethnic groups. The Government should strive to ensure fair and equal rights and status for all ethnic populations in areas including politics, economy, social issues, education, culture and examinations.

We maintain that the resolution of cross-strait issues should be based on the principle of putting "Taiwan First".

The future of both sides of the Strait rests in our ability to resolve these matters wisely, through consultations between the peoples of both sides. The governing party and opposition parties must use greater tolerance and compassion, and respect the differing positions and ideals of all political parties and ethnic groups, so we can find greatest wisdom with which to

break through not only the divides amongst governing and opposition parties, but the political impasse across the Strait as well.

We believe that for no matter what the conflict, there is always a resolution; that all animosities can be resolved; and, that all historical disputes can be settled. Only if we can walk away from the political shadows of the past fifty years--only then, can we find new opportunities for the progress and development of our country.

President Chen and Chairman Soong have candidly exchanged opinions and have engaged in thorough discussions in this meeting. In order to enhance the welfare of all the people, both President Chen and Chairman Soong agree to continue dialogue and consultation over important issues related to national development and issues of urgency pertaining to the public interests.