

Taiwan rejected from OECD meeting

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An entrance to the Egmont Palace in Brussels is pictured yesterday, where a Taiwanese delegation were ejected from an Organisation of Economic Co-operation and Development meeting after pressure was exerted by the Chinese delegation.

Photo: CNA

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs yesterday said that Taiwan has lodged a stern protest with China, the Belgian government and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) after a Taiwanese delegation was requested to leave a conference in Belgium due to Chinese pressure.

Department of International Organizations Director-General Michael Hsu (郝昌耀) told a press conference in Taipei yesterday that a five-person Taiwanese delegation led by Shen Wei-cheng (陳偉成), director-general of the Industrial Development Bureau's Metal and Mechanical Industries Division, was kept out of a high-level meeting on excess capacity and structural adjustment in the steel sector jointly held by the Belgian government and the OECD in Brussels on Monday.

"The symposium had two parts: a morning meeting open to industrial representatives and an afternoon conference only for government officials. Our delegation had no problem attending the morning meeting, but was asked not to join the afternoon session because of China's objection," Hsu said.

Ministry spokeswoman Eleanor Wang (王淑惠) said the grounds for Beijing's protest was that the "ranking of the leader of the Taiwanese delegation was not high enough."

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“However, Shen’s ranking is similar to that of the leaders of other national delegations,” Wang said.

The Ministry of Economic Affairs also said China’s opposition was groundless, as the Taiwanese delegation have similar ranking to representatives from other OECD member nations.

Hsu said the government has requested that the Mainland Affairs Council file a strong protest with Beijing against its “unfriendly act,” while asking the Taipei Representative Office in Belgium to do the same with the Belgian government.

As the OECD’s headquarters is in Paris, the government has also instructed the Taipei Representative Office in France to lodge a protest with the international economic organization, Hsu said.

“Our nation has actively participated in meetings and made concrete contributions since it joined the OECD steel committee as an observer in 2005. Our professional participation has been recognized by the OECD and its member states,” Hsu said.

Hsu said the Taiwanese delegation was able to attend similar symposiums in 2003 and 2004, adding that it was the first time such an incident had occurred.

The Bureau of Foreign Trade said that while Taiwan is not a member of the OECD, it has been granted observer status — a term changed by the organization from “participant” in 2013 — on its competition committee, steel committee and fisheries committee in 2002, 2005 and 2006 respectively.

Representative to the EU Tung Kuo-yu (譚國瑜) said the Taiwanese delegation was allowed to attend an OECD meeting yesterday, despite being asked to leave on Monday due to pressure from China.

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Before yesterday's meeting began, two officials from the Belgian Ministry of Economic Affairs apologized to the delegation for Monday's incident, saying that they were under great pressure, Tung said.

Chinese Nationalist Party (KMT) caucus whip Lin Te-fu (林德福) said that the government has had "good and peaceful interactions with [China] in the past seven years, but the Democratic Progressive Party [DPP], after it secured a [legislative] majority with the New Power Party, has been resorting to the tactics that it employed when it was an opposition party."

"There will be problems, and [cross-strait] ties could be heading toward a stalemate, if they continue to do what they have been doing," Lin said.

However, DPP Legislator Chen Ting-fei (陳亭妃) said that Taiwan has repeatedly encountered obstruction from the Chinese side in its participation in international meetings, "such as being subjected to the debasement of being described as part of China."

"It has happened all the time; what President Ma Ying-jeou (馬英九) calls 'the best cross-strait relationship in 60 years' is simply non-existent," she said. "There is no need to see the incident as a warning by Beijing to the incoming government."

Legislative Speaker Su Jia-chyuan (蘇嘉全) said that when he was the minister of the Council of Agriculture from 2006 to 2008, Taiwan's representatives were also blocked from meetings on the Pacific Fisheries Agreement and had to sit in an area reserved for the media.

Beijing has been "fierce" in barring Taiwanese representatives from international conferences and it has repeatedly happened before, Su said.

"Facing this kind of phenomenon, the incoming government has to continue communicating with other nations. After all, some nations would remain firm on their stance, but some cave in to the Chinese government's intimidation," he said.

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Additional reporting by Lisa Wang and CNA

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