

Taiwan can play role in post-virus era, Wu says

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Minister of Foreign Affairs Joseph Wu in Taipei on Tuesday takes part in a teleconference organized by the Washington-based German Marshall Fund of the United States.

Photo courtesy of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Taiwan could play a significant part in a global restructuring of production lines and the supply chain of critical materials in the post-COVID-19 era, Minister of Foreign Affairs Joseph Wu (吳敦義) said on Tuesday during a virtual discussion held by Washington-based think tank the German Marshall Fund of the United States (GMF).

A restructuring of the supply chain is being discussed all around the world, Wu said.

Critical materials supplied by Taiwan seem to be helping the international community, he added.

Playing a significant part in a restructuring of the supply chain of critical materials would be a “very good role for Taiwan,” Wu said.

“I think there are already very good friends either from the United States or from Europe ... saying that they are looking at Taiwan as a natural partner in this type of restructuring,” he said. “We’ll be very happy to participate in this regard.”

The hour-long discussion, titled “The Post-Pandemic Order: Navigating Approaches to China,” was part of the GMF’s Brussels Forum and moderated by GMF senior visiting fellow Noah Barkin.

US senators Marsha Blackburn and Chris Coons, and European Parliament member Reinhard Butikofer were among the speakers who participated in the discussion.

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Wu also spoke about the pressure Taiwan has faced from China.

“If you look at the situation in this part of the world, Taiwan is not the only country that is suffering from Chinese pressure,” Wu said, giving as examples a border conflict between China and India, a territorial dispute between Japan and China in the East China Sea, and the expected passage of national security legislation in Hong Kong.

“For Taiwan, we have been dealing with the pressure coming from China for years and years ... but in the period of the pandemic, we are feeling more heat from China — from a more assertive China — than ever,” he said.

While Taiwan has been dealing with military and diplomatic pressure from China for years, Wu said that it has gotten worse in the past few months.

“I think that we are seeing two competing paradigms in dealing with COVID-19,” he said. “On the one hand is democracy and transparency; on the other is authoritarianism.”

Wu said that he believes this competition extends beyond the handling of the pandemic.

“There are also two philosophies, two ways of life,” he said. “I think Taiwan is very clear: We are standing on the side of democracy.”

Taiwan feels Chinese pressure “more than any other country,” he said.

“If we stand strong, I’m sure all other democracies will feel that they have a hope in dealing with China as well,” he added.

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