



Reinhard BÜTIKOFER

Member of the European Parliament

Dr. Tedros A. Ghebreyesus
Director-General
World Health Organization
Avenue Appia 20
1202 Geneva, Switzerland

Brussels, 31 October 2020

Dear Director-General Tedros,

As Bureau of the European Parliament's Delegation for Relations with China, we wish to draw your attention to the fact that, after almost a year since the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, Taiwan is still hindered from participating fully in the mechanisms, meetings and activities of the WHO.

As the COVID-19 pandemic continues to rampage through most parts of the world, having infected over 40 million people and taken more than 1.1 million lives, many countries are struggling to cope with a resurgence of infections. Taiwan, on the other hand, with just 544 confirmed cases, most of which were imported, and 7 deaths as of 21 October, stands in sharp contrast to the gloomy picture elsewhere in the world. In fact, since the beginning of the outbreak, the Taiwanese government has not imposed any lockdown measures, nor have school or business activities been seriously interrupted by the pandemic. The "Taiwan model" in fighting COVID-19 has been widely hailed as an exemplar of how to handle this unprecedented global public health crisis.

The keys to Taiwan's effective containment of the coronavirus are prudence, swiftness, forethought and an abundance of public trust in government. With advanced preparedness, as demonstrated by the rapid production of critical medical supplies such as masks at an early stage of the pandemic, the application of strenuous contact tracing, and the use of big data and digital technology to identify risk groups, Taiwan has effectively controlled the outbreak and mitigated its impact on the economy, civil society and people's livelihoods. Moreover, Taiwan has demonstrated solidarity with the international community, including most Member States of the European Union, by donating 54 million surgical masks, 35,000 forehead thermometers, 227,000 sets of protective clothing, and 600,000 isolation gowns, PCR test devices, and medical gloves to more than 80 countries around the world. Over the past few months, Taiwan has won worldwide acclaim for its effective anti-pandemic efforts and timely humanitarian assistance, and more than 600 politicians from 44 countries have expressed their support for Taiwan's inclusion in the WHO mechanisms and meetings.

Regrettably, despite considerable calls and support from the international community, Taiwan's participation in the WHO is still met with obstacles. Until now, the WHO Western Pacific Regional Office (WPRO) continues to refuse to contact or interact with Taiwan, thus denying Taiwan access to updated information on disease or border control measures by other countries in the

reinhard.buetikofer@europarl.europa.eu - www.reinhardbuetikofer.de

European Parliament, ASP 08G 162, B-1047 Brussels - Tel +32 2 28 45816 - Fax +32 2 28 49816



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region. What is more, Taiwan has no access to WHO COVID-19 Reference Laboratory Networks either, and more than 70% of its applications to attend the WHO technical meetings have been ignored or declined. This unfair treatment is not only detrimental to the fundamental health rights of Taiwan's 23 million citizens, but also creates a dangerous gap in the global disease prevention network. Just as you said in a press conference in August, "No one is safe until everyone is safe", we therefore should not leave Taiwan behind, especially while each and every one of us is grappling with a second wave of infections.

We are aware of the fact that Taiwan will not become a WHO member overnight. We also understand that the People's Republic of China is adamantly opposing the full inclusion of Taiwan in the work of WHO, assumedly because they oppose any formal recognition of Taiwan as an independent jurisdiction, separate from China. We strongly criticise however, that such concerns have been allowed and are still being allowed to stand in the way of a more effective international health crisis management.

We do not, at this time, raise the issue of Taiwan's formal WHO membership. But there have to be pragmatic workarounds to allow the full practical inclusion of Taiwan. That would be to the detriment of no-one and to the advantage of all.

We are aware that in the past there had been at times a higher level of involvement of Taiwan in the work of WHO. As a result of heavy PRC pushback against such practices the valuable contribution that Taiwan can make has been ignored. After all, the Taiwan health system has been rated as ranging among the 10 best in the world.

The World Health Assembly's general meetings were cut short in May due to the pandemic. Despite clarion calls from international like-minded countries, Taiwan was excluded from taking part in the proceedings. As the WHA is scheduled to resume from 9-14 November, we urge you to invite Taiwan to participate in the WHA as an observer and include Taiwan into the WHO meetings, mechanisms and activities, which would be in the interest of all parties concerned.

Sincerely yours,

Reinhard Bütikofer
Chair

Evelyne Gebhardt
1st Vice-Chair

Maria Spyra
2nd Vice-Chair

European Parliament's Delegation for Relations with the People's Republic of China (D-CN)