

Secretary of state pick affirms US backing of Taiwan

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US president-elect Donald Trump's nominee for secretary of state reaffirmed the US' commitment to Taiwan based on the Taiwan Relations Act (TRA) and the "six assurances" during a US Senate confirmation hearing on Wednesday.

"We've made an important commitment to Taiwan," through the TRA and the "six assurances," and such commitments should be reaffirmed, former Exxon Mobil chief executive Rex Tillerson said in response to questions from US Senator Cory Gardner regarding the incoming administration's position on Taiwan and the "one China" policy.

"I think it's important that Taiwan knows we're going to live up to the commitments under the Taiwan Relations Act and the six issues accord," he added.

"That in itself is a message," he said, adding that the US should recognize the "balancing forces" in its relationship with China that need to be dealt with.

Asked about the future administration's position on the "one China" policy, Tillerson said he was not aware of "any plans to alter the 'one China' position."

Tillerson's remarks came after Trump said in an interview with Fox News last month that he saw no reason the US should continue abiding by the "one China" policy unless Beijing is prepared to enter into some kind of bargain.

His remarks have triggered serious concerns in China.

The TRA was enacted in 1979 to maintain commercial, cultural and other unofficial relations between Taiwan and the US after Washington switched diplomatic recognition from Taipei to Beijing.

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The TRA also requires the US to provide Taiwan with “arms of a defensive character.”

The “six assurances” given to Taiwan in 1982 by then-US president Ronald Reagan include US pledges not to set a date for ending arms sales to Taiwan, not to hold prior consultations with China regarding arms sales to Taiwan, and not to play a mediation role between Taiwan and China.

The other three assurances are that the US will not revise the TRA, alter its position regarding Taiwan’s sovereignty, or pressure Taiwan to enter into negotiations with China.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs yesterday said it welcomes and thanks the US’ promise regarding Taiwan’s security, adding that Tillerson’s remarks show that the incoming Trump administration understands the importance of the Taiwan-US relationship for the stability and peace in the Asia-Pacific region and the world.

The ministry added that President Tsai Ing-wen’s (蔡英文) administration has been maintaining mutual trust with the US since her inauguration in May last year based on the principle of “steady and low-key” handling of the relationship between the two countries.

The ministry said that it would maintain close communication with the future Trump administration.

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