

Opening Remarks & Welcome Remarks

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Host :

Sunny-wei WANG (王威元) / President of Taiwan Councilors Forum (TCF),
Councilor of New Taipei City

Co-host :

Chin-chang LIN (林晉章) / Honorary President of Taiwan Councilors Forum (TCF)

Remarks by Special Guests :

MA Ying-jeou (馬英九) / Former R.O.C. President

CHEN Shih-chung (陳時中) / Chief Commander of Taiwan Central Epidemic
Command Center, Minister of Ministry of Health and Welfare

Live Streaming Video on Youtube

[Youtube Video \(CHEN Shih-chung 陳時中\)](#)

Chin-chang LIN (林晉章 / Honorary President of Taiwan Councilors Forum) :

We are officially starting our 5th Asian Councils Forum, 2021. First, I'd like to invite our host, Taiwan Councilors Forum chairperson. He's also a New Taipei City councilor, Mr. Sunny-wei Wang, to give us the opening remark.

Sunny-wei WANG (王威元 / President of Taiwan Councilors Forum) :

Good morning, I am the TCF chairperson, as well as New Taipei City councilor. My name is Sunny-wei Wang. Welcome to the online meeting. Because of the second year of the pandemic, we can only see each other online.

This is the 5th Asian Councils Forum organized by TCF. In 2015, Taiwan, Japan, and the Philippines initiated the ACF. In 2016, the Philippines Councilors League (PCL), organized the very first ACF. And in 2017 and 2019, the second and fourth ACF were hosted by Taiwan. In 2018, Japan hosted the third ACF.

Last year, in 2020, we didn't have a meeting because of the pandemic. But this year, the pandemic continues to impact the world. In September, TCF received an inquiry from President Matzuda of Japan. We did not want this meeting to be interrupted by the pandemic, so we decided to host and organize the 5th ACF event within three months. Well, we look forward that one day the pandemic is over, and we will be able to return to our normal life.

Since the outbreak of the Covid-19 epidemic early last year and its wide ranging effects on all groups of society, prevention and control of the epidemic have become the most

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prevalent topics. It seems that the methods of the government's epidemic prevention measures, actions and the allocation of public resources have not yet received extensive discussion and attention from the public, for example, what domestic and foreign corresponding strategies can be used as a reference. Given this year's theme "The Issues and Strategies of the Epidemic Prevention Measures during/after the Epidemic" the keynote speech, international forum and panel discussion sessions will be covering pandemic prevention issues. The topics of the discussion will be focused on "Domestic Violence during/after the Epidemic," "Community Care during/after the Epidemic," "Support for Disadvantaged Groups during/after the Epidemic," "Make-Up Plan for Compulsory Education during/after the Epidemic," "Local Economy during/after the Epidemic," and "Zero Infection Control during/after the Epidemic." Not only does the arrangement allow all participants to discuss and brainstorm throughout the conference, but we also provide simultaneous interpreting services and live streaming to help with immediate communication. The videos of the six discussion sessions will be uploaded on Youtube. There are four goals of the above-mentioned discussion arrangement: Short-term goal is to exchange the experience of local governance and guide governments and councils at all levels to think about how to respond in a timely manner and plan properly; medium-term goal is engaged with political knowledge exchange and networking; long-term goal is going to institution learning and connecting with the world.

TCF hosted the first two Global Councils Forums (GCF) in 2014 and 2015. Since 2016 to 2021, there were 21 countris attending the ACF meeting hosted by TCF, including TCF (Taiwan), Japan (JLCA), Europe (CALRE), United States (NCSL), Philippines (PCL), Brazil (UNALE), Pakistan (LCAP), Spain GALICIA Regional Council, Italy Lombard Regional Council, Hong Kong Community Governance Forum, Tuvalu (Local Councils of Clan, Funafuti, Tuvalu), Penang State Legislative Assembly of Malaysia, Bandung City Council of Indonesia, Bangkok City Council of Thailand, Koro State Council of Palau, Sri Lanka (FSLGA), National Parliament Speakers Association of South Korea, Ulaanbaatar City Council of Mongolia, Vietnam, France, and China. We've had the councilor alliance from twenty countries and regions, as well as councilors, scholars and experts.

This year, because the meeting is online, we cannot communicate face-to-face. We are only providing English, Chinese, and Japanese interpretations services. Because of the language barrier, it's more difficult for us to communicate online this year. Despite that, we still have representatives from Taiwan, Japan, the Philippines, Pakistan, Malaysia, Tuvalu, and Indonesia. Once again, thank you, and I would like to wish this meeting a great success. Merry Christmas and Happy New Year, thank you.

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Chin-chang LIN (林晉章/Honorary President of Taiwan Councilors Forum) :

Thank you, Chairman Wang, for the opening remarks from TCF. Next, we would like to invite the former president of the Republic of China, Ma Ying-jeou, who paid a lot of attention to the activities of ACF. He has received councilor representatives at the presidential office for the event in 2014 and 2015, and delivered a congratulatory remark at our forum in 2019. This year, he has recorded a video to extend his congratulations to us. Let's welcome former president Ma Ying-jeou to deliver the remarks for us.

MA Ying-jeou (馬英九/Former R.O.C. President) :

TCF, Chairman Wang from TCF, Honorary Chairman Lin Chin-Chang, distinguished guests, good morning.

I had served at local governments. I'm very honored to have the opportunity to record the video for the 5th ACF, GCF, and TCF annual conference online. I would like to wish this forum a great success.

TCF, after the establishment in 2010, is sparing no effort in forming local councilors alliance in 2014 and 2015. The GCF was hosted in Taiwan, and after that, it has been promoting the ACF ever since.

Currently, there are three categories of alliances organizations around the world: first, the United Nations, formed by different nations' governments. Second, interparliamentary union formed by parliaments of different countries. Third, united cities and local governments, which is formed by various local governments.

And with your promotion, we hope that we'll be able to have the fourth category of the international organization: the Global Councilors Alliance. Last but not least, I would like to wish this event a great success. Happy New Year and Merry Christmas. Thank you.

Chin-chang LIN (林晉章/Honorary President of Taiwan Councilors Forum) :

I would like to thank former president Ma Ying-jeou of the Republic of China to deliver the congratulatory remarks for us. He mentioned that there are United Nations, the International Parliament Alliance, and also, the United City Governments. Now, we truly expect to see an international organization formed by local councilors. And in his remarks, he expects us to make it happen.

This year marks the 5th ACF meeting. In Europe, CALRE (The Conference of European Regional Legislative Assemblies) has long been hosting meetings. The

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United States, Latin America, and Australia also have similar organizations. We have been connecting with each other. We hope soon the ACF, in addition to inviting more countries to participate, will be able to share our thoughts with our peers in different regions and countries by forming the Global Councilors Forum or the Global Councilors Alliance.

Next, we would like to invite the Ministry of Health and Welfare, Minister Chen Shih-chung, who has been hosting the Central Epidemic Command Center for the past two years in Taiwan. We have been free of local COVID cases for 35 days. Unfortunately, we have the first local case in 35 days. Chief Commander Chen has been really busy during the past few days. But he still recorded a video to share with us the efforts and achievements what they have done in terms of pandemic prevention during the past two years. Now, please extend our welcome to Minister Chen Shih-chung.

CHEN Shih-chung (陳時中 / Chief Commander of Taiwan Central Epidemic Command Center, Minister of Ministry of Health and Welfare) :

Hello everyone, it is my honor to be invited to deliver the remarks at the 5th annual meeting for ACF, GCF, and TCF.

COVID-19 has been with us for nearly two years. In Taiwan, we've been working very hard to fight against the pandemic, and I would like to share with you some of our achievements in terms of fighting against COVID-19. I would like to divide my talk into several parts: the pandemic situation in Taiwan and in the global community, our strategies, and our experience sharing.

The global pandemic has been quite severe. As you can see, the lines go ups and downs, we have more than 265 million cases around the world, and the total death rate is around 2%. The pandemic situation has been fluctuating, and now we are seeing the fourth wave. Since the outbreak of COVID-19, different countries have been coming up with different ways to manage. But, so far, we haven't seen the end of the tunnel, especially when we have some variants recently. It is still uncertain what kind of impact it will bring.

In Taiwan, we've been controlling the pandemic very well. We have 252 days of zero confirmed cases. We had one major case in the beginning of this year, which involved a pilot and a pandemic prevention hotel. And starting from May this year, we have had community infections. More than 10,000 cases were identified. And we have more than 800 deaths during that period of time. But fortunately, with the support of the public and the central and local governments, we were able to control the pandemic situation in 108 days. At this point, we have 34 consecutive days of zero cases.

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The pandemic has impacted us in many ways, in terms of the economy and society. Segregation, quarantine, and other disaster prevention measures brought fears and problems; especially for the patients, confirmed cases, or even the medical professionals.

We've been working really hard to prevent this kind of social confrontation through good, detailed communication. And in terms of healthcare, we also know that although there has been a lot of pressure and stress for medical professionals in Taiwan, they have been working very hard to fight against the pandemic. So, we haven't seen the situation of losing the majority of our medical professionals. In terms of the economy, the export activity has been going well. And since we have really good pandemic prevention measures, we haven't seen any major disruption of our supply chain. This year's GDP, we will also grow by 6.09%.

However, the domestic economy has been affected a lot. Retail, business, and the hotel industry have been affected a lot. But with the control of the pandemic, we are seeing the recovery in these sectors as well. And from what I have observed, it's the same in all countries. During the pandemic, there were a lot of fake news which may affect the result and effectiveness of pandemic prevention. That's why we've been hosting a press conference every day to prevent the impact of these negative and malicious fake news.

Different countries have chosen different strategies to get the best results. But I believe all countries have been working hard in these 5 areas: board control, precision epidemic prevention, vaccines, medical security and open information. Taiwan, as an island country, has been controlling our borders well. Since we do not have that many cases, our goal is to have zero cases. Although vaccines arrived a bit late, we have been catching up. We are also trying hard to provide medical ssecurity and information disclosure for the public.

In terms of border control, last year, we encountered a lot of different situations. Starting from the beginning, we've been working really fast. In 2019, we started boarding check from December 31, 2019. And we have been controlling passengers from mainland China after the break of the news. And we also implemented 14-day house quarantine measures. We have experienced several incidents, but luckily, we were able to control the damage and minimize the impact. That's why we had 252 days of zero cases last year. During this time, we've implemented 3 custom screening plans. Last year, we had 14-day home quarantine. And this year, we modified the policy. If you cannot achieve one person per unit, you would have to check into a quarantine facility.

We continue to monitor the spread of the pandemic. So, for this year's spring festival

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or Chinese New Year, we require all people coming into Taiwan to stay at a hotel for 14 days. And if you have enough space at home to accommodate, you can stay in a hotel for 10 days and go back home for another 4 days of quarantine. If you are fully vaccinated, then it's 7+7+7. So you have 7 days in a hotel, 7 days at home, and 7 days of self-monitoring. And these are stricter measures compared to last year's because it's quite difficult to achieve zero confirmed cases. Basically if we have enough resources, we will be as strict as possible so we can really control the spread of the new variants and prevent the spread at the border of the country.

As for some incidents in Taiwan, one serious COVID situation began from a cluster infection of pilots at the Novelty Hotel in late April. There was an employee who was a confirmed case. But it was detected probably 12-14 days after the person got infected, so there might have been some community infection. We decided to do precision screenings and start pandemic prevention. We tested all 1,790 contacts, and all PCR results turned out to be negative. Overall, people who are affected by this incident are: the pilot of China Airlines, Novelty Hotel employees, and their family members. 70 pilots and 10 of their family members were confirmed to be COVID positive. As for Novelty Hotel employees, there were 7 employees and 3 family members. However, we achieved zero confirmed cases again after this incident.

This year, we had some major cluster infection events. The largest one would probably be the factory in the Science Park. It was an electronics manufacturing factory. It took us 4 weeks to control the situation. We cooperated with the local government. The central government set up a command center in Miaoli. We cooperated and coordinated with local governments and the central government agencies. We were all there trying to control the situation. We had 471 confirmed cases, but it was fortunate that we didn't have any community infections. Another incident was in Pingtung, which involved the Delta variant. These patients are the first confirmed cases of Delta variant in Taiwan within our communities. They returned to Taiwan from abroad. They're grandparent and grandchild. They were supposed to stay home during the quarantine period. However, because of insufficient control, they were active in the community.

We understood that Delta variant have been haunting most of the countries. It's quite serious. That's why we were very cautious, and we established test stations and conducted isolation and quarantine. We had 17 infections and 1 death. We were able to limit the spread of the variant and control the situation within a relatively short period of time.

Yet another event are the 127 confirmed cases and another 115 confirmed cases in the Huan Nan market. Many people usually come in and out in market places, and a lot of

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people travel in crowds. Huan Nan market is a wholesale market, and a lot of people travel all around the island. It was quite difficult for us to really to identify all the contacts and to really control the infection. We learned a good lesson from this incident, and we accumulated good experience.

And after so many incidents, we realized that in the future, there are some areas we need to make improvement in. We need to control the spread at the source. So, early detection is very important. And if we are able to identify the confirmed cases or contacts as early as possible, it's easier for us to control the spread. That's why we established many testing stations within communities. And we demanded some medical institutions that both patients and visitors need to be screened. And we also distributed rapid testing kits to citizens to monitor their own situation. As for long-term care facilities, people coming in and out need to be tested constantly and regularly.

There are five major measures. First, setting up community hotspot testing stations. We also introduced the rapid testing kits for people to test themselves at home. And we focused on, for example, international airports, because it's high-risk area where people come into contact with foreign visitors and travelers. So those people need to do comprehensive and regular screening. We also tested wastewater and sewage. We were trying to identify some of the cases that were not detected and to understand the scale of the spread, and to use them as reference for future formulation of related measures.

Second, introducing technology such as artificial intelligence to improve the precision of our pandemic prevention. We launched some electronic systems to accelerate some of the testing of those coming into Taiwan. We established a platform where people can inquire the footprints of confirmed cases and hotspots of infections. We wanted to provide rapid, accurate, and timely information, so that people can steer clear of the hotspots. And we could also establish testing stations at these hotspots.

Third, as for vaccination, we didn't have any outbreak in Taiwan in March 2021, so back then people didn't want to get vaccinated. Very few people got vaccinated. With the limited number of vaccines, people were even wondering whether these vaccines would expire. We launched some programs targeting high-risk demographics and medical professionals, classifying them as Type I to Type III. Those people got vaccinated first. In mid-May, we had an outbreak of the pandemic and people rushed to get vaccinated. However, we didn't have enough vaccines then. Fortunately, we thank our friends from around the world for making all these donations of different batches of vaccinations, helping us to get through this difficult time.

And then afterwards, we continued to promote vaccination and people were more

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willing to get vaccinated. Things went quite smoothly. Right now, our vaccination rate has increased rapidly and significantly, and we were able to see the pandemic in Taiwan slowing down. We only had about 10 retrospective cases being identified since September 25. Since October 15th to yesterday, we have had 0 local cases. The willingness of vaccination lowered because most people have already been vaccinated. Now, we have a surplus of vaccines, and we came up with different promotions to encourage people to be vaccinated.

Right now, cumulatively speaking, we have over 30 million vaccinations in terms of number; 78.23% of the population who have gotten their first vaccine, and 61.34% are fully vaccinated with two doses. We want to achieve the goal of over 70% by the end of the year. And of course, there will be some bottlenecks along the way. As for people over 65, the vaccination rate is 80% for the first dose, and 74.6% for the second. But our original goals were higher. Because some adverse events of vaccinations were exposed on the news, a lot of people became hesitant to get vaccines. And because Taiwan is an island country, we need crew members of aircrafts. We need them to work so we get goods transported into Taiwan. That's why we demand that the crew members have a very high vaccination rate. You can see that the crew members have a vaccination rate of 99.6%, and ground crew members at 96.9%. There are five categories: Type I, II, III, V, VII, all of which have relatively high vaccination rates. But eventually, our goal is to exceed 90%.

Fourth, as for the report of adverse events, we have full transparency, disclosing all information for people to know. But the society sometimes overreact to these adverse effects, even though investigation have not been completed. Despite that, we still decided to disclose this information. Unfortunately, for some people, this information just further added to their fear to get vaccinated. But we still believe that it is important for the government to have full transparency in terms of information disclosure.

Fifth, protection of medical system. Earlier this year we had our first nosocomial infection event. It happened on January 11, and ended on February 23. There were 21 confirmed cases with 2 doctors, 4 nurses, 2 patients and 12 family members. It was in a hospital in Taoyuan. We eliminated the cases and eventually achieved zero confirmed cases. Through this experience, we once again accumulated the experience to deal with similar nosocomial infection situations in the future. Regarding nosocomial infections, it's not as hard for us to deal with one single hospital, but when the pandemic breaks out in multiple hospitals, I think we need to speed up our response time.

In terms of the overall medical preparation, we need to identify as early as possible, we need to be more rapid and timely, so we need to be prepared at all times. Therefore,

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early on, we had the response plan, and we reviewed this response plan and understood how to accelerate the triage of patients. We tried to clear out the bed spaces for patients. And we want to reserve more beds so that in case there is a breakout we will be able to treat as many patients as possible. And we also have in place a support plan of backup medical resources and personnel for the identification of COVID cases. If we have a large-scale outbreak, we will need to carry out triage of patients, otherwise our medical resources will be strained, and it will affect the overall pandemic prevention.

So, how we were able to send only the serious, severe cases to hospitals? Basically, we established a network for pandemic prevention, and combined that with our emergency medical care. We integrated all the equipment available, such as PPEs, and provide transparent information. We've been hosting press conference on a regular basis to make sure that we're able to clarify any rumors immediately so that everyone has the capacity and information to fight against the pandemic. I think this have been quite successful so far.

We were able to control the first wave of the pandemic. And with that experience, we should actively do more in the future. There are certain ways for us to implement better measures. We will continue to control the borders and make rolling adjustments according to situation updates. We will continue to improve our vaccination rate, and to prepare the materials and resources such as vaccines, medicines, and PPEs (Personal Protect Equipment). We will try our best to ensure the supply of these materials.

The pandemic situation keeps evolving, representing a challenge each time. Nevertheless, we can learn lessons from these experiences so that we will be able to control better when the next wave of the pandemic hits.

As we are facing the pandemic globally, different countries will be able to exchange ideas and data and contribute to the pandemic control throughout the world. With that, I would like to conclude my presentation on the Taiwan experience of fighting the COVID-19 pandemic. Thank you.

Chin-chang LIN (林晉章/Honorary President of Taiwan Councilors Forum) :

We thank Minister Chen for the very comprehensive presentation at the opening ceremony of the Conference of the ACF, GCF, and TCF. We once again thank you Minister Chen.

Next session is keynote speech hosted by Professor Chao. I will hand over the mic to Professor Chao.