# Delhi Must Help Taipei Get Into the WHO

## by Jagdish N. Singh

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY: It is disappointing that the 73rd meeting of the World Health Assembly, the decision-making body of the World Health Organization (WHO), went ahead on May 18-19 without the participation of Taiwan. The dominant mood in the democratic part of the world has long been to bring Taiwan and its 23.8 million people into the WHO.**

In May of this year, some 127 European parliamentarians backed Taiwan's bid to join the World Health Organization (WHO). On May 6, US Secretary of State Pompeo called on WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus to invite Taiwan to the upcoming meeting of the World Health Assembly (WHA), the decision-making body of the WHO. He also called upon all nations to support Taiwan's participation as an observer at the WHA. On May 11, the US Senate passed an act directing Pompeo to "develop a strategy to regain observer status" for Taiwan in the WHO.

Japanese PM Shinzo Abe and Canadian PM Justin Trudeau support Taiwan's case. Lawmakers from 43 countries, over 600 international politicians, and 29 foreign governments support Taiwan's participation as well.

In view of this widespread world sentiment, the WHO D-G should have invited Taiwan to the recent meeting. The rules of WHA procedure give the D-G the right to invite observers to its annual meeting. Ghebreyesus's predecessor, Margaret Chan, exercised that right and invited Taiwan to be an observer at the WHA throughout the period from 2009 to 2016. Ghebreyesus chose to do otherwise.

India, the world's largest democracy, must take up the cause of Taiwan's inclusion. On May 22, India took over from Japan as Chair of the WHA's newly

elected 34-nation Executive Board. Delhi could use this forum to help Taiwan get into the WHO.

India could solicit the support of like-minded countries in this matter. On May 11, Secretary Pompeo convened a foreign ministers' virtual meeting in which India, Australia, Brazil, Israel, Japan, and South Korea took part. New Delhi could convene such meetings on behalf of Taiwan's inclusion.

China continues to want all nations to honor the "One-China" principle and deny Taiwan entry into the WHO, but this is not acceptable. No principle that neglects the health needs of the Taiwanese people can be considered legitimate in our age.

There is no sense in keeping Taiwan out of the WHO. The motto of the health body is to care for all. The exclusion of Taiwan is thus antithetical to the WHO's own ideals. Besides, the inclusion of Taiwan would benefit the rest of the world, not just Taiwan.

Taiwan has a highly advanced medical system. It has dealt with the coronavirus pandemic in a reasonably successful way. Despite its close geographical proximity to mainland China, Taiwan has recorded just 445 coronavirus positive cases with seven deaths (data as of June 17, 2020).

Remarkably, Taiwan has contained the pandemic without any lockdowns of the kind to which most nations in the world, including India, have resorted. If Taiwan becomes part of the WHO, the world can benefit from its systems and expertise.

Taiwan has always been alive to its obligations as a member of the civilized international community. In the wake of the coronavirus outbreak, Taiwan worked closely with the US and many other countries and shared its expertise in containing the pandemic.

To help the world deal with the crisis, Taiwan launched a large-scale humanitarian assistance initiative in which it donated over 25.5 million face masks and other medical supplies to countries in need, including India, the US, EU member states, and 18 other countries across the Indo-Pacific as well as several African and Middle Eastern countries. In view of this generosity, it would be entirely appropriate for India to make a concerted effort to support Taiwan's admission to the WHO.

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