

Rights congress chooses Taipei

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International Federation for Human Rights secretary-general Debbie Stothard, right, accompanied by federation CEO Eleonore Morel, second right, and Taiwan Association for Human Rights board member Wu Jia-zhen, second left, speaks at a congress in Taipei yesterday.

Photo: Liao Chen-huei, Taipei Times

The International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH) yesterday said that it would in October hold its 40th congress in Taipei, the first time the event is to be held in Asia in its nearly 100-year history.

Taiwan has been chosen due to the federation's long-term rapport with Taiwanese human rights organizations and its concern over marriage equality, FIDH secretary-general Debbie Stothard said.

"When FIDH chooses the location of a congress, in addition to our strong relationship to our members who are in the country — in this case the Taiwan Association for Human Rights [TAHR] — we also consider whether we are here to congratulate the country on their progress on human rights and democracy, or whether we are here to push the state to behave better or to improve their position on human rights and democracy," she told a news conference.

"We very much hope that Taiwan can create history by passing the marriage equality bill tomorrow [today]," she said, adding that it decided to hold the congress in Taiwan from Oct. 21 to 25 in part due to the LGBT Pride Parade to be held on Oct. 26.

Hopefully, the bill would be enacted by the time the congress is held, she said.

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She also expressed hope that the government would pass an asylum law, promote freedom of expression and assembly, and take effective steps to end the death penalty.

Politicians would be reluctant to promote change as elections near, “but let’s not forget that the very existence of Taiwan is an act of courage,” Stothard said.

“Please carry forward that courage into commitments to protect human rights and democracy in this country,” she added.

About 400 human rights advocates from more than 100 nations, along with international experts, local authorities and foreign guests, are expected to join the congress at the Grand Hotel to discuss growing threats to human rights and possible responses to such challenges, TAHR secretary-general Chiu Ee-lin (邱毅) said.

Legislative Speaker Su Jia-chyuan (蘇嘉全) and Minister of Foreign Affairs Joseph Wu (吳敦義) have been invited to attend, she added.

The congress, held once every three years, is a great opportunity for human rights defenders from around the world to share their experiences, FIDH CEO Eleonore Morel said.

Issues on the agenda are to include climate change, digital technology, artificial intelligence, LGBT rights, women’s rights and Aboriginal communities, she said.

“The congress will be one of the largest human rights events that Taiwan has ever hosted and a great opportunity for its government and civil society to engage in a productive dialogue on global issues,” TAHR board member Wu Jia-zhen (吳嘉珍) said.

It would be the perfect opportunity to reaffirm that human rights are universal and that civil society worldwide can work together to fight for common causes, she added.

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