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International review of 2nd ROC reports on implementation of human rights covenants set for January 16-20

An international review of the Republic of China's second set of reports regarding its implementation of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights will be conducted January 16 to 20 in Taiwan.

The International Bill of Human Rights consists of the two covenants plus the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. It defines the basic and most important standards and legal obligations for the protection of human rights worldwide.

Ten internationally renowned experts have been invited to take part in the review. They will examine the ROC response to the concluding observations and recommendations from the first review in 2013, and appraise its progress in human rights protection since that time. The review will also be attended by human rights experts from United Nations organizations, prominent international groups, national committees of other countries, and foreign media, highlighting Taiwan's determination to uphold human rights in line with global trends.

The ROC implemented the two covenants December 10, 2009, to ensure its governance is based on respect for human rights, declare its resolve to protect these rights, and raise its standards in tandem with the rest of the

world. At the same time, it established a mechanism for the release of national human rights reports in compliance with the covenants.

The first national reports were published in April 2012. As the ROC is without UN representation, it is unable to submit its reports for review as is the general practice for UN members. A panel of 10 international experts was thus invited to conduct a review in Taiwan February 25 to 27, 2013. They presented 81 observations and recommendations March 1, recognizing the efforts and commitment that the government and people of the ROC had made to comply with global standards, and offering concrete suggestions for improvements in its human rights protection.

As per its draft and review mechanism for national reports on compliance with the covenants, the ROC has continued to scrutinize its own endeavors in accordance with international norms. In drafting the second reports last year, 115 meetings were held, including discussions between representatives of the Presidential Office Human Rights Consultative Committee, nongovernmental organizations, and the majority of government agencies.

The second reports were published April 25, 2016: the Common Core Document Forming Part of the Reports; Response to the Concluding Observations and Recommendations Adopted by the International Group of Independent Experts on March 1, 2013; Implementation of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights; and Implementation of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

This year the review sessions will be broadcast live online to increase public awareness and participation in human rights issues while giving interested individuals an opportunity to better understand the review process. This arrangement will ensure that human rights are no longer an

issue to be discussed behind closed doors by international scholars and experts, but rather an important topic that is closely associated with every member of society. By holding the international review, the ROC is demonstrating its commitment and effort to implement the two covenants, as well as its proactive participation in international human rights affairs.