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Czech Senate President Miloš Vystrčil Leads Delegation to NCCU, Saying Freedom, Truth and Justice are Taiwan's Sword and Armor

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President of the Senate of the Czech Republic Miloš Vystrčil arrived in Taiwan on August 30, and visited National Chengchi University (NCCU) the following day to deliver his first public speech in Taiwan. The accompanying delegation of 44 dignitaries included Prague Mayor Zdeněk Hřib, the Vice President of the Czech Academy of Sciences, university presidents, and the Director of the Prague Philharmonic Orchestra.



President of the Senate of the Czech Republic, Miloš Vystrčil, delivers a speech on "Deeds are the Best Words" (Photo: NCCU Secretariat)

National Chengchi University is the only university in Taiwan with a Czech language studies program, and conducts frequent exchanges with sister institutions in the Czech Republic. In 2004, NCCU awarded an honorary doctorate of literature to former Czech President Václav Havel, affirming his outstanding contributions to political reform, democracy and literature. In 2019, Prague Mayor Zdeněk Hřib and Jakub Michalek, a member of the Czech House of Representatives, led a seven-member delegation to visit NCCU to discuss collaboration projects with NCCU President Ming-Cheng Kuo and then Dean of the International College of Innovation Fu-Kuo Liu.



NCCU President Ming-Cheng Kuo expresses his hopes for further faculty and student exchanges between Taiwan and the Czech Republic, along with the establishment of bilateral and trilateral joint programs. (Source: Secretariat)

"The Czech Republic is Taiwan's best friend, and National Chengchi University has close ties with Czech universities," said Kuo in his remarks, noting that NCCU is Taiwan's most prominent institute of higher education in the humanities and social sciences, and has made significant contributions to liberty, democracy and the rule of law in Taiwan. NCCU provides an ideal base from which to understand Taiwan's economic, social, political and cultural development. Faculty and student exchanges between NCCU and its Czech counterparts will strengthen cooperation between the two nations.



Minister of Foreign Affairs Joseph Wu expresses his appreciation for the constant role NCCU has played in promoting the friendship between Taiwan and the Czech Republic. (Source: Secretariat)

Kuo also quoted Qing Dynasty poet Sun Hsing-Yan in saying, "It is rare to have an old friend come in a storm," alluding to the value of the lasting friendship of the two countries in the face of the challenges raised by the current COVID-19 epidemic. "National Chengchi University promises herself to be the inheritor of Chinese culture," explained Kuo. "Over the coming decade, our Luo Chia-lun International Sinology Lectures will attract 40 of the world's top sinologists to NCCU." Looking to the future, NCCU will emerge as a global beacon of knowledge and research in this field. Kuo said he also hopes for more intensive faculty and student exchanges between NCCU and its Czech counterparts to develop bilateral and trilateral joint programs of study.

Minister of Foreign Affairs Joseph Wu said that, despite this being Vystrčil's first visit to Taiwan, his decision to make his first speech at NCCU reflects his knowledge of the country.

"As an NCCU alumnus, it is a great honor for me to open this event." Wu also noted NCCU's critical role in cultivating Taiwan's political and diplomatic elites. In his official capacity as Minister of Foreign Affairs, he expressed his sincere appreciation for NCCU in her long and constant role in promoting the friendly relations between Taiwan and the Czech Republic.

"The Senate is the most democratic and free institution in the Czech Republic," said Vystrčil. "Although Havel had stepped down from his Presidency of the Czech Republic when giving an address at NCCU in 2004, he is not just a former president to me, but also the father of our modern liberal democracy." He compared the role Havel played in developing the Czech Republic as a free and democratic society to that of former Taiwan President Lee Teng-hui.

Vystrčil said that defending democracy requires both tenacity and courage. The Czech Republic only won her democracy and freedom in the wake of the success of the 1989 Velvet Revolution. "This is the kind of bravery demonstrated by the Taiwanese students in March 1990." He suggested that the Wild Lily students' movement was an important turning point in Taiwan's democratization. And he praised the youthful protestors of the Sunflower Movement of 2014. "I'm very happy to express my gratitude at NCCU to the students who participated in this movement, and to have this opportunity to meet here to discuss the parallel roads the Czech Republic and Taiwan have followed to democracy."

Discussing possible economic and cultural collaboration between Taiwan and the Czech Republic, Vystrčil said that rather than listing the possible benefits of such cooperation, he'd rather ask, "When Taiwanese and Czech women cooperate, what is the result? The world's most powerful tennis doubles team: Hsieh Su-wei and Barbora Strýcová." Vystrčil also said that, with the eventual end of the pandemic, he hopes to establish direct flights between Prague and Taipei to further promote commercial and industrial cooperation.

"The key thing that Taiwan and the Czech Republic have in common, and also our greatest advantage, is that we both live in free and democratic countries," he said, noting that freedom, truth and justice are Taiwan's strongest sword and armor, and called on Taiwan to dearly cherish these benefits of democracy.

During the Q & A section, reporters noted that China's Minister of Foreign Affairs Wang Yi had called the delegation's visit to Taiwan a provocative challenge to the One-China Principle and had said that there would be a price to be paid. Vystrčil responded that the Czech delegation included Czech Senate's 1st Vice-President and members of the education and constitution committees, and chair of the economic committee, all of whom had decided on their own to make the trip to Taiwan, "because we think it is the right thing to do." He said that Taiwan and the Czech Republic have engaged in technical collaboration to limit the impact of the COVID-19 epidemic, and that the Czech Republic holds the door to Europe open for Taiwan, as Taiwan holds open the door to Asia. He said that long-term exchanges between the two countries will bring significant benefits to all.

At the conclusion of the event, Kuo presented Vystrčil with gifts including prize-winning tea he had grown himself, a Tai-Hwa Pottery tea service, and recordings from the Vox Nativa Children's Choir, a group composed of members of Taiwan's indigenous Bunun Tribe from Mount Jade, Taiwan's highest mountain. With their clear as well as powerful voices, the group is frequently referred to as Taiwan's Vienna Boy's Choir. Vystrčil presented Kuo with a commemorative plaque from the Czech Senate, saying the plaque not only commemorated the historical meeting, but also served as an important reminder of the importance of truth, freedom and justice in preserving democracy. Finally, he urged all attendees to "learn to think."

To ensure the safety of all participants, NCCU closely coordinated with Taiwan's Central Epidemic Command Center, and the Centers for Disease Control provided on-site guidance in advance of and on the day of the event to implement specific safety measures, such as temperature monitoring, mask wearing, and contact tracing. The route by which the Czech delegation reached the venue, and the seating arrangements on-site kept the visitors segregated. At the conclusion of the event, the venue was closed for disinfection. NCCU maintains the strictest anti-transmission specifications, and NCCU President Kuo and all associated staff of the Office of International Cooperation will strictly observe independent health management measures for seven days following the event.



President of the Czech Senate Miloš Vystrčil and NCCU President Ming-Cheng Kuo share an elbow bump after the ceremony. (Source: Secretariat)



Conference attendees. (Source: Secretariat)

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