

Eviction of Taiwanese delegates panned

Written by Taipei Times

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A Chinese delegation trying to prevent a Taiwanese group from attending a meeting hosted by Australian Minister for Foreign Affairs Julie Bishop on Monday has been described as “disgusting” and “extraordinary.”

Participants at the Kimberley Process meeting in Perth said Chinese delegates shouted over the welcoming ceremony and forced the suspension of proceedings on Monday, the *Sydney Morning Herald* reported yesterday.

The Chinese delegation noisily disrupted the ceremony and forced the suspension of at least one of Monday’s sessions, the newspaper said.

“It was disgusting,” the paper cited one high-level Australian attendee who asked not to be named as saying. “It was extraordinary; so uncalled for and so inappropriate, and so disrespectful.”

The conference chair withdrew Taiwan’s invitation “following objections from China and several other delegations,” an Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade spokeswoman said yesterday.

“Continual disruption ... was regrettable and the Australian government’s concerns with respect to the behavior of Chinese delegates have been raised with the Chinese ambassador,” she added.

Asked about the incident, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Javier Hou (侯傑) yesterday said that China “has resorted to every conceivable means” to block Taiwan from international affairs.

This time it disrupted the meeting and delayed proceedings, he said.

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To allow the conference to proceed, the Taiwanese had no choice but to withdraw and attended only bilateral activities on the sidelines of the meeting, Hou said.

Taiwan “understands what had happened, but insists it had the right to attend the meeting,” he said.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs is to write a letter to the Australian government to make clear its stance and express gratitude for the invitation.

Asked if the government would protest to China, Hou said that question would be handled by the Mainland Affairs Council.

Presidential Office spokesman Sidney Lin (林錫山) said that Taiwan’s representatives were invited to the event and China’s move is not conducive the maintenance of good cross-strait relations.

Taiwan had been invited to attend the four-day Kimberley Process meeting under the name “Rough Diamond Trading Entity of Chinese Taipei” at the invitation of the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade.

The Australian government said the invitation was in line with precedent and consistent with its “one China” policy, the *Sydney Morning Herald* said.

In Beijing, Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs spokesman Geng Shuang (耿爽) yesterday said that the organizers had improperly invited Taiwan in violation of the rules and that China had repeatedly complained about the invitation ahead of the meeting.

“China’s reasonable concerns were not respected,” Geng said.

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China's complaints about the issue during the meeting were in line with the rules and were "reasonable and fair" and supported by many other attendees, he said.

The Kimberley Process is an international initiative that brings together governments, industry and civil society with the aim of stopping the trade in conflict diamonds and preventing the diamond trade from funding violence by insurgent movements. The first meeting was held in 2000.

Taiwan was granted observer status in 2007.

Additional reporting by Chung Li-hua and Reuters

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