

Coalition to push US trade deal

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US-Taiwan Business Council president Rupert Hammond-Chambers speaks in Annapolis, Maryland, on October 28, 2018.

Photo: CNA

The American Chamber of Commerce in Taipei (AmCham Taipei) and the Arlington, Virginia-based US-Taiwan Business Council yesterday announced they had formed a coalition to push for a bilateral trade agreement (BTA) between Taiwan and the US.

“A US-Taiwan BTA would allow the two sides to enhance their trade relationship based on mutual trust and shared values, and take full advantage of the complementarity of their industries,” the coalition said in a statement.

The coalition said that it would bind together all who support a BTA, leveraging and coordinating resources to construct a broad base of support in all regions of Taiwan and the US, and from all sectors of the economy.

A stable and economically vibrant Taiwan is in the best interests of the US and its regional allies, it added.

Now is the opportune moment to take tangible steps toward completing a Taiwan-US trade agreement, AmCham Taipei president Leo Seewald said, adding that he hopes the coalition can provide the momentum required to get the process started.

Taiwan-US ties have improved in the past few years and President Tsai Ing-wen (蔡英文) last month announced that Taiwan would ease restrictions on imports of US beef and pork, Seewald added.

AmCham Taipei is the most influential international business organization in Taiwan, with about

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1,000 members from more than 500 companies in the global business community.

Many members have been in Taiwan for decades and are deeply vested in the economy's success.

Council president Rupert Hammond-Chambers said that Tsai's announcement opens the door to a market liberalization trade agreement.

Taiwan made a commitment to trade liberalization, but for many years the commitment remained unfulfilled, the council said.

"That is now no longer the case... The US business community believes that the removal of this barrier affords both parties a way to move forward on a bilateral trade agreement," Hammond-Chambers said.

Linking Taiwan trade liberalization to the US-China trade relationship is wrong, he said.

Rather, the US can pursue its commercial interests with China while working to achieve a trade agreement with Taiwan, Hammond-Chambers said.

"To place a hold on progress with Taiwan, a top 10 trading market, over Chinese concerns is self-censorship and contrary to American interests," he said.

The council is a non-profit organization that is wholly funded by its member companies, which have business interests in Taiwan and vary in size from one-person consulting firms to large multinational corporations.

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