

AIT head pledges US support to Tsai

Written by Taipei Times

Friday, 24 August 2018 06:51 -



President Tsai Ing-wen, right, shakes hands with American Institute in Taiwan Director Brent Christensen at the Presidential Office Building in Taipei yesterday.

Photo: CNA

American Institute in Taiwan (AIT) Director Brent Christensen yesterday pledged the US' support for Taiwan's global contributions and participation, and denounced China's interference in the domestic politics of Western nations.

Christensen made the remarks in his first meeting with President Tsai Ing-wen (蔡英文) at the Presidential Office Building in Taipei since assuming the helm of the institute's Taipei office on Aug. 11.

The meeting, which was streamed live on Tsai's Facebook page, came just two days after Taiwan severed diplomatic ties with El Salvador after learning of its decision to switch allegiance to China.

Some political commentators have said that Beijing orchestrated El Salvador's switch of recognition to vent its grievance over warming Taiwan-US ties, the latest evidence of which being Tsai's high-profile transit stops in Los Angeles and Houston, Texas.

"El Salvador's receptiveness to China's apparent interference in the domestic politics of the Western Hemisphere country is of grave concern to the US," Christensen said, adding that El Salvador's decision has prompted Washington to reassess its relationship with the Central American nation.

Beijing's unilateral effort to alter the cross-strait "status quo" is unhelpful and could undermine the framework that has enabled peace, stability and development in the region for decades, he said.

The US would continue to support Taiwan as it expands its significant global contributions and resists efforts to constrain its appropriate participation on the world stage, he added.

Calling Taiwan a reliable partner and an important player in the Indo-Pacific region, Christensen said that Taipei shares Washington's interests and values, and the US relies on Taiwan to promote regional peace and stability.

"The US and Taiwan stand together to protect what we hold most dear: our freedom, our democracy and our future," he said, expressing the hope of bringing Taiwan-US ties to a new level of friendship and cooperation during his three-year tenure.

At a time when China is resorting to every conceivable means to increase pressure on Taiwan, the nation needs the help of like-minded nations to express concern over Beijing's behavior, Tsai said.

"Washington's statement that Taiwan is a democratic success story, a reliable partner and a force for good in the world is the kind of voice of justice Taiwanese need," Tsai said.

Taiwan has always highly valued its relationship with the US, with both sides increasing the quality and quantity of visits by officials, as well as bilateral cooperation and exchanges in security matters, she said.

She thanked the US for its support and expressed the hope of reaching more milestones under Christensen's leadership.

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Tsai and Christensen discussed a wide range of issues during their meeting, including bilateral trade, cooperation aimed at expanding Taiwan's international space and cross-strait relations, the AIT said.

Source: [Taipei Times - 2018/08/24](#)