Taiwan will not seek U.N. membership: foreign minister

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Taipei, Aug. 18 (CNA) Taiwan will not seek membership in the United Nations, but will continue to pursue meaningful participation in U.N. specialized agencies, Foreign Minister David Lee (李大維) said Thursday.

Lee made the remarks in response to a report in the Chinese-language Liberty Times Thursday that the Taiwan United Nations Alliance, a group that advocates the country's accession to the U.N. under the name "Taiwan," called on the minister a day earlier to urge the government to take action to push for a U.N. bid.

The group is scheduled to conduct a campaign in several U.S. cities, including New York, from Sept. 9-19 in an effort to appeal to the U.N. to extend membership to Taiwan, as the
71st session of the U.N. General Assembly will take place Sept. 13-26 at U.N. Headquarters in New York.

Speaking to reporters Thursday about the issue, Lee said that the government will make every effort to seek meaningful participation in U.N.-related agencies, but will not apply for U.N. membership.

The matter of applying for membership of the U.N. is a highly politically sensitive issue that will have an impact on Taiwan's foreign relations, a senior foreign affairs official said, adding that it involves more than just the Foreign Ministry.

The ministry is waiting for a decision by high-level national security officials on what exact actions Taiwan will take this year, the official said, stressing that the actions will not risk jeopardizing cross-Taiwan Strait relations and will not surprise Taiwan's diplomatic allies.

Taiwan's representative to the United States Stanley Kao (高碩泰) has said recently that Taiwan has made "meaningful contributions" through its participation in international organizations, and that he hopes for better arrangements for Taiwan's participation in specialized international bodies.

The previous independence-leaning Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) government applied for U.N. membership in 2007, but the application was denied by the U.N. Secretariat. Due to a series of pro-independence moves by the administration of then-President Chen Shui-bian (陳水扁), tensions across the strait continued to intensify at the time.

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Since President Ma Ying-jeou (馬英九) of the China-friendly Kuomintang took office in 2008, Taiwan began to go with a more pragmatic approach by seeking meaningful participation in U.N. specialized agencies, such as the International Civil Aviation Organization and the World Health Organization.

The current administration of President Tsai Ing-wen (蔡英文) of the DPP has adopted "steadfast diplomacy," meaning that it will adopt practical strategies when dealing with Taiwan's foreign relations and expanding the country's international space.

The Republic of China joined the U.N. in 1945 as one of the founding members, but was expelled from the body in 1971, with its seat replaced by the People's Republic of China.

(By Tang Pei-chun and Elaine Hou)
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