

# Executive Memorandum

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## Offer Real Support, Not Excuses, for Taiwan's WHO Bid

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Taiwan's participation in the World Health Organization (WHO) will be a major topic at the World Health Assembly (WHA) in Geneva on May 17–22, 2004. The United States should take the lead in supporting Taiwan's participation in the WHO and other international bodies because it is in the U.S. national interest. The more Taiwan is accepted into the international community as a valuable contributor, the less legitimate is China's claim of a legal right to use force against Taiwan. Delegitimizing the use of force in the Taiwan Strait also lessens the likelihood of conflict.

More immediately, Taiwan's participation in the WHO—even as an observer—is also in U.S. interests. In 2003, SARS (sudden acute respiratory syndrome), a lethal and highly virulent form of pneumonia, suddenly gripped East Asia, killing hundreds in Hong Kong, Taiwan, Singapore, Europe, and China. China's refusal to cooperate with the World Health Organization in the early months of the outbreak exacerbated the epidemic, and China's opposition to cooperation between the WHO and Taiwan complicated global efforts to control the outbreak.

In 2004, a new and lethal strain of avian flu slammed the agricultural sector in Southeast Asia and Taiwan. Yet China continues to use its permanent membership on the U.N. Security Council to block WHO cooperation with Taiwan's health

authorities. China insists—incongruously—that “since Taiwan is a province of China its interests in the field of public health can only be represented by the central government of China.”

**PRC's Callous Response.** In May 2003, after Taiwan's bid to join the WHO was defeated, the Chinese representative lectured Taiwanese report-

ers: “What are you arguing about? The matter is over, who cares about your Taiwan?” As *The Wall Street Journal* noted, “It was a particularly callous comment considering that China's own negligence led to the spread of the SARS virus to Taiwan, and Beijing then

delayed the arrival of WHO trying to help the island respond to the disease.”

The government of the People's Republic of China (PRC), of course, has never had jurisdiction over Taiwan. Instead of “caring” for the health of the Taiwanese, Beijing has followed a policy of isolating Taiwan from international health cooperation, hampering legitimate and important global public health cooperation in East Asia.

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- Taiwan's international acceptance delegitimizes China's right to use force against it.
  - Any moves that delegitimize the use of force also lessen the likelihood of conflict, and this is in America's interest.
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This paper, in its entirety, can be found at:  
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On March 25, the leadership of the Congressional Taiwan Caucus introduced legislation (H.R. 4019) that encourages the Secretary of State “to introduce a resolution on the floor of the World Health Assembly...in support of Taiwan’s participation in the World Health Organization with observer status.” The bill was passed unanimously by the U.S. House of Representatives on April 21 and is expected to reach the Senate floor imminently.

Although similar legislation was passed unanimously in 2002 and again in 2003 by both houses of Congress and signed by President George W. Bush, an unenthusiastic State Department declined even to mention Taiwan’s proposed WHO participation on the WHA floor. As a result, the WHA never entertained motions for Taiwan’s participation.

This year, however, the bill specifically asks the U.S. delegation at the WHA, instead of lurking passively in the background, to introduce a resolution supporting Taiwan’s participation as an observer. Japan and Canada have indicated that they would support observer status for Taiwan if the U.S. would also support it. In the past, without U.S. leadership at the WHA, China has succeeded in quashing moves for any participation by Taiwan in the WHO.

**Long-Established Principle.** Enabling the voice of Taiwan’s people to be heard in the international community is a long-established principle of U.S. foreign policy. Congress alluded to it in Section 4(b)(8) of the Taiwan Relations Act, expressing the view that Taiwan is qualified to be a member of “any...international organization.” President Bush reaffirmed this on May 11, 2001: “[R]ecognizing Taiwan’s important role in transnational issues, we will support its membership in organizations where statehood is not a prerequisite, and will support opportunities for Taiwan’s voice to be heard in organizations where its membership is not possible.”

Taiwan is a fully functioning state and a significant contributor to the world community. As the world’s tenth-largest trading nation, it is now a member of both the World Trade Organization and the Asian Development Bank. However, Taiwan’s voice is not yet heard in other international fora overseeing global activities in which Taiwan plays

a major role. For example, as a consumer of nuclear energy and a major producer of defense equipment, chemicals, and biotech products, Taiwan should be represented in world non-proliferation regimes, including the Nuclear Suppliers Group, the Australia Group, the Missile Technology Control Regime, and the Wassenaar Arrangement. Ironically, the PRC not only does not participate in any of these arrangements, but also has been identified as a primary proliferator of dangerous technologies. Yet PRC pressures seem adequate to prevent Taiwan’s participation.

**What the U.S. Should Do.** Congress should continue efforts to promote Taiwan’s participation in all international organizations as stated in the Taiwan Relations Act. The Administration should:

- **Introduce** a resolution explicitly calling for Taiwan’s participation in the WHO;
- **Instruct** U.S. embassies (unlike past practice) to make serious representations to host governments to support Taiwan’s participation in the WHA and other world organizations; and
- **Coordinate** with other major allies, including Japan and Canada, to gain a WHA floor vote on Taiwan’s participation.

**What Taiwan Should Do.** Taiwan should make WHO participation a top foreign policy priority. Before the United States approaches foreign governments on Taiwan’s behalf, Taiwan should make its own representations at the highest possible levels, particularly to Japan, Canada, and Taiwan’s other traditional diplomatic partners.

**Conclusion.** Even with U.S. leadership, there may not be enough time to generate enough momentum to overcome Chinese opposition at the May 2004 WHA. Nonetheless, American leadership is crucial to establishing the precedent of Taiwan’s participation in international organizations. This precedent will improve the chances of future successes, including inducing China to moderate its hostility toward Taiwan as new generations of leaders emerge in Beijing.

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