

Government not to pursue seat at UN

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The government will not pursue UN membership and will instead continue to push for the nation's meaningful participation at UN-related agencies, Minister of Foreign Affairs David Lee (李顯赫) said yesterday.

“With regard to the UN issue, the government will undoubtedly continue our meaningful participation [at UN-related organizations], but will not promote Taiwanese membership in the global body,” Lee said.

He made the remarks one day after Taiwan UN Alliance president Michael Tsai (蔡錦昌) reportedly visited him to urge President Tsai Ing-wen's (蔡英文) administration to “toughen up and honor more than 80 percent of the public's demand” that the government should strive to join the UN.

Michael Tsai reportedly told Lee that the government should refrain from constantly making compromises because of the “China factor,” as Beijing would only take more actions detrimental to Taipei.

Lin made a similar comment at a meeting of the legislature's Foreign Affairs and National Defense Committee on June 8, amid reports that the government was interested in applying for UN membership.

The Republic of China (ROC), one of the founding members of the UN, exited the global body in 1971 when a UN resolution ruled that the People's Republic of China was the only legitimate representative of China to it.

There have been periodic calls for the nation to join the UN under the name “Taiwan” or rejoin the body as the “ROC.”

Two referendums on seeking UN membership were held in March 2008, shortly after former president Chen Shui-bian (陳水扁) left office, but both failed to meet the required 50 percent voter

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turnout.

A high-level official at the ministry, who spoke on condition of anonymity, said that Taiwan's bid to join the UN is a politically sensitive issue and requires careful consideration, as it could affect both cross-strait relations and ties with other nations.

"I believe President Tsai would approach the issue in a pragmatic and down-to-earth manner. Personally, I do not think that her final decision would negatively affect cross-strait ties, nor leave our important allies, particularly the US, in shock," the official said.

However, since the issue is above the ministry's pay grade, it is up to the highest level of government to make the final call, he said.

Presidential Office spokesman Alex Huang (黃alex) said the president's national security team has deliberated on the matter and laid out plans to improve Taiwan's participation in international bodies, including UN-related agencies.

The renewed calls for application for UN membership has also sparked discussions among lawmakers across party lines.

Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) Legislator Lo Chih-cheng (羅志強) said several changes have been made to Taiwan's stance on the UN membership issue, including the name, status and manner of an application.

"Nevertheless, the administration will come up with a more well-thought-out stance before this year's UN General Assembly begins next month," Lo said, adding that Tsai Ing-wen's purported plan to change from "participation" to "dedication" at UN-related organizations is expected to win acclaim from the international community.

DPP Legislator Gao Jyh-peng (高志鵬) said that as the ROC flag cannot represent the nation in

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the international arena, the government should change both the official title and national flag.

Chinese Nationalist Party (KMT) Legislator Johnny Chiang (江國昌) said that as the public had witnessed the dismal outcomes of Chen's UN endeavors, Tsai Ing-wen should introduce supplementary measures rather than simply "heating leftover rice."

New Power Party caucus convener Hsu Yung-ming (許永明) said that in light of an ongoing discussion in the international community that the appellation "Chinese Taipei" — under which the national team is competing at the Olympics in Rio de Janeiro and other sports events — can no longer represent Taiwan, the party would throw its support behind any bids for membership at the UN or the International Olympic Committee as "Taiwan."

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