

HKSAR Government responds to media enquiries on temporary suspension of operations of Hong Kong Economic, Trade and Cultural Office (Taiwan)

In response to media enquiries regarding the temporary suspension of operations of the Hong Kong Economic, Trade and Cultural Office (Taiwan) (HKETCO), a spokesman for the Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) today (May 21) said:

Hong Kong-Taiwan relations are a special component of the cross-Strait relations. Since Hong Kong's return to the Motherland, the Government of the HKSAR has fostered and developed Hong Kong-Taiwan relations in a pragmatic and steady manner. In 2010, the Hong Kong-Taiwan Economic and Cultural Cooperation and Promotion Council (ECCPC) was established as a non-official platform for discussing co-operation between Hong Kong and Taiwan, with an aim of enabling positive interactions between the two places. The HKETCO commenced operation in Taipei in December 2011 to promote economic, trade and cultural exchanges between Hong Kong and Taiwan, in accordance with the "1992 Consensus".

In recent years, Taiwan has grossly interfered in Hong Kong's affairs on repeated occasions and created irretrievable damage to Hong Kong-Taiwan relations. Most notably, Taiwan has launched the so-called "Hong Kong Aid Project" and unilaterally established the so-called "Taiwan-Hong Kong Office for Exchanges and Services" under the Taiwan-Hong Kong Economic and Cultural Co-operation Council (THEC), offering assistance to violent protesters and people who tried to shatter Hong Kong's prosperity and stability. The provocative acts of Taiwan are inconsistent with the goal of the ECCPC and the THEC, which is to promote exchanges and co-operation between Hong Kong and Taiwan, and also go against the founding purpose of the THEC. The Government of the HKSAR expresses utmost regret over Taiwan's actions.

Taiwan's series of actions in recent years has severely damaged Hong Kong-Taiwan relations, gradually jeopardising the operating environment for the HKETCO in Taiwan. On the other hand, staff members of the HKETCO have been threatened by radicals in Taiwan. These circumstances have posed uncertainties for the staff members and narrowed the room for promoting Hong Kong-Taiwan exchanges in various areas. As the HKETCO could hardly fulfil its founding purpose, and to protect the safety and rights of its Hong Kong staff members, the Government of the HKSAR has eventually decided to temporarily suspend the operations of the HKETCO. All Hong Kong staff members have already left Taiwan and returned to Hong Kong.

We will closely monitor the development of the situation and consider the way forward for the HKETCO in a holistic manner. During the HKETCO's

temporary suspension of operations, the Government of the HKSAR will continue to handle general enquiries and requests for assistance made by Hong Kong residents in Taiwan, as well as provide Taiwan residents with information related to Hong Kong, through the hotline services of 1823 and 1868 and the GovHK website.

The Government of the HKSAR reiterates that it will continue to handle matters related to Hong Kong-Taiwan relations in accordance with the Basic Law of the HKSAR of the People's Republic of China, the one-China principle as well as the Basic Principles and Policies of the Central Government regarding the Handling of Taiwan-related Matters in Hong Kong.