



Chinese (Taiwan) Society of International Law

中華民國國際法學會

Press Release

Chinese (Taiwan) Society of International Law

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Representatives from Chinese (Taiwan) Society of International Law – its president, Professor Chun-i Chen and two members of its executive committee, Professor Dustin Kuan-Hsiung Wang and Professor Yann-huei Song – were invited to join the delegation that traveled to Taiping (Itu Aba) Island by air in witnessing the ceremony marking the completion of renovation and official opening of its wharf and lighthouse on December 12, 2015, the sixty-ninth anniversary of the return of the Nansha (Spratly) Islands to the Republic of China.

In their three-hour stay on the Island, the representatives were deeply impressed by the ceremony and by the high morale of the Coast Guard personnel who stationed on Taiping. In the executive committee meeting held next day, the representatives reported to the directors and supervisors how much they were deeply touched by the experience, and how completely erroneous the Filipino views, including those expressed in the proceedings in the *South China Sea Arbitration*, in characterizing the Island as a “rock” have been, based on the facts that Taiping Island has its own natural sources of good quality freshwater, which have been enabling the nourishing of the soil and the growth of lush native plantation, and the fact that more than one hundred officers and personnel of ROC Coast Guard have been stationing on the Island on a continuous basis, who have cultivated a large variety of vegetables and fruits and raised livestock. All those facts indicate that Taiping (Itu Aba) Island is a naturally formed island.

Today, the General Assembly of Chinese (Taiwan) Society of International Law, in complete agreement with the above views that Taiping (Itu Aba) Island satisfies every criteria in Article 121 of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS), thus without doubt is a naturally formed island in international law; in its earnest support of the ROC Government in its efforts in maintaining the rights and interests in the South China Sea including through promoting the “South China Sea Peace Initiative”; and expressing its earnest willingness in providing every assistance possible in formulating grounds in international law to illustrate and evidence the relevant claims so as to support the fulfillment of the aim of securing peace and the national territory in the South China Sea, adopts the following declaration:

“The General Assembly of Chinese (Taiwan) Society of International Law,

Conscious of the views of Philippines, expressed in its pleadings before the Tribunal in the *South China Sea Arbitration*, that described Taiping (Itu Aba) Island as of a legal status of a “rock” is completely unfounded for reasons of disregarding the following facts:

that Taiping Island has its own natural sources of good quality freshwater and natural soil, enabling the growth of lush native plantation and a large number of trees, some



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of which are of considerable age and as high as four to five stories, including 125 *Hernandia nymphiifolia*, the largest of which has a 907 cm trunk diameter and is estimated of 363 years old; 9 *Calophyllum inophyllum* L., the largest of which has a 546 cm trunk diameter and is estimated of 218 years old; 12 *Guettarda speciosa* L., the largest of which has a 470 cm trunk diameter and is estimated of 188 years old; one *Barringtonia asiatica* L., which has a 228 cm trunk diameter and estimated to be 91 years old;

that stationed on Taiping Island on a continuous basis are more than one hundred officers and personnel of ROC Coast Guard, who have cultivated a large variety of vegetables and fruits and raised livestock including sheep and chickens, as well as farm dogs;

that on Taiping Island is a hospital of 10 beds, serviced by three doctors (including one dentist) and two nurses, which over the past ten years has been providing emergency medical care to 21 persons, 12 of which are of nationalities such as Myanmar, the Philippines, Indonesia, and Mainland China;

that Taiping Island has its own comprehensive living facilities, including a post office and a Bodhisattva temple,

Noting that based on the above facts, Taiping Island, which has been physically returned to the Republic of China (Taiwan) on December 12, 1946, and has since been under its rule for over 69 years, is a naturally formed island, in its natural form it can sustain human habitation and economic life of its own, and satisfies every criteria in Article 121 of UNCLOS,

Noting with satisfaction that having personally witnessing the above facts during their recent visit to Taiping Island, including drinking from the water drawn from Well No. 5, which contains 99% of freshwater, enjoying dishes over lunch made virtually completely from ingredients (including chicken, loofah gourd, bitter melon, plantains, and coconut juice) produced on the Island, and visiting the hospital, post office and the Bodhisattva temple, the representatives of the Society can testify the full forces of those facts,

solemnly declares that:

1. The Society fully supports the ROC Government in its efforts in maintaining the rights and interests in the South China Sea, including through promoting the “South China Sea Peace Initiative”, and expresses its earnest willingness in providing every assistance possible in formulating grounds in international law to illustrate and evidence the relevant claims so as to support the fulfillment of the aim of securing peace and the national territory in the South China Sea.

2. Further, the Society sincerely urges President Ma to personally visit Taiping Islands while still in office so as to manifest the sovereignty of the ROC (Taiwan), boost the morale of the personnel, and to demonstrate to the international community the willingness of the ROC (Taiwan) in safeguarding the freedom of navigation and overflight



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enjoyed by every country in accordance with international law in the South China Sea, as well as its resolve in settling the relevant disputes by peaceful means in accordance with international law.”

The General Assembly also approves the establishment of its “Working Group on International Law relevant to the South China Sea”, which will be organized by five members of its executive committee.

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