

ECFA overlooks human rights: watchdog group

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A watchdog organization yesterday accused the government of overlooking human rights and environmental issues while developing closer economic ties with China.

“At the very beginning of a trade agreement signed between the EU and South Korea, it was mentioned that the environment and human rights should be fully respected in trade relations,” Tseng Chao-ming (曾昭明), a member of Cross-Strait Agreement Watch and secretary-general of Corporate Social Responsibility Taiwan, told the forum. “Unfortunately, such issues are not mentioned at all in the Economic Cooperation Framework Agreement (ECFA) the government signed with China in June.”

Tseng said human rights and environmental issues were also addressed in the free-trade agreement (FTA) between Taiwan and Panama, while such issues were also mentioned in the FTA between China and New Zealand.

“What good would an economic relationship do if it’s not based on protection of the environment and human rights?” Tseng asked. “Without paying attention to the two areas, the closer cross-strait ties are, the more resentment the people will have.”

Alliance for Fair Tax Reform spokesman Wang Jung-chang (王宗昌) said the most important thing in economic development was equal distribution of wealth.

“Looking at the Closer Economic Partnership Agreement [CEPA] between China and Hong Kong — which is very similar to the ECFA — I am quite worried,” Wang said.

“The CEPA has been the source of unequal distribution of wealth in Hong Kong, especially since it introduced massive amounts of capital from China for real estate investment, and made real estate prices too high for the common people in Hong Kong.”

Although the group had invited representatives of the Cabinet, the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP), the Chinese Nationalist Party (KMT) and the Non-Partisan Solidarity Union legislative caucuses to attend the meeting, only DPP caucus whip Kuan Bi-ling (關比靈) attended the forum.

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