

The U.S. Is Right to Support Taiwan’s Participation in International Organizations

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KEY TAKEAWAYS

Taiwan is currently blocked from participating, or having observer status, in most international organizations due to opposition from China.

More and more countries have sided with China, which consistently impedes meaningful Taiwanese participation in the international system.

While adhering to a “one China policy,” the U.S. does rightly support international participation of Taiwan and its 23 million citizens and should continue to do so.

When the United States terminated diplomatic recognition of Taiwan, officially named the Republic of China (ROC), and recognized the People’s Republic of China (PRC) in 1979, it made clear its ongoing commitment to Taiwan in the Taiwan Relations Act (TRA).¹ The U.S. stated that recognition of the PRC “rests on the expectation that the future of Taiwan will be determined by peaceful means,” and that efforts to determine the future of Taiwan by coercive means, including boycotts and embargoes, would be a matter of grave concern. The Taiwan Relations Act states that the shift in recognition should not be construed as “a basis for supporting the exclusion or expulsion of Taiwan from continued membership in any international financial institution or any other international organization.”

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Beijing has subsequently conducted an increasingly aggressive campaign to isolate Taiwan and impede its participation in international organizations, including blocking efforts by Taiwan to continue its participation as an observer in the World Health Assembly and the International Civil Aviation Organization. To counter Beijing's actions, Congress passed legislation in 2019 clarifying that U.S. policy was to advocate, as appropriate, Taiwan's participation in international organizations.² More recently, in the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA) for fiscal year (FY) 2023, Congress instructed the Administration to develop and implement a strategy to counter efforts by Beijing to undermine support for Taiwan internationally, including its participation in international organizations.³

Congress is correct to press the Administration to develop and implement such a strategy. Taiwan is self-governing, economically developed, and strategically important to the United States. Its integration with the global economy is deep, and Taiwan has much to offer in helping to develop international regulatory policies and addressing common concerns, such as infectious disease. It deserves to participate in international organizations, if not as a member state, at least as an observer.

Beijing's Campaign Against Taiwan

China was one of the original 51 member states of the United Nations. Due to its participation in the alliance of victors of World War II, China was awarded a permanent seat on the U.N. Security Council when the organization was founded in 1945. In the first few decades of the U.N., China was represented by the ROC.

Shortly after the U.N. was founded, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) gained momentum in the civil war against the ROC and, by the end of 1949, controlled the entire Chinese mainland, with ROC forces retreating to Taiwan. With support from the U.S. and its Western allies during the Cold War, U.N. recognition remained with the ROC, however, and it continued to represent all of China in the U.N.

In the early 1950s, the CCP-controlled PRC initiated a prolonged diplomatic campaign to take over the representation of China in the U.N. and other international organizations. While the U.S. and many of its allies resisted this attempt, the Soviet Union and its allies recognized the PRC as the legitimate government of China in 1949. Starting in the early 1960s, the U.N. General Assembly introduced annual resolutions to shift recognition from the ROC to the PRC, but they were defeated.

Two decades of diplomatic efforts by the PRC and the Soviet Union—aided by the addition of many newly independent nations to the U.N., mostly former colonies,⁴ which tended to sympathize with the PRC—culminated with the adoption of Resolution 2758 (76 in favor versus 35 opposing with 17 abstentions). That resolution recognized the PRC as “the only legitimate representatives of China to the United Nations” and instructed the U.N. to “expel forthwith the representatives of Chiang Kai-shek from the place which they unlawfully occupy at the United Nations and in all the organizations related to it.”⁵

Resolution 2758 shifted the diplomatic recognition of China in the U.N. to Beijing from Taipei, including the right to vote in the General Assembly and the Security Council. This shift at the United Nations swiftly tilted diplomatic recognition globally away from the ROC toward the PRC.

Quixotically, with no prospect of ousting the PRC by force, and after the adoption of Resolution 2758, the ROC continued to insist that it was the only legitimate government of China. To bolster this claim, Taiwan sought to maintain and broaden its diplomatic recognition with other governments, often using financial enticements.⁶ This attempt was countered by similar, more successful efforts from the PRC that resulted in a steadily shrinking number of nations recognizing the ROC.⁷

Throughout this period, one thing was clear: Neither the PRC nor the ROC was willing to abandon its assertion that it was the legitimate government of all of China.

In the 1990s, as Taiwan democratized, focus shifted from claiming to govern all of China toward shoring up its rights as a self-governing territory. Taiwan sought to join the U.N. as an independent state or to participate in various ways in the U.N. system, arguing that its 23 million citizens deserved a voice.⁸ More than a dozen efforts to permit Taiwan to participate in the U.N. in some manner fell short due to opposition from Beijing.⁹

A particularly important moment occurred in 2007 when Taiwan sought full membership in the U.N. The application was denied by the U.N. Secretary-General without submitting it to the U.N. member states based on a U.N. Office of Legal Affairs opinion that sided with Beijing by asserting that Resolution 2758 affirmed not only that the PRC is the sole and legitimate Government of China, but that the “position of the United Nations is that Taiwan is part of China.”¹⁰

By asserting that Taiwan was a part of China, the U.N. legal opinion was far more expansive than the text of Resolution 2758, which dealt solely with representation of China within the U.N.¹¹ In fact, the U.N. interpretation was in effect an endorsement of China’s “One China

principle” that asserts: “There is but one China in the world, Taiwan is an inalienable part of China’s territory, and the Government of the People’s Republic of China is the sole legal government representing the whole of China.”¹²

Then-President Chen Shui-bian of Taiwan rejected this position:

Resolution 2758 neither grants China the right to represent Taiwan’s 23 million people at the United Nations, nor states that Taiwan is either a part of China or the People’s Republic of China.

My country, Taiwan, is an independent sovereign nation and our people have the right, as stipulated in the UN Charter, to participate in the United Nations. Furthermore, according to the rules of the United Nations, only the Security Council and the General Assembly have the authority to review and decide on UN membership applications. The UN Secretariat does not have the power to decide on such matters. The people of Taiwan wish to join the United Nations. Taiwan is willing and able to fulfill membership obligations and to make greater contributions to world peace, justice and prosperity.¹³

The U.S. agreed that Resolution 2758 did not settle the issue of Taiwan and has rightly pushed back on U.N. statements and documents asserting that Taiwan is a province of China. The U.S. objected to the U.N. position in 2007 noting that it “is consistent with the Chinese position, [which] is not universally held by UN member states, including the United States.”¹⁴

The U.S. position, known as the “one China policy” and set out in the 1979 Taiwan Relations Act, acknowledges U.S. diplomatic recognition of the PRC but does not subscribe to China’s assertion that Taiwan is an inalienable part of China. At the same time, this policy is not an endorsement of Taiwanese independence. The U.S. explicitly opposes any unilateral change to the status quo, whether it be a takeover by China or a declaration of formal independence by Taiwan. However, the U.S. supports Taiwan’s ability to defend itself from forced unification with China and urges resolution of the dispute through peaceful dialogue.

This diplomatic dance allows the U.S. to engage with Beijing while supporting the interests of Taiwan. It also reflects the position of most Taiwanese people who overwhelmingly wish to preserve the status quo relationship with China and oppose unification, and legitimately fear that a formal declaration of independence would force Beijing’s hand and result in war.

This position on Taiwan has enjoyed broad bipartisan support since the passage of the TRA and U.S. policy was articulated under the Reagan Administration in its Six Assurances to Taiwan.¹⁵ As explained by Secretary of State Antony Blinken in 2022:

On Taiwan, our approach has been consistent across decades and administrations.... The United States remains committed to our “one China” policy, which is guided by the Taiwan Relations Act, the three Joint Communiques, the Six Assurances. We oppose any unilateral changes to the status quo from either side; we do not support Taiwan independence; and we expect cross-strait differences to be resolved by peaceful means.

We continue to have an abiding interest in peace and stability across the Taiwan Strait. We’ll continue to uphold our commitments under the Taiwan Relations Act to assist Taiwan in maintaining a sufficient self-defense capability—and, as indicated in the TRA, to “maintain our capacity to resist any resort to force or other forms of coercion that would jeopardize the security or the social or economic system, of Taiwan.” We enjoy a strong unofficial relationship with Taiwan, a vibrant democracy and leading economy in the region. We’ll continue to expand our cooperation with Taiwan on our many shared interests and values, support Taiwan’s meaningful participation in the international community, deepen our economic ties, consistent with our “one China” policy.

While our policy has not changed, what has changed is Beijing’s growing coercion—like trying to cut off Taiwan’s relations with countries around the world and blocking it from participating in international organizations.¹⁶

Indeed, while Beijing was willing to tolerate Taiwanese participation in the World Health Organization (WHO) and the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) under its preferred party, the Kuomintang (KMT), the PRC has escalated its efforts to isolate Taiwan under the leadership of the more independently minded Democratic Progressive Party (DPP). As noted in a 2022 German Marshall Fund report, “Since the inauguration of President Tsai Ing-wen from the DPP in May 2016, Taiwan has yet again been prevented from participating in UN and UN-affiliated organizations.”¹⁷ The State Department’s Global Engagement Center (GEC) recently confirmed Beijing’s aggressive efforts “to isolate Taiwan from the international community and shut it out from meaningful international participation” and use “high-level summits and agreements to amplify its desired narratives

regarding issues ranging from its domestic political system to Taiwan and Xinxiang.”¹⁸ Examples provided by the GEC of how high-level Chinese nationals abuse their authority in the U.N. system include:

The International Telecommunication Union retroactively changed references from “Taiwan” to “Taiwan, China” or “Taiwan, Province of China” during the 2015–2022 tenure of ITU Secretary-General Zhao Houlin, a PRC national supported and nominated by the PRC... [I]n 2020 the International Civil Aviation Organization—when under the leadership of a PRC citizen—blocked social media users asking about Taiwan’s exclusion from the organization.¹⁹

This effort has gone to ridiculous and extreme lengths, including successfully pressuring the U.N. to deny private citizens access to U.N. headquarters because they have Taiwanese passports,²⁰ not allowing Taiwanese citizens to use their passports to register for U.N. conferences through the U.N.’s Indico platform,²¹ and blocking applications from nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) seeking consultative status with the U.N. unless they “explicitly recognize Tibet and Taiwan as integral parts of Chinese territory.”²²

Next Steps for Taiwan’s Meaningful Participation

Across the U.N. system, China has succeeded in ostracizing Taiwan. For instance, Taiwan has not been able to participate as an observer in meetings of the U.N. and its specialized agencies since 2016 despite the many equities that Taiwan has in matters considered by those organizations. The U.S. should be adamant that Taiwan is a responsible member of the international community with valuable contributions to make to the international system, demand that Taiwan be allowed to participate as an observer in international organizations, and insist that its citizens, media, and civil society organizations be allowed the same access to facilities and opportunities to participate that is available to citizens and private organizations from other nations and territories.

This approach would not conflict with the “one China policy,” but complement it, allowing Taiwan and its citizens to participate in the international system and express their priorities and preferences—an option not available if Beijing is treated as the only representative voice of Taiwan.

In the NDAA for FY 2023, Congress instructed the Administration to develop and implement a strategy to counter efforts by Beijing to undermine support for Taiwan internationally and to support its meaningful participation²³ in international organizations. This strategy should include

an analysis of international organizations that “best lend themselves to advancing Taiwan’s participation” and a list of no more than 20 international organizations at which the “United States Government will prioritize for using its voice, vote, and influence to advance Taiwan’s meaningful participation.”²⁴

The report on this strategy was due 180 days after enactment, but, as no public version of the report is available, it likely was provided as a classified document. But there is utility in an articulated public strategy. Such a strategy should involve three elements.

First, the U.S. should use its voice, vote, and influence to protect Taiwan’s current participation in those international organizations in which Taiwan enjoys full membership or some lesser status. Currently, Taiwan claims to be a member of or have meaningful participation in more than 60 international organizations.²⁵ But China continues to press for Taiwan’s expulsion or replacement as illustrated by the August 2023 decision to expel Taiwan and make the PRC a permanent observer in the Central American Parliament.²⁶

In pursuit of this goal, the U.S. should identify the organizations where Taiwan is a member or enjoys meaningful participation, assess their procedures for changing membership or other status, and engage with the organization and bilaterally with the member governments to protect Taiwan’s current status. This might require countering Chinese financial incentives with U.S. and Taiwanese investments.

Second, the U.S. should use its influence and leverage to restore Taiwanese participation in the WHO and the ICAO where it has participated in the recent past. It should also demand that the U.N. allow Taiwanese citizens, media, and NGOs to access U.N. buildings and conferences using identification issued by Taiwan. To do otherwise is to render them “stateless” in the eyes of the United Nations or to compel political speech on the people of Taiwan by forcing them to submit to Chinese nationality that they do not recognize. There is precedent for such treatment. Citizens of Niue, a self-governing territory of New Zealand, can register for U.N. conferences in the Indico system under their own “nationality.” The U.N. itself issued documents to citizens of Kosovo until the government issued its own, even though that country is not officially recognized by the U.N. and other member states. The U.S. Department of State should explore other creative solutions to this problem.

Finally, the U.S. should seek meaningful participation for Taiwan in those organizations where it is currently barred from participation but has legitimate interests and can contribute to the mission and mandate of the organization and benefit the international community.

Partial Precedents

Although China's objection to Taiwanese participation creates political hurdles to its participation, Taiwan's situation has similarities with other territories whose status is disputed or participate in the U.N. despite not being member states.

Niue. Citizens of Niue, a self-governing territory of New Zealand, can participate in U.N. conferences under their own nationality as an option in Indico despite not being a member state or a non-member observer state in the United Nations. In addition, Niue and the Cook Islands are member states in the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the WHO even though they lack formal status with the United Nations. Moreover, the U.S. had agreed to treaties with Niue prior to official diplomatic recognition in 2023.²⁷

The Holy See. The Holy See participates in the U.N. system as a non-member state observer even though it is universally recognized as sovereign.

Kosovo. Kosovo is a member state or observer in several international organizations, including the World Bank and the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, even though it lacks universal diplomatic recognition and is blocked from U.N. membership due to opposition from the Russian Federation.

The Palestinian Authority. The "State of Palestine" has a non-member observer state status in the United Nations and is a member state of UNESCO, the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), and the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) despite lacking universal diplomatic recognition. Indeed, the Palestinian efforts illustrate that participation can be secured even over opposition from a major power like the U.S.

The Sovereign Order of Malta. The Sovereign Order of Malta is a lay religious order of the Catholic Church with diplomatic relations with many other nations.²⁸ It currently enjoys permanent observer status at the U.N. but is not a member state.

The U.S. should use these partial precedents to argue for Taiwan's meaningful participation in international organizations even if that participation falls short of full membership.

Step by Step

Building support should proceed incrementally in three steps.

1. *First*, the U.S. should use its voice, vote, and influence to protect Taiwan's current participation in the 60-plus international organizations in

which Taiwan enjoys full membership or a lesser status.²⁹ The most important international organizations where Taiwan is currently allowed some participation include:

The Asian Development Bank (ADB). Taiwan has been a regional member of the ADB since 1966 and currently is referred to as “Taipei, China” by the bank, providing more than 1 percent of the ADB’s subscribed capital and controlling more than 1.16 percent of the voting power.³⁰ China joined the ADB in 1986 after the U.N. and many nations shifted recognition to Beijing.

Asia–Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC). Taiwan has been a member economy in APEC since 1991 under the name “Chinese Taipei” to appease China. However, the president of Taiwan does not attend APEC meetings, with Taiwan represented by business leaders and a political envoy.³¹ As a member economy, Taiwan works with fellow APEC members to promote free trade, investment, and economic integration in the region through policy agreements and economic and technical cooperation. Rules for expulsion or suspension are unspecified, but decisions are made by consensus.

The European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD). Taiwan is a long-standing donor to the EBRD, providing more than \$250 million to the organization since 1991.³² Despite this commitment and partnership, Taiwan is not a member of the EBRD. China is a member state and minor shareholder in the EBRD.³³

The Inter-American Development Bank (IDB). Taiwan has been an observer in the IDB since 1991 and has committed resources to support IDB projects and the mission of the bank.³⁴ The U.S. Senate has introduced legislation urging U.S. backing for membership for Taiwan in the IDB.³⁵ China is a non-regional, non-borrowing member and minor shareholder in the IDB.

The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). Taiwan was granted observer status as Chinese Taipei by the OECD and allowed to participate in several of the organization’s committees, the first being the competition committee in 2002. The OECD later changed Taiwan’s status to “participant,”³⁶ and it continues to participate in three committees—the Steel Committee, the Competition Committee, and the Fisheries Committee.³⁷ China is not a member state of the OECD but is a “Key Partner.”

World Organization for Animal Health (WOAH). Taiwan participates as a member under the name “Chinese Taipei.” The WOAH works to control risks to animal health by sharing and disseminating veterinary information.

World Trade Organization (WTO). The WTO does not require members to be states, which allowed Taiwan to join as the “Separate Customs Territory of Taiwan, Penghu, Kinmen and Matsu.” Unusually, both Taiwan and China are full members of the WTO. Admission was carefully negotiated and linked to China’s admission to the organization immediately prior to Taiwan.³⁸ The WTO agreement does not contain provisions for expulsion or suspension, which should ensure Taiwan’s continued participation absent amendments adopted by the membership, which the U.S. should oppose.³⁹

2. The *second step* should be to restore Taiwan as an observer in those organizations in which it previously had such status, including the WHO and the ICAO. Clearly, both Taiwan and the WHO and ICAO member states recognized the value of Taiwanese participation in these organizations previously and that value continues.

The WHO. Taiwan participated as an observer in the World Health Assembly from 2009 to 2016 as “Chinese Taipei.” After the election of President Tsai in 2016, China has blocked Taiwan’s participation. The WHO may have facilitated the spread of COVID-19 by ignoring a warning from Taiwan about human-to-human transmission in December 2019 because the WHO does not recognize Taiwan due to Chinese objections. The experience of COVID-19, where Taiwan performed superbly, rallied support from the U.S. and other like-minded countries for Taiwan to retake its observer status. The U.S. should emphasize that, if the WHO truly believes that “disease knows no borders”⁴⁰ and universal cooperation is vital, it must not exclude Taiwan from its deliberations even if it lacks support for joining as a member state.

The ICAO. Taiwan was permitted to attend an ICAO meeting in 2013 as an observer. As with the WHO, Beijing supported Taiwan’s participation at the time in part as an enticement to its preferred Taiwanese political party, the KMT, which was in power. More recently, however, the ICAO has repeatedly rejected Taiwanese efforts to attend ICAO meetings despite Taipei’s status as a major air traffic hub.⁴¹ The U.S. should challenge other member states with the fact that failure to allow Taiwan to participate undermines the ICAO’s mission and purpose to promote universal standards and procedures involving government and non-government stakeholders.

3. The *third step* of this strategy should be to identify those organizations where both Taiwan and the mission of the organization would benefit from meaningful participation by Taiwan:

The Community of Democracies (COD). The COD was established in 2000 to bring together governments, civil society groups, and the private sector to promote democratic principles, freedom, and the rule of law.

Taiwan is a strong democracy and would be a worthy participant in the COD. The U.S. and other members of the Governing Council should invite Taiwan to participate as an observer in future COD meetings.

The G-20. The G-20 was established in 1999 after the Asian financial crisis to annually convene finance ministers and central bank governors from major developed and developing economies to discuss current and looming economic concerns and propose joint action to bolster financial stability. The host country, which shifts annually, can invite non-member governments, international organizations, and other entities to the meeting. Taiwan is a highly developed and significant economy and should be invited as an observer when the U.S. hosts the G-20.

The International Association of Anti-Corruption Authorities (IAACA). The IAACA is an independent and non-political anti-corruption organization focused on implementing the U.N. Convention Against Corruption. Members are represented by the parts of their government that combat corruption, which is the Department of Justice for the United States. China has three organizational members in the IAACA, one each for mainland China, Hong Kong, and Macao.⁴² Taiwan has a domestic agency focused on anti-corruption, the Agency Against Corruption in the Ministry of Justice,⁴³ and should seek an informal relationship with the IAACA.

The International Telecommunication Union (ITU). The ITU is a critical organization where standards for communications and digital technologies are negotiated and approved.⁴⁴ As a leader in technology innovation, Taiwan should have meaningful participation in ITU deliberations, and Taiwanese businesses and researchers should be allowed to participate as free Taiwanese entities the way businesses and private-sector participants from other nations can.

The Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU). The IPU was established in 1889 to promote parliamentary democracy and dialogue. However, IPU membership includes authoritarian governments like China and “Palestine,” despite the latter’s lack of universal recognition.⁴⁵ Taiwan has more governmental fidelity to the IPU principles than does China, and the voices of 23 million Taiwanese citizens should be present in this forum even if political issues preclude it becoming a member state. However, the IPU also includes international organizations like UNICEF and NGOs like Amnesty International as “Permanent Observers”—a status that allows them to attend and actively participate in IPU assemblies. As the IPU notes, permanent observer status is available to various groups, including “regional, sub-regional or geopolitical parliamentary assemblies or associations” and “international political party federations.”⁴⁶

The International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL).

INTERPOL is an international organization that promotes information exchange and cooperation between national police forces. While the PRC regularly abuses its membership of INTERPOL by using it to pursue its political enemies, Taiwan is a mature and responsible democracy. U.S. Public Law 114–139 (2016) already directs the U.S. Secretary of State to develop a strategy to obtain observer status in INTERPOL for Taiwan, and the Taiwan Assurance Act of 2020 stated that it is the policy of the U.S. to advocate for Taiwan’s “meaningful participation” in INTERPOL. Taiwan itself has regularly requested observer status to attend meetings of the INTERPOL General Assembly.

Standard-Setting Organizations. There are several standard-setting organizations that would benefit from Taiwanese participation and where the failure to allow Taiwan to participate impedes their commitments in other organizations. For instance, the WTO relies on the standard-setting organizations to promulgate standards for their agreements, which creates complications if those organizations are not open to all WTO members. As noted by law professor Steve Charnovitz,

Taiwan cannot participate in international standard-setting mechanisms whose standards are the source of WTO obligations in the [Agreement on Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT)], [Agreement on the Application of Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures (SPS)], and [General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS)]...because of the discrimination against it, Taiwan cannot meet its obligations under the SPS, TBT, and GATS Agreements to participate in international standard-setting mechanisms. This is a current, not just theoretical, problem, and so the WTO should take action to promote Taiwan’s effective participation in those organizations.⁴⁷

Relevant standard-setting organizations include:

- **The Codex Alimentarius Commission (CAC).** The CAC is responsible for implementation of food standards established by the Food and Agriculture Organization and the WHO. The WTO’s Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures (SPS) agreement directs members to participate in the CAC and promote WTO-prescribed goals within it. The U.S. should work with other WTO member states to allow Taiwan to participate in the CAC in a meaningful manner, as the WTO requires.

- **The International Plant Protection Convention (IPPC).** The IPPC promotes safe trade in plants to prevent the spread of pests and disease. The WTO's SPS agreement directs members to participate in the IPPC and promote WTO-prescribed goals within it. The U.S. should work with other WTO member states to allow Taiwan to participate in the IPPC in some meaningful manner as the WTO requires.
- **The International Organization for Standardization (ISO).** The ISO is an international organization with membership that includes national standards bodies that collaborate to set international standards for many products to bolster safety and interoperability. As do many other international organizations, the ISO labels Taiwan a province of China and Taiwanese participation is limited by Beijing.⁴⁸ As noted by Charnovitz, "the GATS Annex on Telecommunications directs Members to promote international standards on inter-operability through the International Telecommunications Union and the International Organization for Standardization."⁴⁹

Treaty bodies established under the U.N. Convention of the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS). China is making increasingly aggressive claims in the South China Sea and its land borders that infringe on the territory of its neighbors. Although the U.S. is not a party to UNCLOS, nor should it ratify the treaty,⁵⁰ the U.S. should explain to regional partners that Taiwan shares their concerns and could assist them in their efforts to push back on illegitimate Chinese claims through meaningful participation.

The United Nations. The U.N. General Assembly has an established process for granting observer status to non-member states, organizations, and other entities even though there is not a specific provision for that status in the U.N. Charter.⁵¹ Examples range from other international organizations, such as the International Olympic Committee, to political-religious entities, such as the Sovereign Order of Malta that has diplomatic relations with more than 100 countries. Securing observer entity status in the U.N. would allow Taiwan's 23 million citizens to have a legitimate voice in the international system and would ease gaining similar status in other parts of the U.N. system.

The World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO). The WIPO promotes intellectual property protection and helps to harmonize patent systems worldwide.⁵² Taiwanese researchers and companies are an important source of patent applications. According to Bloomberg, Taiwan topped world rankings in patent applications a decade ago.⁵³ The WIPO does not

track Taiwan applications separately, grouping them with China, but the Taiwanese Intellectual Property Office reports robust levels of applications in 2022.⁵⁴ Recognizing Taiwan's innovation by allowing meaningful participation in WIPO would benefit the member states.

Conclusion

Since the passage of the Taiwan Relations Act in 1979, the U.S. has repeatedly made it clear that it values and supports Taiwan's meaningful participation in international organizations. This support is based both on U.S. interests as Taiwan is generally supportive of American economic and foreign policy and on the principle that 23 million people deserve a voice in the international system. Congress has also regularly supported this policy, including in the July 2023 passage on a bipartisan basis by the House of the Taiwan International Solidary Act and the enactment of the FY 2023 NDAA.

Taiwan has sought with limited success in the past to participate in international organizations. China has consistently sought to block or erode Taiwan's participation in such organizations. Congress is right to demand that the U.S. Administration develop and implement a strategy to facilitate Taiwan's meaningful participation in international organizations. While the most effective approach to achieve this objective will differ according to the membership, rules and procedures, and political dynamics of individual organizations, the U.S. is now rightly committed to developing strategies to prevent the PRC from further isolating Taiwan to deprive it of its legitimate participation in international organizations.

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Endnotes

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