

UK motion seeks to bolster Taiwan ties

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A Union flag flutters near the British Houses of Parliament in London on March 13, 2017.

Photo: AFP

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs yesterday thanked British lawmakers for passing a motion to enhance security cooperation with Taiwan and support its bid for international recognition.

Members of the British House of Commons on Thursday unanimously voted for the motion following discussions over UK-Taiwan friendship and cooperation presided over by MPs Alicia Kearns and Bob Stewart — who are cochairs of the China Research Group and British-Taiwanese All-Party Parliamentary Group respectively.

Several lawmakers called for a free-trade deal with Taiwan and supporting Taipei's bid to enter the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership.

It is London's policy to support Taiwan's efforts to participate in the WHO, International Civil Aviation Organization and Interpol, the motion said.

It urges the British government to facilitate the exchange of visits by senior officials and monitor Beijing's disruptions of the rules-based international order, including encroaching on Taiwan's air defense identification zone, and the use of hacking and hybrid warfare.

The UK should work with the US and other democratic countries to protect the right of Taiwanese to decide their future, the lawmakers said.

The motion also expressed approval for Taiwan's bilingualism project and Britain's intent to enhance cooperation on education initiatives with Taiwan.

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“Other like-minded countries are increasingly appreciative of the need to band together against authoritarianism and economic coercion,” the Ministry of Foreign Affairs said in a statement.

The ministry also condemned Chinese military incursions into Taiwan’s air defense identification zone, adding: “Taiwan is not alone and it has on multiple occasions defeated that authoritarian state’s attempts at intimidation.”

Taiwan would build on the solid foundation of Taiwan-UK friendship, maintain channels of dialogue and seek to deepen the partnership through innovative policy, it said.

Members of the British parliament’s Foreign Affairs Committee are to visit Taiwan on Saturday next week to offer their support in dealing with Chinese pressure, committee chairman Tom Tugendhat said on Thursday.

“I am very much looking forward to the opportunity to visit Taiwan and show that the UK will stand up for the protection of the island’s democratic values under increased pressure from Beijing,” said Tugendhat, who is to be part of the nine-person delegation.

It would be the first time a delegation from the committee has visited Taiwan since 2006.

The trip is not only a long overdue opportunity for British lawmakers to display solidarity with Taiwan, but also a chance to learn, said Tugendhat, one of five British MPs punished by Beijing last year for spreading what it called “lies and disinformation” about China.

Taiwan has been on the front line of various forms of interference from the Chinese Communist Party, which has also targeted the UK, Tugendhat said.

“We must learn how we can deepen cooperation to respond effectively to threats that undermine liberal democracy,” Tugendhat said.

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Additional reporting by CNA

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