

Taiwan gets support at ICAO Assembly

Written by Taipei Times

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Taiwan faced a great challenge in its bid to participate in the International Civil Aviation Organization's (ICAO) Assembly, but it received warm support from its diplomatic allies, a Taiwanese official outside the event said.

Civil Aeronautics Administration (CAA) Deputy Director Ho Shu-ping (何淑萍) made the remarks in an interview with the Central News Agency (CNA) on Saturday, before returning to Taiwan after a six-day trip in Montreal.

Heading a seven-member delegation, Ho flew to Canada on Thursday last week when the ICAO opened the 39th session of its assembly at the ICAO's headquarters.

Taiwan was not invited to the event — most likely because of the objections of Beijing — but the government nonetheless sent a delegation to express its appreciation to countries that have shown their support for Taiwan, Ho said.

Asked what position Taiwan's civil aeronautics authorities would take on the most important issue to arise in this year's ICAO assembly — establishing a global carbon offset mechanism to address carbon emissions from international aviation — Ho said environmental protection and reducing carbon emissions are important policies of the ICAO.

"Being a part of the world's aviation sector, Taiwan will naturally participate in and be in accordance with [the policy]," she said.

However, as it was unable to attend the ICAO assembly, Taiwan cannot acquire the information of what was discussed regarding the carbon reduction issue, so it would have to collect as much information as possible indirectly through various channels, Ho said.

Taiwan has to narrow the "time gap" in acquiring the data as much as possible, and that is the challenge Taiwan will be faced with when it is unable to participate in the ICAO, Ho said.

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She added that Taiwan would not want its aviation businesses to be unable to follow the world's steps in the reduction of carbon emissions because they have not had enough time to prepare for it due to the time and information gaps.

This is why Taiwan must call for the support of other countries in its bid to participate in the ICAO assembly meaningfully and professionally, the official said.

Speaking of the delegation's bilateral talks with Taiwan-friendly countries outside the venue of the ICAO assembly without stopping to rest over the past six days, Ho said the reason it did so was to thank the allies for their support, seek their continuous backing and inform them on the general condition of Taiwan's aviation transportation operations.

During the talks, the delegation had sensed the countries' warm support and their agreement that it is necessary for Taiwan — an aviation transportation hub in East Asia — to participate in the ICAO professionally.

The countries all agree with the idea that "aviation safety is without borders" and believe that flight safety should not be affected by any factors, including politics, Ho said.

From the results of the talks, the delegation has concluded that Taiwan has to continue to seek closer ties with its allies and friendly countries on issues concerning aviation services, safety and security, and environmental protection.

Taiwan's civil aviation authorities will continue to improve all kinds of civil aviation measures to allow the international community to be informed on Taiwan's situation in the sector, Ho added.

Ho and the rest of the delegation departed Montreal later on Saturday to return home.

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The ICAO is a UN specialized agency responsible for establishing worldwide aviation policies.

In 2013, Taiwan was represented at the 38th ICAO assembly by Jean Shen (陳建), then-director-general of the CAA, who was invited as a special guest of then-ICAO Council president Roberto Kobeh Gonzalez.

That marked Taipei's first representation at the ICAO assembly since losing its seat in the UN to Beijing in 1971.

Cross-strait relations have cooled since President Tsai Ing-wen's (蔡英文) took office on May 20, and opposition from Beijing is widely believed to be the main reason behind the ICAO's decision not to invite Taiwan this year.

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