



# Taiwan Ecumenical Forum

# 台灣普世論壇

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This newsletter is about the current effort by the people and the government of Taiwan to participate in the upcoming session of the World Health Assembly (WHA) due to take place in Geneva, Switzerland from 21 to 26 May. Since 2009, Taiwan has been invited by the World Health Organization (WHO) to participate as an observer. In 2017, for the first time, Taiwan was not invited to attend the WHA. Till now, Taiwan hasn't received yet an invitation to attend the 2018 session.

The Presbyterian Church in Taiwan urges all its partners to contact their governments to enable Taiwan to participate in the 2018 session of the WHA.

This newsletter seeks to provide some background information about the relationship between Taiwan and the WHO.

Since the election of President Tsai Ing-Wen in Taiwan, with a population of over 23 million and as the 21st economic power in the world, Taiwan has not been admitted to membership in the Interpol nor the International Civil Aviation Organization.

Many Taiwanese are perplexed by Taiwan's exclusion from the WHA because the WHO mission statement advocates "Health for All" and the inalienable "Right to Health".

Taiwan's healthcare system has been widely recognized for the quality and the access levels of its health system. In the 2018 session WHA will embark on a crucial 'Comprehensive global strategy on health, environment and climate change.' Taiwan has serious challenges to deal with air pollution because the problems are shared by neighboring countries. Taiwan's participation would strengthen its capacity to deal with such transnational health issue in cooperation with other countries in East Asia.

China has exerted its influence in all international organizations, including the WHO, insisting that Taiwan's participation should be in accordance with the "One China" principle. It considers Taiwan to be an "inalienable" part of China. The People's Republic of China has never ruled Taiwan, but views the "Taiwan Question" as an unresolved Civil War with the Chinese Nationalists of Chiang Kai-shek, who fled to Taiwan in 1949.

Participating in the 2016 WHA, the Taiwan government announced that it did not accept the conditions proposed by the WHO secretariat, namely that it should be identified as "Chinese Taipei." Speaking about the right to participate in the WHA, President Tsai believes that Taiwan should be allowed to participate in its own right, for according to the WHO charter, the right to health is a fundamental and universal right, and that is why Taiwan would contribute to the WHO. She believes that the right of Taiwanese to fully participate in the international community should not be restricted by any political framework.

According to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, mainstream international media have published 134 articles about Taiwan's bid to participate in the 2018 WHA, Among the most prominent are the Yomiuri Shimbun Japan and the Medical Journal of Australia.

At the beginning of April, Taiwan's government launched an English-language Web site titled "Leave No One Behind" that highlights the nation's dedication to global health. It also produced a three-minute documentary titled "A Perfect Pair" which shows Taiwanese efforts to treat a Vietnamese girl with lymphedema. This video had been viewed more than 4.71 million times and shared by several foreign government agencies, including the US Department of State, the Japan-Taiwan Exchange Association and the German Institute Taipei. In a bid to expand the reach of its messaging, the Taiwan government has printed WHA-themed stickers and bookmarks, and designed a special frame for Facebook profile pictures with the phrase: "Health for all, Taiwan can help."