

Establishing a People-oriented Concept of Security

Globalization has forced a re-definition of all levels of human civilization, with the concept of security in particular having taken on a new meaning. As far back as 1994, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) started stressing the concept of human security. The UNDP equates security with the rights of individuals rather than nations, states, and military buildup. The focus, it argues, should be shifted from the arms race to a respect for humankind and basic rights. The central assertion of the report was that each person has the right to existence, free from threats such as disease, poverty, violence, and environmental disasters.

The contemporary world community is closely linked and mutually reliant. The issue of security is no longer something that can be addressed by a single nation or region. Rather, it is the responsibility and obligation of each member of the international community. As the world's 21st largest economic entity and 16th largest trading nation, Taiwan is keenly aware of its responsibility as part of the global family of nations. It is an active participant in international cooperation, offering Taiwan's advantages and experiences to developing nations, to create sustainable development models.

Since becoming Minister of Foreign Affairs, I have spent considerable time pondering how Taiwan can create more space for itself in the international community amid today's trend of globalization. Returning to the aforementioned topic of human security, the goal of globalization should be to achieve equality and prosperity throughout the world. In other words, each nation should maintain a perspective that transcends national concerns or those of a specific region. A country must think on a global scale, strengthening international development and cooperation operations, and working with other countries to address global issues such as poverty, hunger, disease, education, and the environment. It is precisely this type of thinking that will lead to progress in human security.

In Taiwan's case, engaging in development assistance concerns more than just promoting national interests: it is about staying in step with international trends in order to help realize global prosperity. Since sending a team of agricultural technicians to Vietnam in 1959, Taiwan has been involved in international development activities for nearly half a century. As Taiwan has expanded its assistance drive over the decades, the government has realized the importance of coordinating its limited foreign assistance resources. In response, the International Cooperation and Development Fund (TaiwanICDF) was created in 1996 to serve as Taiwan's sole foreign assistance organization.

The TaiwanICDF, with its superior planning, implementation, supervisory and evaluation mechanisms, coordinates capital, human resources, and technology into a comprehensive international development and cooperation platform that consists of banking and finance operations, technical cooperation, international human resource development, and humanitarian assistance. These efforts have created more room for Taiwan in the international arena and bolstered the quality of life in developing countries, helping to realize the goal of human security.

This year marks the 10th anniversary of the founding of the TaiwanICDF. The organization has chalked up many accomplishments over the years thanks to the efforts of everyone affiliated with it. Over the past year, the TaiwanICDF and 27 medical institutions from the Taiwan Nongovernmental Hospitals & Clinics Association (NHCA), along with Chang Gung University's School of Medicine, jointly established the International Healthcare Cooperation Strategic Alliance (IHCSA). This marked a new milestone in introducing civil resources into assistance and development work. In addition, the Alliance's support has helped to strengthen the treatment and training provided by our Mobile Medical Missions (MMMs), improving the quality of health care and medical personnel in developing nations. Meanwhile, also in 2006, the TaiwanICDF began managing the APEC Digital Opportunity Center (ADOC) on behalf of the Ministry of Economic Affairs' (MOEA) Bureau of Foreign Trade, taking advantage of Taiwan's world-renowned information technology (IT) prowess in coordinating development assistance and business opportunities. In this instance, the TaiwanICDF has successfully created synergy.

The TaiwanICDF participates in cooperative assistance and development, expanding its relations with international development institutions, which helps Taiwan to make room for itself in the international community in the face of its unique diplomatic situation. For instance, in 2006, the TaiwanICDF engaged in humanitarian assistance and technical aid activities in conjunction with Mercy Corps and Food For The Poor (FFP). We also signed an agreement for a contribution toward a Trade Facilitation Program with the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD), which is creating business and trade opportunities for Taiwanese firms in Central and Eastern Europe.

Over the past decade, the TaiwanICDF has gained considerable experience and expertise. In addition to our many achievements, a foundation for the future has been laid. Continued innovation and breakthroughs have enabled the TaiwanICDF to extend Taiwan's development advantages to its foreign assistance efforts. In the late 1950s, Taiwan's initial development assistance projects were primarily agricultural; half a century later, it now also offers assistance in many other areas such as health care, IT, and small and medium enterprise (SME) development. The TaiwanICDF is helping developing nations to replicate Taiwan's successful experience. To highlight these achievements, the organization has published an "Overview on International Development and Cooperation," detailing its efforts over the last 10 years.

On the path of international cooperation, history and the transmission of experience provide the foundation for the future. We must consistently innovate, and surmount all obstacles in order to reach new heights. Twelve years ago, the UN introduced its concept of human security, setting out a vision for the future of international society. Now, twelve years on, the TaiwanICDF, with its belief in "working for humanity, sustainable development, and economic progress," is striving to maintain that vision while representing Taiwan internationally in its development and assistance work.

As our first decade of work draws to a close, we must begin to map the direction our efforts will take over the next 10 years. With the publication of this annual report, I would like to take the opportunity to express my gratitude to those who have provided unwavering support to the TaiwanICDF over the years. I hope that even more people will participate in and discuss international development in the future, and that the power of the public, private and Third Sector can be coordinated to carry out development assistance. I also hope that we can work together to enable human security to be realized through concrete actions.



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "James C.F. Huang". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

James C.F. Huang
Minister of Foreign Affairs and Chairman of the TaiwanICDF