

Message from the Secretary General

Reform will Boost the International Visibility of the TaiwanICDF

The history of Taiwan's overseas assistance can be traced back to an agricultural mission to Vietnam in 1959. Taiwan had cause to reflect upon this and subsequent experiences during 2009, when we celebrated the 50th anniversary of our nation's participation in international cooperation and development.

The TaiwanICDF itself was established in 1996, integrating the development work of other Taiwanese organizations into one central agency. As such, this anniversary marked a significant year for us as much as our country, as we stood at the crossroads between history and future, and reflected upon our endeavors. Over the years, the TaiwanICDF has initiated a range of key programs. In 1997, the TaiwanICDF Overseas Volunteers service began after five civilians were recruited to work in Swaziland; while in 1998, six overseas students arrived in Taiwan to take up scholarship placements in tropical agriculture. By 2000, the TaiwanICDF had joined forces with World Links to promote the understanding and use of ICT and the Internet, and 2001 saw our first group of servicemen from the Taiwan Youth Overseas Service depart for placements at overseas technical missions. In 2002, the Taiwan International Cooperation Alliance (TICA) was jointly established with six local universities; and by 2005, we were engaged in multilateral cooperation through the creation of a regional microfinancing initiative with likeminded international institutions. The formation of the International Healthcare Cooperation Strategic Alliance (IHCSA) in 2006 was followed by the creation of the Taiwan ICT Alliance (TICTA) during the next year; and in 2008, the World Trade Organization (WTO) Committee on Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures cited two of our projects in Guatemala and Panama as examples of best practice in aid for trade. The evolution of the TaiwanICDF continued throughout 2009, in response to new policies set out in MOFA's White Paper on Foreign Aid Policy. All of us at the TaiwanICDF are aware of our history and the great responsibility that comes with the work we do. We will continue to do our utmost to promote and implement the very best development initiatives.

I have served with MOFA for many years, and assumed the post of Secretary General of the TaiwanICDF in late 2009. In an effort to enhance the performance and international participation of the organization, I am seeking to introduce various reforms to the way we work.

I believe that the TaiwanICDF should focus on improving the quality of its own human resources and strengthen institutional capacity. Doing so will earn staff more credibility and enable us to secure the resources demanded by the



distinctive nature of our mission. The organization needs to be recognized as the leading consultant to decision-making authorities, rather than just an organization that implements projects on the behalf of others.

I would like to see us taking an active role in identifying the problems and requirements of our partner countries, and then using this analysis to validate project design. Our projects must demonstrate greater penetration during their implementation phases, and integrate our resources with those of various other government agencies and the private sector as effectively as possible. We should also focus on making the most of Taiwan's comparative advantages, particularly in high-tech sectors. Collectively, these measures will maximize resources, consolidate best practices, and reinforce the substantive impact that our projects have on our partner countries.

On an operational level, I envision our technical missions becoming increasingly driven by specific projects and goals. Projects should be handed over to partner agencies in line with timeframes agreed during their initial phases. Ideally, we should generally reduce the quantity of short-term projects we take on and focus on medium-term development, working to a project cycle of between four and six years.

Partner countries should be involved in every project from the preliminary stages, so as to gain an understanding of the technological considerations that must be factored into project design, and be better placed to replicate best practices when initiating projects independently. In order to ensure that project handovers go smoothly, we will continue to provide scholarships for specialist instruction at Taiwanese institutions, so that personnel from partner countries are well prepared upon taking charge. Acquiring the right knowledge should not, however, be limited to our partners: shifting development needs will also be reflected by an increase in TaiwanICDF staff with technological and marketing expertise.

I also hope that we can refine a number of programs. First of all, the recruitment and training of Taiwanese volunteers should occur with greater frequency. Maintaining a permanent reserve of qualified personnel is a flexible means of addressing the development needs of partner countries.

Secondly, we will reduce the period of local training for servicemen enrolling with the Taiwan Youth Overseas Service, to account for the shorter period of military service that the government is seeking to introduce.

Thirdly, future Mobile Medical Missions (MMMs) will focus on areas in which Taiwan exhibits particular strengths, such as treatment for cleft lip and palate, cataracts, and hip replacement operations.

Fourthly, international human resource development will increasingly focus on specialized workshops and courses, better rationalized to the development needs and skills shortages of participants.

Fifthly, selection criteria for entry into the International Higher Education Scholarship Programs will be clarified and published so that applicants understand language requirements and the specialized nature of the coursework.

Finally, we will widen the scope of our post-disaster humanitarian assistance, in response to the intensity and frequency with which natural disasters have struck our partner countries. Specifically, we will strengthen our efforts during the response phase in the immediate aftermath of a disaster, building the capacity to support the most urgent humanitarian needs of survivors and victims.

Much of the work I have described above was initiated during 2009, and will continue for some time into the future. With clear objectives before us, I believe we are laying solid foundations for the next 50 years at the TaiwanICDF.

Tao Wen-lung
Secretary General