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**New Characteristics of Future Cross-Straits Relations and New
Challenges**

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In recent years, as seen from the course of observing the Taiwan Straits' situation, on the one hand, social activities in Taiwan were very active, and many people, especially the young generation, expressed opinions on some topics, and actively participated in social and political life, not only impacting Taiwan's political situation, but also exerting profound influence on cross-Straits relations; on the other hand, under the joint influence of the mainland, Taiwan and international factors, the cross-Straits relations and Taiwan Straits' situation maintained a steady trend of development.

Through analyzing and studying the current and future cross-Straits relations, we can see that though cross-Straits relations have encountered some new complicated situations emerging in Taiwan's society, overall cross-Straits relations have maintained the momentum of steady development and shown new characteristics. In view of the new characteristics manifested by cross-Straits relations, actively and properly handling new problems facing future cross-Straits relations is conducive to promoting and maintaining the trend of steady development of cross-Straits relations.

I. The current complicated situation facing cross-Straits relations and the mainland's Taiwan policy

The development and change of Taiwan's social trend is an important factor influencing cross-Straits relations. In the past more than one year, many major events happened in Taiwan, including the "Sunflower Movement" in March 2014, the "nine-in-one local elections" in November and the "Anti-Curriculum Movement" in July 2015, showing profound changes happening to Taiwan's social and political environment. These changes not only exert major influence on the current cross-Straits relations, but also bring about more complicated situations facing future peace and development of cross-Straits relations.

(I) Taiwan's social movements initiated localization and democratic transformation of Taiwan's society again

Localization and democratic transformation of Taiwan's society have major influence on the development of cross-Straits relations. In the Chiang Kai-shek and Chiang Ching-kuo Period, both Taiwan and the mainland formulated various policies from the perspective of Greater China, and both sides of the Taiwan

Straits jointly stuck to the principle and standpoint of “one China”. With Taiwan’s initiation of democratic and local social transformation in the 1980s, the starting point of various policies formulated by Taiwan changed and began to take Taiwan as the main part and view the mainland and the world from the perspective of Taiwan, and both sides of the Taiwan Straits had major divergences on the principle and standpoint of “one China”. In the later period of the Lee Teng-hui administration and the period of Chen Shui-bian, Taiwan’s social transformation showed an extremist tendency, localization developed towards “elimination of Chinese influence”, democratization developed towards “change of the name and Constitution”, “Taiwan’s subjective consciousness” went extreme, and thus a major crisis happened in cross-Straits relations. After the Kuomintang came into power again in 2008, Ma Ying-jeou revised textbooks again, stopped the “elimination of Chinese influence” by Taiwan’s society, emphasized “observation and implementation of the Constitution is more important than revision of the Constitution”, temporarily suspended localization and democratic transformation of Taiwan’s society, and ushered in a period of rapid development of cross-Straits relations.

However, in the “Sunflower Movement” and “Anti-Curriculum Movement”, the “subjective consciousness” of Taiwan’s society was enhanced again, showing the trend of opposing the “Greater China” consciousness. The topic of “revision of the Constitution” was mentioned again, showing that localization and democratic transformation of Taiwan’s society was initiated again. In the future, localization and democratic transformation of Taiwan’s society will bring daunting challenges to development of cross-Straits relations.

(II) The results of the “nine-in-one elections” show fundamental changes happening in Taiwan’s political environment

Taiwan’s “nine-in-one elections” ended on November 29, 2014. Among the 22 county and city magistrates, the number of counties and cities ruled by the Kuomintang dropped from 15 in the previous term to 6, and the population under its rule was about 5.82 million, accounting for only 24.85% of Taiwan’s total population; the number of counties and cities ruled by the Democratic Progressive Party increased from 6 to 13, and the population under its rule was about 14.44 million, accounting for about 61.67% of Taiwan’s total population. Besides, three independents were elected. The Democratic Progressive Party’s local political power was significantly expanded.

After the “nine-in-one elections” ended, the Democratic Progressive Party’s morale was greatly boosted. Since Chairwoman of the Democratic Progressive Party Tsai Ing-wen and “Vice President of the Legislative Yuan” Hung Hsiu-chu were officially elected as the candidates of the Democratic Progressive Party and the Kuomintang for Taiwan’s 2016 “general election”, Tsai Ing-wen’s support rate

has been much higher than that of Hung Hsiu-chu. The opinion poll results released by the Taiwan Competitiveness Forum show, “The results on the 2016 candidates’ support: the 36% support rate of Chairwoman of the Democratic Progressive Party Tsai Ing-wen is the highest, followed by the 26.9% support rate of ‘Vice President of the Legislative Yuan’ Hung Hsiu-chu; the 15.5% support rate of James Soong Chu-yu is the lowest. Besides, 96.6% of people think James Soong Chu-yu’s participation makes it easier for Tsai Ing-wen to be elected.” It is quite possible that the Democratic Progressive Party will win Taiwan’s 2016 “general election” and at the same time win much more seats in the election of “legislators”. Then, the balance of political power between the Democratic Progressive Party and the Kuomintang will be fundamentally reversed, and major changes will happen to Taiwan’s political environment.

In July 2014, Chairwoman of the Democratic Progressive Party Tsai Ing-wen said when interviewed by the *CommonWealth* magazine, “The greatest challenge to the Democratic Progressive Party is that we must do well in the 2014 ‘nine-in-one’ elections. If we do well, then even China will make adjustments towards the direction of the Democratic Progressive Party.” Tsai Ing-wen further stated: “When China makes adjustments, Americans will have nothing to say.” With the significant rise of the Democratic Progressive Party’s political power, the driving force behind further adjustment of the Democratic Progressive Party’s cross-Straits policy is also obviously absent. Changes in Taiwan’s political environment will bring daunting challenges to development of cross-Straits relations.

(III) In light of the complicated situation emerging on the Taiwan Island, the mainland has clearly expressed the basic standpoint of its Taiwan policy

In view of the complicated situation facing cross-Straits relations, in the past year, General Secretary Xi Jinping received Honorary Chairman of the Kuomintang Lien Chan and Chairman of the People First Party James Soong Chu-yu successively, met with the joint visiting delegation of Taiwan’s peaceful reunification groups, and systematically elaborated the basic principles of the mainland’s Taiwan policy. The Taiwan Affairs Office of the State Council PRC also used various opportunities to publicize the mainland’s Taiwan policy according to these basic principles. On August 6, 2015, at the 12th Cross-Straits Relations Symposium held in Changchun, Jilin, Director of the Taiwan Affairs Office of the State Council PRC Zhang Zhijun indicated the basic key points of the mainland’s current Taiwan policy again in a speech. The specific content includes:

“Peaceful development of cross-Straits relations should go further steadily. The most important point is to stick to the ‘1992 Consensus’ and oppose the common political basis of ‘Taiwan independence’. The ‘1992 Consensus’ answers a fundamental question about the nature of cross-Straits relations, i.e. the mainland

and Taiwan belong to one China. This is the core connotation of the ‘1992 Consensus’. It is not empty talk coming out of nowhere but joint confirmation of the objective fact and status quo that the mainland and Taiwan belong to one China by both sides of the Taiwan Straits. It is history and reality that both sides of the Taiwan Straits belong to one China, but this will certainly be the case in the future. Sticking to this core connotation will exclude the option of ‘two Chinas’, ‘one China and one Taiwan’ or ‘Taiwan independence’. All responsible political parties need to clearly answer this fundamental question.

As long as compatriots on both sides of the Taiwan Straits go ahead along the road of peaceful development, the prospects will certainly be brighter and brighter; the Taiwan Straits’ situation will be more stable and peaceful; the fruits of peaceful development will benefit more compatriots on both sides of the Taiwan Straits; there will be more opportunities and more space for Taiwan’s economic and social development; under the precondition of not causing ‘two Chinas’ or ‘one China and one Taiwan’, the issue of Taiwan’s participation in international organizations’ activities will be handled properly through negotiation between both sides of the Taiwan Straits, and reasonable arrangements will be made.

It must be seen that the forces of Taiwan independence are obstinately and resolutely sticking to and promoting their separatist position, which is the biggest threat to the peace and stability of the Taiwan Straits and the biggest obstacle to the realization of the wonderful prospects of peaceful development of cross-Straits relations. We sincerely hope that peace and stability of the Taiwan Straits will last, and sincerely hope that the wonderful prospects of peaceful development of cross-Straits relations will be realized. However, on the major issue of maintenance of national sovereignty and territorial integrity, our position is clear and firm and will not waver at all.”

II. New characteristics of future cross-Straits relations

Development of cross-Straits relations is a long course. After undergoing violent clashes in the period of the Chen Shui-bian administration and rapid development in the period of the Ma Ying-jeou administration, future development of cross-Straits relations will show new characteristics.

(I) The basic framework of future development of cross-Straits relations has begun to take shape

The basic framework of future development of cross-Straits relations is formed jointly by the mainland’s Taiwan policy and Taiwan’s cross-Straits policy, and is also influenced by international factors. From the mainland’s perspective, the basic principles of the mainland’s current and even future Taiwan policy include

four aspects: 1. continuing to promote peaceful development of cross-Straits relations is still a main task in work related to Taiwan; 2. the goal of unification of both sides of the Taiwan Straits should be realized in the course of peaceful common development of both sides of the Taiwan Straits; 3. realization of unification of both sides of the Taiwan Straits should tolerate social differences between both sides of the Taiwan Straits and benefit people on both sides of the Taiwan Straits; 4. the mainland's firm will and determination to oppose separatist forces of "Taiwan independence" are clearly expressed.

From Taiwan's perspective, in January 2008, before Ma Ying-jeou came into power again, he proposed the new "three-no" model of cross-Straits relations, i.e. "no reunification, no independence, and no war", and Ma Ying-jeou explained "no independence": "What he means by 'no independence' is that he will not advocate 'the new Constitution', 'the Republic of Taiwan' or 'the State of Taiwan'." Thus, the Kuomintang established the cross-Straits policy with "no reunification, no independence, and no war" as the core. On June 3, 2015, the Democratic Progressive Party's candidate Tsai Ing-wen said in a speech at the Center for Strategic and International Studies in the United States, "Therefore, if elected President, I will push for the peaceful and stable development of cross-strait relations in accordance with the will of the Taiwanese people and the existing ROC constitutional order."

From the policies of three parties on both sides of the Taiwan Straits elaborated above, it can be seen that the basic framework of future development of cross-Straits relations has been initially established. The upper limit of this framework is that unification of both sides of the Taiwan Straits cannot be realized in a short time and that peaceful development of both sides of the Taiwan Straits will be a long course; the lower limit is that the Democratic Progressive Party that used to advocate "Taiwan independence" has accepted the "ROC constitutional order" and that both the Kuomintang and the Democratic Progressive Party have excluded the option of "de jure Taiwan independence". Between the upper limit and the lower limit will be peaceful development of both sides of the Taiwan Straits. It should be realized that the formation of the basic framework of cross-Straits relations not only results from the joint influence of the mainland, Taiwan and international factors, but also reflects inherent essential ties between Taiwan and the mainland, i.e. completely severing cross-Straits ties and realizing "de jure Taiwan independence" is impossible, and Taiwan and the mainland are bound to maintain ties in certain forms. Such ties are an objective need of Taiwan's social development.

(II) Adopting the bottom-up mode to promote various exchanges and cooperation between both sides of the Taiwan Straits will be another characteristic of future development of cross-Straits relations

With the establishment of the basic framework of cross-Straits relations, the possibility of occurrence of extreme states of cross-Straits relations is much lower, and the theme of cross-Straits interaction will not be abstract general concepts disputed intensely in the past such as peace or war and unification or independence but focus on specific problems to carry out dialogue, exchange and cooperation with respect to topics like cross-Straits social governance and people's wellbeing.

In view of the model of development of cross-Straits relations after 2008, since the mainland's Association for Relations Across the Taiwan Straits (ARATS) and Taiwan's Straits Exchange Foundation (SEF) resumed negotiation, ARATS and SEF have held 11 high-level dialogues and concluded 23 agreements involving multiple aspects such as economic cooperation, mutual judicial assistance, tourism and food safety, and cross-Straits relations entered the stage of "great exchange, great cooperation and great development". As Executive Vice President of the mainland's Society of Taiwan Studies Zhou Zhihui pointed out at the 3rd Forum of Cross-Strait Youth and Scholars, "Since 2008, both sides of the Taiwan Straits have formed the model of 'agreement-driven' development with negotiation, discussion and agreement execution by ARATS and SEF as important impetus." This is a top-down development model promoted by the authorities of both sides of the Taiwan Straits. However, in view of the actual situation of cross-Straits relations, the conclusion of these agreements did not produce the social effect anticipated by people. The outbreak of Taiwan's "Sunflower Movement" shows that rapid development of cross-Straits relations did not combine with structural conflicts such as political, economic and social ones existing in Taiwan's society and did not proceed from Taiwan's reality to effectively propel the solution of various problems existing in Taiwan's social development.

In future development of cross-Straits relations, dialogue, exchange and cooperation should be carried out, focusing on specific problems existing in the mainland's and Taiwan's social development. On August 18, 2015 the "Shanghai-Taipei Forum" was held in Shanghai. Discussion on the four themes of cultural exchange, smart cities, community medical care and youth entrepreneurship was carried out during the forum. These four themes are all topics facing both Shanghai and Taipei in urban governance, and each of the two cities has strong points with respect to these problems. The forum was a great success.

The successful staging of the two-city forum shows choosing to carry out cooperation and exchange with respect to specific issues facing both sides of the Taiwan Straits from the perspective of social governance is in the best interest of people on both sides of the Taiwan Straits. At the forum, the two mayors Yang Xiong and Koh Wen-je "agreed on the idea of 'priority of nongovernmental

sectors and government support' the most". This cooperation model is conducive to enhancing cross-Straits consensus in a bottom-up manner, establishing cross-Straits mutual trust and creating a social basis for ultimately solving political divergences between both sides of the Taiwan Straits.

(III) Adopting the mode of going towards each other to narrow the gap between the positions of both sides of the Taiwan Straits on some major issues will become another characteristic of future development of cross-Straits relations

The so-called "going towards each other" means "Both parties go towards each other face to face. Going towards each other is moving face to face towards the same goal. In narration of political issues, going towards each other is often used to indicate both parties have the same goal or the same vision." Both sides of the Taiwan Straits can only narrow the divergences between them on some major issues by going towards each other.

The normalized mechanism of communication between the departments in charge of cross-Straits affairs, i.e. the Taiwan Affairs Office of the PRC State Council and Taiwan's Mainland Affairs Council, is a case of both sides of the Taiwan Straits going towards each other successfully. The Taiwan Affairs Office of the PRC State Council and the Mainland Affairs Council not only represent their authorities respectively, but the establishment and existence of these two departments also show "both sides of the Taiwan Straits belong to the one China framework". On this basis, during the 21st APEC Leaders' Informal Summit in October 2013, Taiwan allowed officials of the Mainland Affairs Council to attend APEC meetings for the first time; Director of the Taiwan Affairs Office of the State Council PRC Zhang Zhijun and Minister of the Mainland Affairs Council Wang Yu-chi in charge of cross-Straits affairs also met for the first time and mentioned each other's official title. Later, both sides of the Taiwan Straits held three "Zhang-Wang summits" successively, marking a historic breakthrough in cross-Straits political relations. This was the result of the common efforts of both sides of the Taiwan Straits "going towards each other". Similarly, after Koh Wen-je became the mayor of Taipei, "he elevated the 'mainland group' under the Research, Development and Evaluation Commission of the Taipei City Government to a position directly under the mayor, with Koh himself as the convener and vice mayors Teng Chia-chi and Chou Li-fang as deputy conveners, and clearly positioned exchange between Taipei and Shanghai as "cross-Straits city exchange". He said, "We have defined exchange between Taipei and Shanghai as city exchange, so we have established a special mainland group for handling mainland affairs and an international affairs group for handling foreign-related matters under the Secretariat of the Taipei City Government. We know the differences between the two groups." It was because Koh Wen-je clearly explained the nature of cross-Straits relations, drew close to the mainland's

position and clearly defined the forum of the two cities of Taipei and Shanghai on both sides of the Taiwan Straits as “cross-Straits city exchange” instead of “state-to-state” relations that the mainland responded with good will, so the “Shanghai-Taipei Forum” was a great success.

In view of the above case of success, continuing to adopt the mode of “going towards each other” to address major divergences between both sides of the Taiwan Straits will be conducive to promoting sustained and steady development of cross-Straits relations.

III. New problems that will face cross-Straits relations in the next year

2016 is a year of Taiwan’s “general election”. In light of the current situation, the support rate of the Democratic Progressive Party’s candidate Tsai Ing-wen is still the highest by a large margin, and the possibility of the Democratic Progressive Party’s return to power is rising. Once the Democratic Progressive Party comes into power again, doing the following work tasks well will be very necessary to promoting development of cross-Straits relations.

(I) Fostering political mutual trust between both sides of the Taiwan Straits

Political mutual trust will be very important to maintaining stability and development of cross-Straits relations in the future. Former Secretary-General of the Taiwan authority’s “National Security Council” and Chairman of the Taipei Forum Su Chi stated, “Today’s cross-Straits relations have one aspect invisible but actually very important, ‘that is cross-Straits political mutual trust’. In today’s cross-Straits relations, the extent of political mutual trust determines the extent of economic cooperation. Areas beyond the reach of political mutual trust are also beyond the reach of economic cooperation.” He also emphasized, “Political mutual trust is accumulated, including personnel arrangements, public and private communication among Party and government officials, important speeches and many acts such as domestic, economic and diplomatic ones. They all accumulate political mutual trust.” The mainland’s position is “sticking to the 1992 Consensus and opposing Taiwan independence”. The Democratic Progressive Party must choose to actively accept the 1992 Consensus or passively avoid words and deeds for “Taiwan independence”.

Tsai Ing-wen said in a speech at the Center for Strategic and International Studies in the United States, “I will push for the peaceful and stable development of cross-strait relations in accordance with the existing ROC constitutional order.” Looking back at the Democratic Progressive Party’s history of development, we should see that the Democratic Progressive Party has undergone great changes from the establishment of a “party constitution for Taiwan independence” in 1991,

the acceptance of the term “Republic of China” by adopting the *The Resolution on Taiwan’s Future* in 1999 and Tsai Ing-wen’s full acceptance of the “ROC constitutional order” today. In the future, while fostering cross-Straits mutual trust, the mainland will give attention to whether Tsai Ing-wen follows the “principle of the ROC Constitution” or the position of “one country on each side”. For example, referring to the “mainland” with “China” manifests the position of “one country on each side” and violates the “principle of the ROC Constitution”. In the future, the Democratic Progressive Party should avoid words and deeds against the “principle of the ROC Constitution”. This is very important to establishing cross-Straits mutual political trust.

(II) Establishing dialogue and communication channels

Under the precondition of the Democratic Progressive Party’s exclusion of “de jure Taiwan independence”, establishing cross-Straits communication platforms is very important to preventing occurrence of misjudgment and accumulating political mutual trust. However, the Democratic Progressive Party refuses to accept the “1992 Consensus”, so the mechanism of communication between ARATS and SEF faces obstacles. In the future, the authorities on both sides of the Taiwan Straits should promote the normalized mechanism of communication between the departments in charge of cross-Straits affairs, i.e. the Taiwan Affairs Office of the PRC State Council and Taiwan’s Mainland Affairs Council, and take it as a platform of dialogue and communication between the authorities on both sides of the Taiwan Straits.

According to the provisions of Taiwan’s relevant laws, the Mainland Affairs Council is responsible for making overall plans and handling affairs related to the mainland. The establishment of the Mainland Affairs Council reflects the constitutional principle that “both sides of the Taiwan Straits belong to one country”. In the future, Taiwan should handle mainland affairs according to this constitutional principle and gradually promote establishment of working bodies on the other side of the Taiwan Straits. This will be very important to stability and development of cross-Straits relations.

(III) Various agreements executed by both sides of the Taiwan Straits should be adopted as soon as possible

Since both sides of the Taiwan Straits resumed institutionalized negotiations in 2008, they have held 11 talks in total and concluded 23 agreements. At present, five agreements including the Economic Cooperation Framework Agreement have not been adopted by the “Legislative Yuan” yet because after the outbreak of the “Sunflower Movement” in Taiwan, Taiwan’s “government and public” reached a consensus on legalizing the cross-Straits agreement supervision mechanism as

soon as possible. Chairman of Taiwan's Straits Exchange Foundation Lin Jointsane said, "In the future, cross-Straits negotiation will be greatly improved. The 'Cross-Straits Agreement Supervision Regulations' proposed by Taiwan's 'Executive Yuan' will be included into the course of cross-Straits negotiation first, including the communication and security check mechanisms, to make negotiation open and transparent and avoid unnecessary doubt of Taiwan's public." However, now the "Cross-Straits Agreement Supervision Regulations" are still stuck in Taiwan's "Legislative Yuan". In January 2016, after reelection of the "Legislative Yuan", the number of seats of the Democratic Progressive Party's "legislators" will certainly rise significantly. Whether various agreements concluded by both sides of the Taiwan Straits can be adopted as soon as possible after the proportions of the seats of the "Legislative Yuan" change will exert major influence on future cross-Straits relations.

(IV) The dispute over the South China Sea should be handled cautiously

The dispute over the South China Sea will be one of the major sensitive issues facing the Democratic Progressive Party after it comes into power again. On the dispute over South China Sea, the Kuomintang sticks to the position of the "U-shaped line" according to history. After her speech at the Center for Strategic and International Studies in the United States, the Democratic Progressive Party's candidate Tsai Ing-wen said in answer to a question raised by an attendant, "Taiwan should solve the dispute over the South China Sea according to international laws, especially the corresponding convention on the law of the sea, and the principle of freedom of navigation and peaceful solution of dispute." However, the dispute over the South China Sea is not simply an issue of freedom of navigation but involves the more complicated situation of the Taiwan Straits. First, denial of the "U-shaped line" involves territorial change. Article 3 of Chapter 3 of the Constitution of the Republic of China provides, "The territory of the Republic of China shall be its traditional territory. The territory and its division shall not be changed unless by law." Second, changing the territory of the "Republic of China" will certainly touch the bottom line of cross-Straits peace and make the mainland adopt tough measures. Third, changing the territory of the "Republic of China" will certainly cause turbulence across the Taiwan Straits and harm the United States' strategic interests in the Asia-Pacific region. Therefore, the Democratic Progressive Party's South China Sea policy will cause a series of consequences. Cautious handling of dispute over South China Sea bears on whether peace and stability of cross-Straits relations can last.

(V) Cross-Straits grassroots county and city exchange should be promoted

In January 2015, the “China Affairs Committee” guiding the direction of the green camp’s cross-Straits policy was established. The committee decided to prepare for establishment of “cross-Straits groups” specially responsible for handling cross-Straits affairs and promoting cross-Straits exchange in all the 13 counties and cities under the rule of the Democratic Progressive Party with Kaohsiung City as reference. Director of the Democratic Progressive Party’s Department of Chinese Affairs Chao Tien-lin said, “When Director of the Taiwan Affairs Office of the PRC State Council Zhang Zhijun visited the south in 2014, the Kaohsiung City Government’s cross-Straits group played the role of a window, not only responsible for handling all affairs of various bureaus and divisions related to the itinerary of Zhang Zhijun’s visit to Taiwan, but also directly contacting the Central Committee of the Democratic Progressive Party, so that the localities and central committee could get information in time.” Then the counties and cities under the rule of the Democratic Progressive Party established “cross-Straits affairs groups” successively. The establishment of “cross-Straits affairs groups” by all grassroots county and city governments of Taiwan separates cross-Straits affairs and international affairs and manifests the principle that cross-Straits relations are not state-to-state relations. “Cross-Straits affairs groups” will become platforms of cross-Straits grassroots dialogue and cooperation and will be conducive to promoting cross-Straits grassroots social exchange and cooperation and creating a good social atmosphere.

To sum up, in view of the current situation, whether the Kuomintang or the Democratic Progressive Party comes into power after Taiwan’s “general election” in January 2016, both parties have excluded the option of “de jure Taiwan independence”. This will become a new basis for maintaining stability of cross-Straits relations and promoting development of cross-Straits relations. Cross-Straits mutual benefit and a win-win situation will be realized by enhancing cross-Straits political mutual trust and practically giving impetus to various specific measures on this basis.