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The Honorable Nikki Haley
Governor
State of South Carolina
1205 Pendleton Street
Columbia, SC29201

Dear Governor Haley,

Due to your ongoing interest in and kind support for Taiwan, allow me to share some recent news regarding Taiping Island. On January 28, President Ma-Ying Jeou made a trip to Taiping, the largest of the naturally formed islands in the Nansha Islands, a group in the South China Sea over which Taiwan enjoys all rights in accordance with international law.

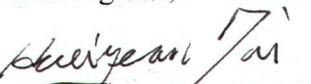
President Ma's visit to Taiping Island had four purposes. He wanted to extend holiday greetings for the upcoming Lunar New Year to the local residents. He announced the South China Sea Peace Initiative Roadmap, based on a framework three yeses and three noes: "yes" to cooperation, "no" to confrontation; "yes" to sharing, "no" to monopolizing; "yes" to pragmatism, "no" to intransigence. President Ma emphasized that Taiwan is dedicated to the peaceful use of the island, working to transform it into an ecologically friendly, low-carbon island. Finally, President Ma wanted to clarify the status of Taiping Island.

The Philippines sought arbitration with the Permanent Court of Arbitration in 2013 concerning competing claims with mainland China in the South China Sea. The Philippines holds that Taiping Island has no freshwater, no arable soil, and that food and water must all be imported, which means that it is not an island but a rock to which no claim on territorial waters can be made beyond 12 nautical miles. Yet, the economic, environmental and cultural realms all show that the island has ample resources to be self-sufficient. Taiping meets the criteria for an island as specified in Article 121 of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea.

Taiping is a habitable island on which ROC troops have been stationed since 1956. It has fresh water, electricity, and essential infrastructure for agriculture, transportation and communications. The Nansha Hospital provides medical services to the island's troops as well as fishermen from different countries operating in neighboring waters.

The Republic of China's efforts on Taiping reflect the country's resolve to turn the South China Sea into a "Sea of Peace and Cooperation." As always, thank you for your ongoing friendship to Taiwan.

Best regards,


Huei-Yuan (Steven) Tai
Director General