

## Taiwan to invest in non-diplomatic allies: MOFA

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The nation aims to solidify and deepen bilateral and multilateral relations with countries that are close to Taiwan in values, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) says in a report to be presented at the Legislative Yuan today.

The nation will press on with the implementation of the New Southbound Policy, which aims to increase interactions with ASEAN members, South Asia, and New Zealand and Australia, as well as participation in regional economic organizations, the ministry said.

Today's legislative briefing is the first since the nation severed diplomatic ties with Burkina Faso on Thursday. Taiwan has since 2016 terminated diplomatic relations with Sao Tome and Principe, Panama and Dominican Republic as they switched recognition to Beijing, leaving Taiwan with only 18 allies.

Taiwan's remaining allies are under constant pressure from "the China factor" and other interferences, the report said, adding that many politicians in these countries entertain "unrealistic fantasies" about or expectations of China, increasing pressure on Taiwan's diplomacy.

Beijing has used the China-Community of Latin American and Caribbean States Forum and other multilateral platforms, as well as local economic and trade offices, and Confucius Institutes to expand its Belt and Road Initiative to the Latin American region, the report said.

It has also used Latin American countries' need of businesses, investments and infrastructure, as well as the scramble for seats in the UN Security Council to threaten and lure Taiwan's diplomatic allies and expand its influence in the region, it said.

China has used donations or concessional loans to fund construction projects in the Pacific region, the report said.

Beijing is continuously engaged in discussions with the Vatican in an attempt to draw Taiwan's

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only diplomatic ally in Europe to its side, it said.

The nation is likely to face bigger challenges than before, the ministry said, adding that the main challenge is and would always be from China, which is pushing an increasingly aggressive foreign policy agenda.

The ministry will leverage the nation's strengths and resources to tap into underdeveloped areas in diplomacy, even as China tries to suppress Taiwan on the world stage, it said.

It will keep Taiwan's commitments to the Asia-Pacific region and the international community, and will not engage in malicious diplomatic tactics to counter China's aggressive moves, the report said.

Aside from striving to maintain diplomatic relations with existing allies, the ministry would also attempt to bolster Taiwan's "substantial relations" with the US and other countries that share the nation's values, it said.

The southbound policy has entered a new phase as the government aims to establish strategic partnerships with countries that are friendly to Taiwan in trade and diplomacy, the report said.

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