

## Remarks of Deputy Minister Hsu on EADF on 06262019

President Liao, Dear EADF friends, Dear TFD colleagues,  
Honorable Ambassadors & Representatives, Chairman Chen,  
Chairman Hsu, Ladies and Gentlemen. Good morning.

It is great to see so many old friends of East Asia Democracy Forum, and it is also a delight to meet with new friends. I am honored to be invited to speak at this year's East Asia Democracy Forum. The Forum is an annual event hosted by TFD to provide a platform for democracy advocates and like-minded allies to exchange views and information for strengthening our shared values. The importance of the exchange cannot be overstated, particularly in this era of democratic recession and authoritarian aggression around the globe. We are hoping that the EADF and the Taiwan Foundation for Democracy can continue to be part of Taiwan's spearheading effort in advancing democracy and human rights.

Taiwan has been on the frontline of malicious cyber-attacks and disinformation spreading for years. The V-Dem in Sweden released a report this April which pointed out that Taiwan is on the top of all the countries that suffer from cyber attacks from foreign governments or their proxies. While we're fortunate to see that Taiwanese civil society groups have been quick to act and help social media users distinguish truth-based news from false, made-up stories, the government can do more than standing by.

As a democratic government, we refrain from placing curbs and walls on the Internet that many non-democratic regimes use without qualms. But guaranteeing freedom of speech does not mean tolerating hate speech or intentional falsehood that could in the end compromise our democratic and free environment. There is room and certainly proactive roles for the government to play, and here are some of the efforts that the government has adopted.

First, the Taiwanese government has started to issue rebuttals and clarifications via social media outlets by using easy-to-read and easy-to-forward infographics. These rebuttals are also made available to be published in the disinformation-busting section on chat application such as on LINE's newsfeed interface (LINE today).

Second, the legislature last month passed amendments to impose stiffer penalties on those who spread fake disaster and disease information.

Third, the government has also been more attentive to social media accounts that appear to be fake or continue to spread unfounded messages in social media groups, reporting them to the police for further investigation if necessary.

On the private sector and civil society, there are also numerous efforts. First, there are efforts taken by the social media companies. Take the company LINE for example, there are in fact more than 20 million active accounts in Taiwan where the population is 23 million. As closed messaging groups can be

and are formed on LINE platform, misinformation and disinformation can be forwarded easily and fast without public examination. In the hopes of coping with this menace, LINE Taiwan in March announced that they were launching a campaign to combat the flow of disinformation on its chat platform. The company has teamed up with non-governmental fact-checking partner groups to build on the application's newsfeed interface (LINE today) a disinformation-busting section where articles debunking misinformation and disinformation will be published.

Likewise, we are also glad to hear that Facebook has partnered Taiwan's fact-checking organizations to tackle with the disinformation problems by removing and de-prioritizing posts that are found to be deviating from truth.

Secondly, their individual efforts now have amassed to upgrade to further collective action. Just last Friday, the Taipei Computer Association has been joined with four major foreign social

media platforms, i.e., Facebook, Google, Line, Yahoo, and one domestic BBS platform, the Back Kick Kicking Industrial Workshop (the PTT), to promulgate the “Self-regulating Guidelines of the Prevention of Disinformation for the Practice of Relevant Industries.” This Principle was created based on the principles advocated by the “Manila Principle on Intermediary Liability.” This marks an important milestone of the collaboration between the government and the private sector in addressing together the challenge of combating disinformation.

To probe the origin of all these disinformation campaigns, authoritarian influence is the elephant in the room. In the case of Taiwan, the Chinese government has been relentless in asserting its desire to annex Taiwan in whatever means. We are not yet able to pinpoint China as the sole source of disinformation, as IP addresses can be hidden and bounced, and we have not yet 100% ascertained the connection between the Chinese Communist Party and some media outlets in Taiwan that trumpeted the red regime’s cause. But both the civil society and

the government in Taiwan are already more vigilant than ever of the authoritarian influence prevalent in the Taiwanese society, from the local political scene and business through education and entertainment to media outlets. On the street, just three days ago, there was also a huge crowd of more than one hundred thousand people gathering on the Ketagalan Boulevard in Taipei City protesting against the incursion and infiltration of China's influence in Taiwan's media. In the legislature, the civil society groups have recently been campaigning and advocating for the legislation that reins in foreign agents and influence, following the lead of the Foreign Agents Registration Act of the US and Australia's Foreign Influence Transparency Scheme Bill that was passed just last year. A public hearing was just held last week. The LY also passed the amendment to the National Security Act last Wednesday, levying heavier penalties on practices that jeopardize national security, including developing organizations and collecting confidential information for China.

The historic rally of more than 2 million people in Hong Kong

recently provides Taiwan and regional democracies an alarm of how the Chinese political power, particularly under its formula of “One Country Two Systems,” could erode and destroy the freedom and rule of law. Xinjiang’s situation worries us all the more. Under Chinese government’s full control, the region is now behind an iron curtain where people not only disappear but undergo brainwashing processes and disavow their religion and culture in the so-called “vocational training programs.”

With the expansion of China’s political and economic influences, particularly the Belt and Road Initiatives, China has further exerted its influence beyond its sovereign, through financial loans, collaborative projects, cultural investments, and political donations. As the Chinese Communist Party vows to embrace a “Commonality of Human Destination,” it is hard for us not to be chilled by what kind of world China envisions for the whole human kind given what they have done to their own people.

So, we the like-minded democrats, we shall have no choice but to work together, to push back against the authoritarian influence. We need to confront the authoritarian regimes' propaganda head on by demystifying the rosy picture they paint for their political system and red-flagging the financial aid and benefits they claim to be without strings attached. What's more, we need to positively reinforce our narrative of democracy with truth and transparency, reinvigorating & refurbishing the democratic institutions with creativity and open-mindedness on the one hand, and also to proactively defend and protect our democratic and free space on the other. I believe the East Asia Democracy Forum is a vital part of such endeavors. And Taiwanese people and government shall never hesitate to work with you. I wish this forum all the success. Thank you.