

Center urges US action on Taiwan's integration

Written by Taipei Times

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Taiwan's quest for greater participation in the international community is of great importance to all democracies, senior vice president for Asia at the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS), Mike Green, said on Wednesday.

"The people of Taiwan deserve — and we need to see them get — a seat at the table," he said.

Green was presiding over a packed meeting held in a room within the US Congress to formally release a new report by CSIS senior adviser for Asia Bonnie Glaser on the nation's need to be part of international organizations.

US Democratic Senator Robert Menendez and Republican Senator James Inhofe — joint chairmen of the Taiwan Caucus — were scheduled to attend, but were unable to after US Secretary of State John Kerry called an urgent closed-door meeting on Iran.

Leo Lee (李 Leo), deputy representative of the Taipei Economic and Cultural Representative Office in the US, read a message from President Ma Ying-jeou (馬英九) thanking the US Congress for its support.

Ma said in his message that Glaser's report was the most comprehensive study of the nation's bid to participate in international organizations published in recent years.

"Beijing never misses an opportunity to constrain Taiwan's space and to have its voice heard," Glaser said. "The exclusion of Taiwan from many international organizations erodes Taiwan's competitiveness and erodes Taiwan's integration in the regional economy."

Glaser said China presented the biggest obstacle to Taiwan joining international organizations.

"There is concern on the mainland that if Taiwan is given greater international presence it

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could be used somehow to press for independence in the future," she said.

"One would hope that with China's growing confidence and capabilities, its power economically and militarily, that China would become confident in itself and give Taiwan the opportunity to play a role in any organization," Glaser said.

"It's extremely unlikely that Taiwan would be able to leverage its participation in an international organization to achieve de jure independence, but this continues to be a concern which is unfounded and one which the international community should push back on," she said.

The 50-page study and its recommendations were the subject of an earlier report in the Taipei Times on Nov. 28.

Glaser said that participation in international organizations was an issue that Taipei had to make a priority in cross-strait relations.

"In pushing [Chinese President] Xi Jinping (习近平) to provide more opportunity for Taiwan and to block Taiwan less, there could be the possibility to make more progress," she said. "It must be an issue on the cross-strait agenda because if Beijing wants to continue to veto or block Taiwan's participation it can continue to do so."

At the same time, the US should be more proactive in soliciting the support of other nations, Glaser said.

"In addition to doing more for Taiwan, I think we actually need to encourage other countries to do more. There are nations out there that are a little nervous in saying things publicly in support of Taiwan, but there is safety in numbers," she said.

"If you get a lot of countries saying something, China is not going to punish the entire international community," she added.

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As of now, Lee said that the nation has membership to only 34 of the world's 5,000 international organizations.

Glaser said that for "a few years" support for Taiwan in the US Congress had been "a little on the down side," but that it had picked up recently.

"There are a lot of individuals in Congress now who are willing to work on some of these issues and that helps," she said.

Greater flexibility on Taiwan's international space was something that Xi may be convinced to "consider," Glaser said.

"Ultimately, if he wants to develop the cross-strait relationship this is an opportunity and a way to do that and the downside is not as great as China has feared in the past," she said.

"This is not something that China should fear — there is a lot more upside than downside," she said.

Glaser said it was in US interests to stand up more to China on the issue.

"We need to be a leader and we should be standing up for our rights and our values," she said.

"There is growing angst in this country that our relationship with China is so important that we should not be challenging China on specific issues," Glaser said. "But when it comes to our own interests and values we shouldn't hesitate to stand up for them."

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