

Message from the Chairman

Sharing Taiwan's Expertise, Experience and Enthusiasm; Continuing to Champion Overseas Development

Cooperation and development are essential ingredients for progress in the world. Cooperation enables limited resources to be utilized effectively, while development redresses imbalances in the quality of life around the globe.

Over the past half century, Taiwan's economic growth has provided a model for developing nations to emulate. Today, Taiwan has the world's 21st largest economy, and is the 16th largest trading nation. Taiwan has never overlooked its responsibilities as a member of the international community. For many years, we have actively engaged in international cooperation, sharing our strengths and experiences to pave the way for stable, sustainable development in our partner countries. Yet if we are to truly help bring about global prosperity, our practices should be commensurate with international trends. Accordingly, as Taiwan has become more and more involved in these cooperative endeavors, the government has come to appreciate the importance of coordinating the nation's foreign aid resources.

As such, the International Cooperation and Development Fund (TaiwanICDF) was established in 1996 to allow Taiwan to integrate its limited resources for development work purposes. Operating within a transparent, effective framework, and combining its capital, human resources and technology, the organization helps partners to develop sustainably by offering assistance through four core operations: lending and investment, technical cooperation, human resource development and humanitarian assistance. For over a decade, the TaiwanICDF has not only attained greater recognition for Taiwan in the international community, but has also done much to promote the United Nations' vision of human security by substantially raising living standards in developing partner countries.

My first assignment as a diplomat with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) was in Lesotho, a small kingdom in southern Africa. It was there that I had my first opportunity to witness Taiwan's development cooperation in action. From then on, I formed close bonds with technical missions wherever in the world I was posted. Taiwan has played a significant foreign aid role for a number of decades now, and has witnessed many



changes along the way. Initially, technical assistance and cooperation between Taiwan and Africa was centered on a concept of "agricultural diplomacy," with various Taiwanese organizations making contributions. We then extended our assistance to handicrafts, medicine and health care, enterprise development, and information and communications technology (ICT), as well as to other regions. The eventual establishment of the TaiwanICDF brought all foreign assistance under one umbrella.

Our rich history of sharing experience with the international community in many ways reflects Taiwan's own development process. Moreover, looking back at Taiwan's emergence on the international development scene, we have come to appreciate how much our history and heritage can teach us as we push forward. Combining continuous innovation with Taiwan's own comparative advantages is the only viable means of replicating the success of history. And so it is that, in light of an increasing international focus on environmental protection, our projects now cover issues of environmental sustainability.

The wealth of experience and best practices that the TaiwanICDF has accumulated over the years are shaping the organization's future. Our policies will continue to exploit Taiwan's successful experiences, strengthen cooperation with international and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), set regional cooperation strategies according to local conditions, and integrate Taiwan's private sector resources. These efforts are helping partner countries to foster stable economic and social development, reduce poverty, and generate well-being and prosperity.

Still, in the face of globalization and growing interdependence among nations, we realize that we need to modernize the way we work. Taiwan's recent promotion of "flexible diplomacy" is designed to expand our international relations. As part of this, the TaiwanICDF can adjust its approach to its international cooperation and development operations by adding emphasis on increased professionalism and pragmatism. Similarly, Taiwan's foreign aid must consistently appeal to three principles: proper goals, legal processes and effective administration.

I always urge my TaiwanICDF colleagues to appreciate that, as individuals dedicated to international cooperation, we must always bear in mind how the world perceives Taiwan. Our technical missions must build accountability in the countries where they are stationed, and work in a spirit of togetherness. In addition to exploiting Taiwan's own assets, our missions need to consider what is practical and most helpful at a local level in each partner country.

The TaiwanICDF will continue to work closely with its domestic and overseas partners. In addition to giving assistance to our friends, we aspire to serve the world. Taiwan's enduring devotion to international cooperation and development will continue to make our world a better place. We firmly believe that, by extending a helping hand to those in need, there can be a brighter future for all.

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