

Taiwan is already a sovereign and independent nation and therefore has no need to declare its independence, Vice President William Lai (賴清德) said at his swearing in as Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) chairman in Taipei yesterday.

Lai, who is regarded as the frontrunner to secure the DPP's nomination for next year's presidential election, made the comment after being asked to clarify his cross-strait policy.

Last month, he said it was to promote peace while protecting Taiwan.



**Vice President William Lai attends a news conference at the Democratic Progressive Party's headquarters after being sworn in as party chairman in Taipei yesterday.**

Photo: Johnson Lai, AP

As a leading DPP politician who has previously called himself “a political worker for Taiwanese independence,” Lai's recent comments are seen as marking a shift in the party's policy regarding Beijing.

The DPP would continue to stand firm on President Tsai Ing-wen's (蔡英文) four commitments in managing cross-strait ties under his leadership, he said yesterday.

Tsai's commitments are to defend the nation's sovereignty and democratic constitutional order, ensure China and Taiwan are not subordinate to each other, resist annexation or encroachment upon Taiwan's sovereignty, and guarantee that Taiwan's future is determined by Taiwanese alone, he said.

## Taiwan already independent, Lai says

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Asked to comment on his strategy to settle the differences between Taipei and Beijing, Lai said that China's constant rhetorical attacks, military threats and efforts to alter the "status quo" are to blame for the rise in tensions, which is a problem Taiwan cannot resolve on its own.

Asked about his strategy to settle the differences between the two sides, Lai said that Taiwan cannot be expected to alleviate regional tensions caused by Beijing.

China should seek common ground with Taiwan and join forces in the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic, disasters and other humanitarian crises, which would benefit ordinary Chinese, he said.

Lai — who took the reins of the DPP from Kaohsiung Mayor Chen Chi-mai (陳其邁), who was acting chairman — announced reforms to restore the party's electoral competitiveness following its rout in the nine-in-one local elections last year.

The reforms include purging corruption and dealing with members accused of breaching academic ethics, he said.

The DPP would improve the role of the democratic process to promote talent, restore its standing among diverse social forces and better respond to the needs of young people, he said.

The party's platform to protect and promote democracy, peace and prosperity would be carried out by policies that emphasize the economy, societal issues, national defense and peace, Lai said.

The DPP must continue to create blueprints to develop the nation and share the fruits of economic growth without excluding any societal groups, he said.

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The party should address the gap between rich and poor people, facilitate the creation of a tolerant and harmonious society, and ensure that peace and stability prevail in the Indo-Pacific region, he said.

Additional reporting by CNA

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