Taiwan might still be barred from the World Health Assembly and UN events, but two news items show that it continues to quietly make strides in areas where China blatantly fails.

After hosting the Oslo Freedom Forum in November last year, Taiwan this year is to remain the forum's only Asian destination since its inception in 2009.

Organizers last week announced that it would return to Taiwan in September, explicitly saying that it is a symbolic move to hold two consecutive forums in Taiwan focusing on human rights, democracy and freedom.

The Oslo-based event's only other satellite destination for the forum this year is in Mexico City, making Taiwan stand out on the human rights world map as a place where the forum's main topics of information warfare, cybersecurity and transgender rights are highly relevant.

One of this year's speakers is Hong Kong singer and democracy advocate Denise Ho (□□□). Once popular in China, Ho has been banned from performing there due to her activism. On Monday last week, Ho spoke out against Chinese treatment of Hong Kong at the UN Human Rights Council. After being interrupted twice by the Chinese delegate, she ended her speech by asking that China be removed from the council.

That Ho will be able to speak freely in Taiwan shows the global community that the two nations operate under very different political systems and values.

With politics so ingrained in everyday life and discourse in Taiwan, it is easy to forget that much of the world actually knows little of the nation's diplomatic plight and political situation. For example, Egyptian LGBTQ advocate Omar Sharif Jr told the *Taipei Times* during last year's forum that he was "shocked to learn that Taiwan only has official diplomatic ties with 17 countries."

At the time, groups opposed to LGBTQ rights had just scored a victory through national

referendums, and Sharif used his newfound knowledge to make a point, saying: “Almost every Taiwanese knows what it feels like to be marginalized by the family of nations out there. I don’t know why you would do that inwardly to your own citizens.”

Taiwan’s international marginalization obviously left an impression on him, and hopefully also had an effect on other attendees.

In addition, Taiwanese delegates are participating in the US-backed Ministerial to Advance Religious Freedom in Washington, which ends tomorrow. The nation also participated last year, and in March hosted a follow-up event, titled “A civil society dialogue on securing religious freedom in the Indo-

Pacific region,” of which a significant portion focused on religious persecution in China.

At that event, President Tsai Ing-wen (□□□) and US Ambassador-at-large for Religious Freedom Sam Brownback issued a joint statement calling for more religious freedom in Asia — without directly naming China. Tsai also spoke of how religious freedom is woven into everyday life in Taiwan.

While the global powers might not care much for these events and continue to marginalize Taiwan at China’s behest, human rights and democracy are areas upon which China is unlikely to exert much influence, except in the UN. It is one of the few avenues where Taiwan can shine and be heard, and its continuous participation in such events is the way to move forward.

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