UNITE FOR PEACE IN THE WORLD AND TAIWAN’S INCLUSION IN THE UN

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Russia’s invasion of Ukraine is a reminder of how autocracies care little about causing death and destruction. The war is a gross violation of human rights and the principle of peaceful settlement of international disputes as codified in the United Nations Charter, which has helped maintain the rules-based international order and kept the world in relative peace since the end of the Cold War.

The war’s humanitarian and economic fallout has also shown that in a globalized world crises cannot be contained within national borders. It is therefore imperative to deter similar threats to global security from happening elsewhere. Taiwan—a democracy that is home to over 23 million people and that I proudly represent—continues to confront enormous challenges posed by China.

Since the mid-20th century, the People’s Republic of China (PRC) has vowed to take control of Taiwan and refused to renounce the use of force, despite never having ruled Taiwan. For decades, the people of Taiwan have remained calm in safeguarding the status quo of peace and stability across the Taiwan Strait. However, as China’s economic and military might has grown stronger, it becomes increasingly aggressive in flexing its military muscle to intimidate Taiwan, thereby threatening our democratic way of life. This includes sending warplanes and ships across the median line of the Taiwan Strait and encroaching into our air defense identification zones. It has also intensified gray-zone tactics, such as disinformation and economic coercion, in an attempt to wear down our will to fight.

The PRC’s expansionism does not stop at Taiwan. China’s use of gray-zone activities in the East and South China Seas are designed to expand its power and substantiate its hawkish territorial claims. In addition to signing a security agreement with Solomon Islands in the South Pacific, the PRC has been securing
ports for future military use in the Indian Ocean. All of these maneuvers are causing grave concerns that peace is becoming more difficult to maintain.

Ensuring peace and stability in the Taiwan Strait is in everyone’s best interest. Half of the world’s commercial container traffic passes through the Taiwan Strait each day. Taiwan produces the majority of the world’s semiconductors and plays a key role in global supply chains. Any conflict in the area would have disastrous consequences for the global economy.

In recent years, bilateral and multilateral forums have repeatedly emphasized that the peace and stability over the Taiwan Strait is indispensable to global security. While we can all agree that the war must be avoided, how to best do so requires inclusion, dialogue, and, most of all, unity.

The United Nations remains the best platform for global discourse. UN officials speak often of joint solutions, solidarity, and inclusion in tackling the pressing issues of our time. Taiwan is more than willing and able to take part in these efforts.

However, Taiwan continues to be excluded from the UN due to China’s distortion of UN General Assembly Resolution 2758. This resolution neither states that Taiwan is a part of the PRC nor gives the PRC the right to represent the people of Taiwan in the UN and its specialized agencies. In fact, the resolution only determines who represents the member state China, a fact that the international community and China itself recognized following the relevant vote in 1971. The subsequent misrepresentation of Resolution 2758 contradicts the basic principles upheld by the UN Charter and must be rectified.
The 78th session of the UN General Assembly, which will center on the theme “rebuilding trust and reigniting global solidarity,” is timely in light of a number of broad global challenges. For example, the UN’s Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) were designed as a shared blueprint for peace and prosperity. Yet the most recent SDG progress report showed that just 12 percent of SDG targets were on track, while progress on 50 percent has remained insufficient. And on more than 30 percent, we have stalled or even regressed.

While there are no easy answers, the first step is dialogue. As a truly global institution, the UN can serve as a champion of progress. We call on the UN to uphold its principle of leaving no one behind by allowing Taiwan to participate in the UN system, rather than excluding it from discussions on issues requiring global cooperation. A good first step would be to allow Taiwanese individuals and journalists to attend or cover relevant meetings, as well as ensure Taiwan’s meaningful participation in meetings and mechanisms regarding the SDGs.

Ukraine’s incredible bravery and resilience have inspired countries around the globe. The war there has forged a new sense of togetherness in the world. Unity is crucial to pushing back against Russia’s aggression and to preserving universal values, such as human rights and global peace, more broadly.

It is vital to make China and other authoritarian governments aware that they will be held accountable and to urge them to settle differences through peaceful means. Allowing Taiwan to meaningfully participate in the UN system would benefit the world’s efforts to address pressing global issues. This would also demonstrate the UN’s determination to unite for global peace at a critical juncture when the future of the world is at stake.
We are stronger together. Now is the time to act on this fundamental principle by including Taiwan.