In my meeting with Mr. Xi, we exchanged views on cross-strait relations, peaceful development and the consolidation of the status quo of peace and prosperity. You must all be concerned about the atmosphere at the meeting. The meeting took place in a frank and very positive atmosphere. I found Mr. Xi to be pragmatic, flexible, and candid when discussing the issues. We hope that this spirit will be reflected in the handling of cross-strait relations.

Our discussions focused on several points.

The first point is the consolidation of the 1992 Consensus and the maintenance of peace across the Taiwan Strait. I told Mr. Xi that the consensus reached between the two sides in November 1992 was that the two sides of the Taiwan Strait insist on “one China,” but differ as to what that means, and each side could express its interpretation verbally. This was the 1992 Consensus of “one China, respective interpretations.” Our side's interpretation does not involve two Chinas; one China, one Taiwan; or Taiwan independence, as the Republic of China Constitution does not allow it. I also emphasized that sustainable peace and prosperity should be the common goal in the development of cross-strait relations. We will continue to consolidate the 1992 Consensus of “one China, respective interpretations” as the basis for relations, and maintain the status quo of peace and prosperity.

The second point is the reduction of hostility and peaceful handling of disputes. We told Mr. Xi that the people of Taiwan are especially concerned about security and dignity. We wanted Mr. Xi and mainland China to understand that we hope all disputes, whether they be political, military, social, cultural, legal, or of any other form, can be peacefully resolved, allowing both sides to experience mutual good will. I made special mention of the frustrations our people have had when participating in NGO activities, as well as the interventions our government has faced when taking part in regional economic integration and other international activities. We hope to see a reduction of hostility in these areas, especially with regard to our NGOs. I told Mr. Xi that these organizations comprise elite
members and specialists, who have reacted quite strongly to these issues and the treatment they received. We hope there will be fewer such occurrences.

In response, Mr. Xi said he hopes these issues will be appropriately handled case by case.

I also stated that many people in Taiwan are concerned about mainland China’s military deployments against Taiwan, including the Zhurihe base, with which we are all familiar and where missiles are deployed. Mr. Xi said that these deployments are in principle not targeted at Taiwan.

The third point is the expansion of cross-strait exchanges and mutual benefits. We emphasized that given the fact that Taiwan and mainland China have different social and economic systems, the two sides need sufficient time to engage in deeper exchanges. We also reiterated Taiwan’s interest in participating in regional economic integration. The issue of which side joins first and which side joins later should not arise. Mr. Xi expressed willingness to discuss this issue and welcomed our participation in the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank and mainland China’s “one belt, one road” initiative.

The fourth point is the establishment of a cross-strait hotline. We believe that a hotline can be set up between the Mainland Affairs Council Minister and the Taiwan Affairs Office Minister, who can then exchange views on important or urgent issues. Mr. Xi stated that this matter could be promptly dealt with.

With regard to cultural and educational exchanges, I also expressed the hope that mainland China can allow more vocational college graduates to pursue higher education in Taiwan. I noted that our efforts over the past several years have met with limited success. As we from Taiwan know, our polytechnic universities have a shortage of students. I drew attention to the fact that Vietnam, Thailand, India, and Indonesia have been funding university lectures to pursue graduate studies at polytechnic institutes in Taiwan. We welcome these students. Before I took office, we had about 30,000 students from overseas studying in Taiwan. This year, the figure has increased to above 100,000. We intend to transform Taiwan into an Asia-Pacific center for higher education. I mentioned that mainland China has over a million vocational college graduates. Mr. Xi said he is willing to look into this matter. The vocational college graduates I refer to are like graduates from five-year junior colleges in Taiwan who then enroll in two-year programs at polytechnic colleges.

The fifth and final point is joint cooperation for cross-strait prosperity. I suggested that history has left behind several issues that the two sides cannot resolve overnight. These issues must be handled pragmatically. If we deal rashly with some of the excessively sensitive issues, it will make things worse. The maintenance of cross-strait peace and stability is Taiwan’s mainstream view. How cross-strait relations develop in the future will have to take into account the direction of public opinion. In
particular, I reiterated that cross-strait relations should be built on the foundation of dignity, respect, sincerity, and good will, for only then can we narrow the psychological gap between the two sides.

I especially expressed the hope that the two sides can turn hostility into friendship and seek peace, not war.

After concluding his remarks, the president then opened the floor to questions from the media. Following is a translation of the questions and responses in their entirety:

**Q1:** The media is calling this meeting a historic handshake. It seems that Mr. Xi responded to all the issues you brought up. But the point is, how will those responses be turned into concrete results in the future? In addition, your term in office will soon be coming to a close. President Ma, what expectations do you have for your successor?

**President:** Those are good questions. Today the leaders of the two sides of the Taiwan Strait have gotten together, but we couldn’t really deal with overly technical issues. As such, we discussed principles and major issues. Any concord reached by the two sides, of course, is just an indicator. Let’s take the 1992 Consensus as an example. This is the first time the leaders of the two sides discussed this issue since reaching that consensus in 1992. I just read to everyone, word by word, what the 1992 Consensus is, and why it reads “one China, respective interpretations.” “Two Chinas,” “one China, one Taiwan,” and “Taiwan independence” will not be used in the Republic of China’s interpretation of that consensus. The two sides have already discussed the 1992 Consensus for so many years, and this is the first time that the truth has been restored in the presence of the leaders from the two sides. That question came from Ho Zhen-zhung (何振忠) from the United Daily News (UDN). Originally, the term “one China, respective interpretations” was first used in the UDN on November 18, 1992.

As for the hotline, why does it connect Taiwan’s Mainland Affairs Council (MAC) and the mainland’s Taiwan Affairs Office (TAO), and not higher levels [of government]? We’re starting there because there’s already a hotline between the Straits Exchange Foundation (SEF) and the MAC at the deputy minister level. So now we’ll set one up between the two ministers. We’ll see how well it functions, and then see whether we need to make further adjustments.

**Q2:** The Taiwan public has expectations associated with “one China, respective interpretations.” However, neither TAO Minister Zhang Zhijun (張志軍) nor Mr. Xi Jinping brought up “one China, respective interpretations.” Is that disappointing? Do you feel that today’s meeting was conducted based on equality and dignity?

**President:** I just pointed out that when the 1992 Consensus was formally confirmed on November 16, 1992, it specifically mentioned that both sides uphold the “one China” principle, but had different
interpretations of that principle, which would be expressed in oral statements. Newspapers subsequently used the word “interpretation,” and so everyone started to use that term. I just showed everyone a newspaper from that year, so it’s quite clear. As for implementation, Mr. Xi has instructed the relevant agencies to discuss and research most of the issues, and the MAC will continue to follow up to see how things go. I emphasized that if the leadership doesn’t make decisions, sometimes grassroots elements will drag their feet.

Q3: You and Mr. Xi expressed hope to reduce hostility between the two sides, and you also mentioned that the Taiwan public is concerned about the deployment of missiles [on the mainland aimed at Taiwan]. Did you assert your position on removing those missiles?

**President:** I mentioned a bit earlier that their [mainland China’s] deployment is a general, overall deployment program, not directed at the people of Taiwan. I think…I’m afraid that this is the first time that the leaders of the two sides have talked about this issue. At least I brought it up, and told him that the people in Taiwan are concerned. So I hope Mr. Xi will pay more attention to this issue.

Q4: During your discussions, did you raise the issue of Taiwan’s marginalization with the mainland side, and mention Taiwan’s desire to increase its participation in the international community?

**President:** I just talked about this on two different levels. One level concerns private NGOs. We have some civic groups that find it difficult to participate in international organizations. And I made a point to say that people in Taiwan have complained that they can’t use their passports to get tour tickets of the United Nations. I explained that a small matter like that, if not handled correctly, can lead to a lot of dissatisfied people. On another level, the issue is our participation in international and regional economic integration. That’s the governmental level, and we hope that it doesn’t come down to an issue of who gets in first, since both sides are going to take part, and that would be advantageous to everyone. The participation of both sides in the World Trade Organization has benefited everyone, and we hope that’s how things will be in the future. I also mentioned the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP) and the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP), and let him know that issue is very important for both of us. So let’s not look at these issues in terms of which side gets in first, as we should both participate.

Q5: President Ma, last year in an interview with the media you stated that when the leaders of the two sides meet, they should stabilize the concept of “1992 Consensus, respective interpretations,” thus creating an “ultra-stable framework.” Was that objective achieved through today’s meeting?

**President:** I feel that it was helpful. First, the atmosphere today was good. Second, both sides were extremely positive about being able to hold today’s meeting, and felt that this was a rare and historic opportunity. That’s a very healthy and positive attitude. Both sides embrace the 1992 Consensus.
Perhaps there are issues concerning how it’s interpreted, but basically, the general direction is the same. If future presidents of the ROC, no matter who they are, can continue to promote the 1992 Consensus this way, I am confident that the status quo we have created can be maintained, and continue to move forward.

**Q6:** During the meeting when several substantive matters came up, did Mr. Xi directed related agencies to follow up? With regard to economic and trade cooperation and international organizations, when TAO Minister Zhang made remarks and mentioned the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, did he express hope that Taiwan would join under an appropriate name? Did Mr. Xi mention any concrete measures to be taken? Did you ask related agencies to become involved and was a concrete timetable set?

**President:** Yes. Mr. Xi stated that Taiwan would be able to participate in an appropriate manner and this was clarified in a concrete manner. About other things, like the NGO situation that I talked about, he said that they are willing to consider it as long as it doesn’t create an impression of “two Chinas” or “one China, one Taiwan.” We said that we weren’t talking about any specific application, but we will sort out the various kinds of activities we want to participate in. Since Mr. Xi had made such statement, we hope this will come about. This is a task that the MAC and other related agencies will deal with once we return to Taiwan.

**Q7:** This Ma-Xi meeting is a milestone and opens a new chapter in the development of cross-strait relations. What type of prospects do you see for this new platform and new chapter?

**President:** I stated in the press conference I held two days ago that this meeting is not about an individual or a party. It is being held with Taiwan’s future in mind and so that we can continue to interact with the mainland. In the future, the leader of Taiwan and the leader of the mainland should still have opportunities to replicate this type of meeting. In other words, my goal is for meetings between the leaders of the two sides to become normalized. Today was a first step. It is really quite odd that cross-strait relations have already reached this level, but that the cross-strait leaders have never met, isn’t it? It should be a normal thing to meet at this time and take stock of the relevant issues, along with exchanging opinions candidly. That is my goal.

**Q8:** Although you indicated that you brought up the removal of missiles and “one China, respective interpretations” during the meeting, it doesn’t seem that they were receptive. Do you feel that Mr. Xi actually responded to your requests?

**President:** I think for this topic at this meeting, the most important result was that we presented Mr. Xi with a detailed and fact-based explanation of the whys and wherefores of the 1992 Consensus and our position so that he can understand them. Mr. Xi noted that I have several decades of experience
dealing with this topic. I figure it’s about 27 or 28 years. Initially when the 1992 Consensus was reached, I was the MAC’s deputy minister. And I’ve been talking about this issue consistently for so many years. Eight years ago, the 1992 Consensus had strayed a bit from its original track, and I urged both sides to simultaneously return to the 1992 Consensus. What do I mean by “simultaneously?” At that time, the mainland focused on “one China,” while Taiwan focused on “respective interpretations.” Consequently, the gap between the two sides was growing wider and wider. The consensus was originally something useful, but it wasn’t utilized. It was not until I became president over seven years ago that we were able to bring the consensus back on course. The 1992 Consensus, of course, is not the same as signing an agreement or a treaty. Instead, it gives everyone some room for interpretation. That’s not a bad thing. Cross-strait relations had been cut off for over 60 years. Now, just to be able to sit down and have a discussion was quite a feat. We will take it step by step, seeking common ground while respecting differences. Things we thought impossible in the past are now possible. Things we thought we were unable to do in the past we now can do, and things are continuing to develop. When I took office, no one thought that we would have an opportunity over the coming eight years to meet with the mainland’s leader. We originally hoped to have a meeting at the annual APEC Economic Leaders’ Meeting, but the mainland felt that was problematic. So today we are meeting in a third place. Both sides have exhibited a good deal of flexibility and a pragmatic attitude. That is what’s most important, as once the correct attitude is in place, it becomes easier to discuss issues.

Q9: During the meeting, did you invite Mr. Xi to visit Taiwan?

President: Not yet. Let’s take things step by step. Do you want me to invite him?

Q10: The 1992 Consensus was forged by semi-official organizations that were set up by each side and authorized to hold talks. Twenty-three years later, the leaders of the two sides have now held discussions and have also reached a consensus. Why should we continue with this 1992 Consensus instead of referring to it as the “2015 Consensus?”

President: Because I feel that the 1992 Consensus is a pretty good arrangement. Over the past seven years it’s been quite clear. We can’t have a new consensus each year, just like we make red wine every year. In principle, we should maintain the original 1992 Consensus and continue to give it new meaning by putting it into practice. That’s the best way. It’s like not being able to amend the constitution every day, and rely on interpretations instead. So in principle, I feel we should keep up with the times. Is the 1992 Consensus that we’re talking about today completely the same as what we discussed 23 years ago? The results of putting it into practice show that it is extremely different now. Actually, the consensus has been able to steer the two sides toward peace and prosperity. I feel that this is a successful consensus. Perhaps each side views the consensus a bit differently, but that’s not important. These differences can be overcome through ongoing negotiations. I think that in principle, the consensus is extremely viable.
Q11: Might there be a second Ma-Xi meeting before you leave office?

President: You may be getting ahead of yourself. Let’s conclude this meeting first, evaluate it, follow up the implementation, and hope for some results. While I just said that a country’s leader can’t address overly detailed issues, it’s inevitable that we broached a few. Let’s see if there's new progress on some of these issues. If there is, then that’s a success. As to whether I will invite him to Taiwan, I feel that we should take things gradually, step by step. We spent two years talking to get to today’s meeting and now we made it happen. You could say that we are advancing with the times, and that the time was ripe.

Q12: When you shook hands, you unbuttoned your coat. Why? What was your frame of mind at the time?

President: I unbuttoned my coat because Western suits pull quite tight when you raise your hand. There was no special meaning. Did that create some sort of misunderstanding? I shouldn’t think so. It was a good feeling, and we both gave a firm handshake.

Q13: Some people say that the last piece to the puzzle in your presidency has been to promote a cross-strait leaders’ meeting. What goals do you have for your remaining time in office?

President: You’ve touched on a very important objective for this Ma-Xi meeting. Take for example things like the Cross-Strait Trade in Goods Agreement, the establishment of reciprocal representative offices, and allowing mainland passengers to transit in Taiwan on their way to other destinations. We hope to see some concrete results on all of these issues following this meeting. Why was this meeting held with only six months remaining in my term? Well, it’s because I only have six months left in office. Mr. Xi still has over seven years left in his term. Relations between Taiwan and the mainland aren’t going to end any time soon, and we still need to build good groundwork.

Over the past seven years, we have continued to build a foundation and create an ultra-stable framework for Taiwan and the mainland. That required a lot of attention and care. You can’t just pay lip service and then wait for something to drop from the sky. That’s not how the world works. We have put in a lot of work over the past seven years, but ultimately we have found a way to proceed. Everyone should just think: Is there another relationship in the world like the cross-strait relationship? There is none. It is extremely complex and involves internal issues, foreign relations, military matters, and economics. It’s not at all easy. We need to cherish the gradual reconciliation that created this kind of situation.

Of course there will be some minor problems, but you have to think of ways to overcome them. You
don’t want these minor issues to impact the overall direction. That is the profound experience that I am
taking away from this meeting, and I feel that Mr. Xi has the same intentions. I hope that this process
can continue to move forward. Let’s look at the big picture and not minor issues. I hope that in terms
of overall direction and the overall situation, we’re all on the same page, which will benefit both
Taiwan and the mainland.

Q14: Are you concerned about the results of today’s Ma-Xi meeting? If Taiwan’s next president
doesn’t accept the 1992 Consensus, will that have any impact?

President: The two sides today have a clear consensus that the 1992 Consensus is the primary
foundation that has allowed cross-strait relations to make tremendous advances over the past seven
years, and created the most stable and peaceful cross-strait relations that we have seen in the past 66
years. Mr. Xi and I both hold this view. Everyone has clearly seen the developments of the past seven
years. Without the 1992 Consensus, how would today be possible? Of course, not everyone is satisfied
with the 1992 Consensus. But I feel that the most important thing is that it has paved the way for the
achievements of the past seven years and has been tremendously effective.

Some friends in the international community have said that the substance of the 1992 Consensus
seems to be quite vague, and joked that it is a masterpiece of ambiguity. However, regardless of
whether it is ambiguous, what’s most important is that it has been able to resolve problems. For
example, before I came to Singapore I held a press conference in Taiwan where members of the media
asked whether I would mention the “Republic of China” during the Ma-Xi meeting. And today, I said
it during the meeting. Why can’t we say anything about “two Chinas,” “one China, one Taiwan,” or
“Taiwan independence?” Because the ROC Constitution doesn’t permit it. I said “Republic of China,”
each and every word, in full. I took the firm position that an ROC president should take.