

Push in US for Taiwan to enter ICAO

Written by Taipei Times
Thursday, 29 July 2010 08:15 -

US Representative Ileana Ros-Lehtinen on Tuesday called on US President Barack Obama's administration to immediately push for Taiwan to be awarded observer status in the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO).

Blaming China for working behind the scenes to keep Taiwan out of ICAO, she said: "The provincial and shortsighted manipulations of Beijing's leaders who seek to deny Taiwan international space cannot stand in the way of airport safety and security."

Speaking on the floor of the House of Representatives as a resolution was introduced calling for Taiwan to be accorded ICAO observer status, Ros-Lehtinen said there was no doubt that Taiwan, which provides air traffic control services for more than 1.3 million flights a year, needs to be part of the international organization responsible for air safety and security.

"This is especially true in a post-Sept. 11 world where security in the sky is of paramount importance to not only the American people, but to all across the globe," she said.

"It is time to bring to an end Beijing's petty parlor games of one-upmanship and humiliating slights in the running of international organizations," she said.

Ros-Lehtinen added that if "the alleged thaw" in cross-strait relations was to have any true significance, it must and should begin in the meeting rooms of the ICAO and other international organizations.

"Those passengers, including our American citizens who travel on one of the almost 200,000 international flights headed to and from Taiwan each year, expect and deserve every protection than can be afforded," she said.

"The time to let Taiwan begin to have constructive and meaningful participation in [the] ICAO is long overdue. The United States' State Department, as this resolution suggests, must assume a leading role to ensure this happens as quickly as possible," she said.

The congressional resolution, which has now gone to the Foreign Affairs Committee where it is expected to pass, argues that Taipei has been impeded in its efforts to maintain civil aviation practices in line with international standards because of its inability to contact the ICAO for up-to-date information.

Nevertheless, "Taiwan has made every effort to comply with the operating procedures and guidelines set forth by the organization," the resolution says.

It adds that the US government should take a leading role in gaining international support for the conferral of observer status to Taiwan in the ICAO and the US Department of State should provide briefings to, or consult with, the US Congress on all developments.

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Source: [Taipei Times - 2010/07/29](#)