

Toward a New Era of Japan-Taiwan Relations

National Chengchi University

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It is a great honor to once again visit National Chengchi University—one of Taiwan's most prestigious universities—together with my fellow members of the Constitutional Democratic Party of Japan, CDP. We would like to express our sincere gratitude to Dean and Professor Yeh-chung Lu and Professor Shui-hui Li of the College of International Affairs for graciously arranging this invaluable opportunity for us to share our views and exchange ideas with all of you.

I was born and raised on a small island, Okinoerabu Island in Kagoshima Prefecture, near the main island of Okinawa and have felt a deep closeness to Taiwan since a very early age. My constituency, Yamato City in Kanagawa Prefecture, next to Tokyo has forged a special relationship with the Taiwanese “Shonenko” — young boys who were engaged in the manufacturing of fighter aircraft at the Koza Naval Arsenal in Japan during World War II. Even today, exchanges between the citizens of Yamato City and the Taiwan Koza Association formed by these former “Shonenko” continue without interruption. This enduring relationship has formed the foundation for the current friendship between Japan and Taiwan, often described as the finest since the war.

With the increasing incidence of wars and conflicts around the world, the international order based on the "rule of law" is facing a serious crisis. At this critical juncture, we must strengthen cooperation between Japan and Taiwan more than ever to safeguard peace in Asia and across the globe. For Japan, Taiwan is an irreplaceable partner with whom we share the universal values of democracy, freedom, and the rule of law. Thanks to the long-standing efforts of our predecessors in both Japan and Taiwan, people-to-people exchanges between our two nations have steadily flourished across a wide range of fields. Now is the time to elevate this relationship to a new and higher level of partnership and open up a new era together.

In recent years, concerns have been mounting over the possibility of a military invasion of Taiwan by China—a so-called Taiwan contingency. Should a military conflict or war break out in the Taiwan Strait, the consequences would not be confined to Taiwan and China alone. Such an event would have a profound impact on Japan's very existence, and

would inflict immeasurable damage on the entire international community. This is precisely why we must pursue deeper and more effective cooperation in diplomacy and national security in order to deter China from resorting to military action.

As a concrete initiative for forging a new Japan-Taiwan partnership, the first priority is to strengthen global security cooperation. In July of last year, the two nations' maritime safety authorities conducted a joint exercise simulating search and rescue operations at sea. Going forward, it is essential to expand such maritime cooperation into the broader realm of security, including its military aspects, and to reinforce multilateral collaboration. In practical terms, this means carrying out joint exercises with partners such as the United States, the Philippines, South Korea, Australia, and NATO, in order to stabilize the security environment within the First Island Chain.

The second priority is the sharing of military intelligence between Japan and Taiwan. By establishing communication channels between the Japan Self-Defense Forces and the Taiwanese military, we can ensure that information is shared in peacetime, paving the way to seamless cooperation in the event of a contingency. To further facilitate smooth communication, we should also accelerate the dispatch of active-duty Self-Defense Force officers to the Japan-Taiwan Exchange Association office in Taipei.

The third priority is the expansion of free trade. We strongly support Taiwan's accession to the CPTPP, the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership. With the United Kingdom having recently joined, the CPTPP has grown into a huge economic bloc, accounting for approximately 15% of the global GDP. Accession by Taiwan should enable it and Japan to assume the leading role in promoting global free trade and make a significant contribution to the growth and stability of the world economy, at a time when the United States is adopting protectionist policies.

Following the results of the Upper House election in July, Japan's political situation has entered a period of instability. However, even if there is a change of government in Japan—that is, even if the Constitutional Democratic Party of Japan comes to power—we will remain committed to strengthening Japan-Taiwan relations, and to expanding our cooperation in the fields of security and the economy as part of that. Please rest assured of this.

Finally, at the ongoing Osaka-Kansai Expo, Taiwan is presenting "TECH WORLD," a

pavilion where visitors can experience its cutting-edge AI and digital transformation technologies and its rich nature and culture. In 2027, my hometown of Seya Ward in Yokohama City will host the highest-level International Horticultural Exposition, GREEN×EXPO 2027. We are making preparations to ensure that exhibitors from Taiwan can also take part, so I am very much looking forward to seeing you all in Yokohama next.