

Taiwan must fight for recognition

Written by Taipei Times Editorial
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The adage that “politics should not be mixed with sports, showbiz, medical affairs or any other arena for that matter” does not apply to Taiwan.

As a result of China’s incessant international campaigns to — incorrectly — claim that Taiwan is part of its territory, Taiwan’s presence in global organizations has always been deemed “political” regardless of its eagerness to contribute positively to the international community.

Therefore, cross-strait diplomatic tussles more often than not have expanded from the traditional diplomatic arena to other spheres.

Taiwan’s participation in the annual World Health Assembly (WHA), the decisionmaking body of the WHO, is no exception.

While Minister of Health and Welfare Lin Tzou-yien (林錫山), who is heading Taiwan’s delegation in Geneva for the WHA, has been given an entry badge with his name on it and entered the meeting yesterday without obstruction, it remains to be seen whether China will pull off its attempt to belittle Taiwan on the international stage.

It is no secret that prior to the opening of the WHA, China attempted to denigrate Taiwan’s sovereignty by insisting that UN Resolution No 2758 and the “one China” principle be added to the invitation sent by WHO Director-General Margaret Chan (陳寶善).

Observers are given speaking rights at the WHA meeting and Lin is scheduled to give a speech tomorrow outlining Taiwan’s planned contribution to the global health system. A worse scenario would be China employing yet another dirty trick to obstruct Lin from the podium.

For Taiwan’s delegation — whose members are medical professionals — the nation’s presence at the global health body is never as simple as just dealing with issues concerning medical and health affairs.

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The WHO might wish to reiterate its professional credentials as the international health body, but it has allowed its credibility to be eroded by China's blatant political interference and attempts to undermine Taiwan's sovereign status.

China has never tried to hide its attempts to mix politics with any other arena as a way to marginalize Taiwan internationally.

In view of Beijing's brazenness, it is hoped that Lin — unlike the spineless administration of former president Ma Ying-jeou (馬英九) that often sowed confusion and cultivated the misconception among the international community that Taiwan is part of China — can make Taiwan's stance heard with his speech.

In an international setting such as the WHA, Taiwanese officials must uphold the nation's integrity and sovereignty — a matter of dignity that transcends politics.

After all, the new government has the backing of Taiwanese, as a survey conducted by the Cross-Strait Policy Association clearly indicated, with more than 71 percent of respondents disagreeing that participating in the WHA entails accepting the so-called "one China" principle, as Beijing claims.

Taiwan's diplomatic dire straits are primarily a result of China's deliberate suppression, and while it is shameful that the WHO has chosen to turn a blind eye to Beijing's behavior, Taiwan must not let itself grow numb to such incorrectness and accept this continuing injustice.

A breakthrough against China's blockade is not impossible so long as Taiwanese and the government raise a collective voice to make Taiwan heard in the international community.

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