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Taiwan Belongs to World, Not China: VP Lu
TAIPEI, CNA

Vice President Annette Lu said Wednesday that looking from a global vantage point, Taiwan does not belong to China; rather it belongs to the world.

Lu made the remarks in a video conference organized by the New York based think tank -- the Council on Foreign Relations.

In her opening remarks delivered at her office in Taipei, Lu said, new generations of Taiwanese are developing their own unique experience of China different from their elders.

Quoting the results of a recent survey conducted by universities in Taiwan, Japan and Hong Kong, Lu said 60 percent of people in Taiwan now consider themselves "Taiwanese," compared to 18 percent in 1992.

With less and less young people share the "China experience" that had previously defined a generation of "Chinese on Taiwan," Lu said the leaders on both sides of the Taiwan Strait should define cross-strait relations with new thoughts and new vision.

"Taiwan and China are relatives ethnically and close neighbors geographically," Lu said, adding that there is no reason for the two sides to resent or to fight against each other.

Constructive engagement and normalization of cross-strait relationships should be based on the three Cs, namely cooperation, co-existence and co-prosperity, Lu said.

Similarly, Lu said, the international community should also re-examine the outdated and often misleading concept of the so-called "one China" policy, given the fact that Taiwan and China have been separate and independent from each other. "Only then can we find an effective solution to the cross-strait disputes," she argued.

Examining Taiwan's history, Lu further said the fate of Taiwan is not decided by China; rather it is tied to the affairs of the world.

Looking from a Chinese perspective, Lu said, one may see the inevitable merge of Taiwan and China. "Looking from a global vantage point, however, one will realize that Taiwan does not belong to China; rather, it belongs to the world," she explained.

In her speech, Lu also pointed out that Taiwan is now at a historical crossroad because of the three challenges facing it: the rise of Taiwan's national identity, the "magnet effect" of China and the acceleration of globalization.

After leaving its authoritarian past behind and embracing democracy at the end of the 20th century, Lu said Taiwan is developing a unique selfhood, which can be roughly translated as a Taiwan nationality.

While Taiwan's democracy has grown very fast, Lu said, its democratic institutions still suffers many legacies of the authoritarian era.

"Taiwan, as a young democracy, is experiencing what I called 'symptoms of a transitional democracy,'" Lu said, adding that deeper institutional reforms are needed to improve transparency and effectiveness of its government. "We must build our government based on the rule of law, and particularly, on a sound constitution that is fitting for Taiwan in the 21st century," she added.

The second challenge for Taiwan is the magnet effect of China, Lu said. "As China makes impressive economic gains, it has also developed different 'faces of power,' described by Dr. David Lampton in his latest Foreign Affairs article as guns, money and ideas."

The rise of China has an even greater impact on Taiwan than the rest of the world, Lu said, adding that China has stepped up the use of both intimidation and seduction to undermine Taiwan in six different areas: military, economics, diplomacy, law, media and psychology.

"China clearly recognizes Taiwan's strategic importance, as access to Taiwan is necessary for China to fully develop into a Pacific power," Lu noted.

Touching on globalization, Lu said that despite the deliberate exclusion by China, Taiwan continues to engage the world. In the latest globalization index, Lu said Taiwan was ranked 12th in economic integration and 18th in technological connectivity.

"Taiwan has risen in a unique way -- we have developed our own brand of soft power based on democracy, human rights, peace, love and technological progress," Lu said.

She also reminded the world that Taiwan has been a model of global responsibility in its compliance of international norms and in its contributions toward many humanitarian projects.

"Taiwan has demonstrated her ability and responsibility to the world, and it is time to recognize Taiwan's contributions, to respect Taiwan's national dignity and to treat Taiwan as a 'responsible stakeholder,'" Lu urged.

Stressing that Taiwan's future lies in the world, rather in China, Lu said Taiwan has embraced the world and the United Nations will open its door to Taiwan in the future.

About 50 think tank scholars and experts took part in the video conference, which was moderated by Jerome Cohen, adjunct senior fellow for Asian studies at the CFR and a law professor at New York University School of Law.

Cohen introduced Lu and Taiwan's current situation at the start of the video conference. Following her speech, Lu answered 14 questions from 13 academics based in New York and Washington, D.C.

During the question-and-answer session, Lu said it is hoped that the U.S. government can seriously consider allowing President Chen Shui-bian, herself and other high-ranking Taiwan officials to visit the U.S. capital.

Asked about Taiwan's past and present human rights issues, Lu said there is still ample room for the government to improve and deepen its human rights protection.

As to the possibility of Taiwan's planned constitutional reengineering provoking strong opposition and reaction from China, Lu said Taiwan need not declare independence since it has long been an independent sovereign country and has held regular direct presidential elections since 1996.

Noting that Taiwan's present constitution was initiated more than 50 years ago, Lu said many constitutional provisions have become obsolete and cannot fit Taiwan's needs. Lu said she hopes the outside world will let Taiwan write a new constitution to cope with its future needs and ensure good governance.

The video conference started at 9: 30 p.m. Wednesday in Taipei -- 8:30 a.m. New York time -- lasted for about an hour.

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