

FRS TAIWAN PROGRAM ON SECURITY AND DIPLOMACY

“Navigating Taiwan’s maritime future: a conversation with the Minister of the Ocean Affairs Council”

A conversation with Dr. Bi-Ling Kuan



Prior to assuming office as Minister of the Ocean Affairs Council in January 2023, **Dr. KUAN Bi-Ling** was a senior lawmaker who served five consecutive terms in the Legislative Yuan. She dedicated herself to the Internal Administration Committee of the Legislative Yuan, which oversees and reviews bills and budgets relating to the Ocean Affairs Council for two terms. In addition to being a convening member of the legislative committee, she was also the main proposer of the “Marine Conservation Act”. Dr. Kuan is the first female minister of the Ocean Affairs Council, appointed by President Ing-Wen Tsai and Premier Chien-Jen Chen. Dr. Kuan holds a PhD in Political Science from the National Taiwan University.

In 2023, FRS had the opportunity to interview Taiwan’s Minister of the Ocean Affairs Council, Dr. KUAN Bi-Ling. The transcript is published below. Certain portions have been removed to ensure brevity, while preserving the core content and insights shared.

FRS: As an archipelago, the ocean is part of the daily life of the Taiwanese and is the indispensable link between them and the rest of the world. Taiwan is, and above all, a maritime power and a country that faces maritime issues every day. Could you introduce them briefly?

Dr. Kuan: I am delighted to accept the invitation from the Foundation for Strategic Research (FRS) and the Taiwan Security and Diplomacy Program to discuss Taiwan’s overall maritime policies and the context of maritime affairs. I believe this will provide a deeper understanding of our country’s maritime strategy and its contributions to France and other like-minded democracies.

Taiwan is inherently a maritime nation; the ocean is woven into the DNA of our people. Since its es

tablishment, the Ocean Affairs Council (OAC) has been working to construct a policy framework to act as a guardian of sustainable ocean development. I would like to explain the Council’s governance with the “Three Securities, Four Marine Efforts”.

The “Three Securities” refer to the continuous, 24-hour patrol by the Coast Guard Administration to safeguard Taiwan’s “national security, public order, and safety”. National security includes reinforcing defense in the Dongsha atoll and Taiping island, facilitating the transition from peacetime to wartime, protecting undersea cables, and undertaking missions in Gray Zones. To strengthen public order, we are taking rigorous measures to crack down on illegal operations near our shores, trespassing by Chinese vessels, illegal sand dredging, port inspections and law enforcement, crime investigations, and efforts to combat illicit smuggling in agriculture and fishing sectors. In the meanwhile, we have put initiatives in place to combat foreign vessels trespassing, illegal fishing, and sand theft; conducted marine rescue drills and fishery protection missions; created a safe and quality marine and recreational environment for our 23 million fellow citizens.

The “Four Marine Efforts” refer to the prevention and control of marine pollution, management of marine waste, conservation of marine ecology, and development of marine industries. In terms of preventing marine pollution, we will promote marine environment management plans by monitoring critical maritime spaces with satellites, regularly monitoring Taiwan’s water quality, reinforcing mechanisms to respond to marine pollution, and conducting on-site inspections. For marine waste management, we will continue to monitor its distribution, clean up marine waste, and establish the Marine Debris Recycling Coalition to recycle and reuse marine waste. For marine conservation, we will focus on enforcing the management of marine protected areas and promoting rescue plans for endangered marine wildlife. For developing marine industries, the Council will act as a policy coordinator to identify challenges in developing marine industries, devise strategies, and create an environment conducive to developing quality marine industries.

Since taking office, I have placed considerable emphasis on establishing a legal framework for maritime governance. I have strengthened communication and coordination with the legislature and stakeholders. In 2023, the Marine Industry Development Act and the amendment to the Marine Pollution Control Act were passed successively. In the future, we will continue to pursue dialogue with society, and lobby to establish the Marine Conservation Act and the Maritime Space Management Act to develop a comprehensive legal foundation. This will serve as an impetus for policy implementation, promoting the development of marine industries, safeguarding marine biodiversity, protecting the health of marine habitats, coordinating maritime usage and competition, and effectively implementing integrated marine management.

The Ocean Affairs Council’s mission is to cherish and safeguard our oceans. Empowered by the functions and missions granted by our organizational laws, we are responsible for the sustainable development of our oceans. Going forward, we will continue to encourage the comprehensive development of maritime affairs by fostering collaboration between the central and local authorities and facilitating public-private partnerships. We are dedicated to fulfilling our role as an agency coordinating, planning, and integrating maritime policies.

FRS: The Ocean Affairs Council was established on April 28, 2018. What were the main drivers prompting the government to establish the Council? What are the mandates of the OAC and the primary agencies it oversees?

Dr. Kuan: Marine issues are complex and interconnected, spanning a broad spectrum of policy areas. Over the past twenty years, the Executive Yuan – Taiwan’s Parliament – has actively coordinated various ministries and implemented a series of measures toward establishing the Ocean Affairs Council. In 2004, the Executive Yuan Maritime Commission (later referred to as the Maritime Affairs Facilitation Commission of the Executive Yuan) was established to gradually consolidate and promote the implementation of maritime affairs.

Throughout these years, the government has started forming an ocean-oriented mindset. However, the existing governmental organizational structure for handling maritime affairs lacked the ability to take effective and coordinated action and, therefore, required restructuring. Recognizing the need for comprehensive inter-ministerial approaches to marine governance, the Council’s four organizational acts (including the Organization Act of the Ocean Affairs Council, Organization Act of Ocean Conservation Administration, Organization Act of Coast Guard Administration, and Organization Act of National Academy for Ocean Research) were passed on June 16, 2015 by the Legislative Yuan and announced on July 1, 2015 by the president. The Ocean Affairs Council was then established in 2018.

The Ocean Affairs Council is headquartered in the southern port city of Kaohsiung, consolidating maritime affairs spread across more than twenty central ministries. It oversees three primary agencies, namely the Coast Guard Administration, Ocean Conservation Administration, and the National Academy for Marine Research. These agencies are responsible for planning, integrating, reviewing, coordinating, and promoting Taiwan’s maritime policies, which cover areas such as marine industry development, marine environmental protection and resource management, sustainable development, maritime safety, marine education and research, domesticating international maritime conventions, and international cooperation.

FRS: The economic dimension is omnipresent in maritime issues. In France, the prerogative of fisheries is integrated into those of the Secretary of State for the Sea. In Taiwan, it remains with the Council of Agriculture and was not transferred to the OAC. In this purely economic dimension, what are the missions of the OAC?

Dr. Kuan: The marine economy includes industries based on the ocean, such as shipping, fisheries, offshore wind power, marine biotechnology, and more. Whether or not these matters are handled by a single maritime agency depends on the country.

The primary role and function of the Ocean Affairs Council is to serve as an integrated policy body that is responsible for coordinating the administration of maritime affairs among various ministries. The Council also plays a role in overall integration, coordination, and consultation concerning conflicts and competition among departments in the use of maritime spaces. To give an example, the maritime spaces of Liuchiu (one of Taiwan's most renowned marine destinations) are used by different sectors (such as tourism and entertainment, traditional fisheries, and ecological conservation of surrounding waters). When conflicts arise, the Ocean Affairs Council acts as a platform to communicate and coordinate across departments, assisting stakeholders in developing a mechanism to communicate, discuss, and conceive plans to ensure the interests of different parties.

Simply put, the Ocean Affairs Council does not take the original responsibilities off those maritime industry regulatory agencies. Instead, it assumes a role of integration and coordination, systematically consolidating previously scattered marine industry policies, developing phased goals and tasks, coordinating government agencies, driving policy implementation, and fostering the overall development of Taiwan's marine economy.

FRS: While most high-level government institutions are based in Taipei, the OAC is headquartered in the south-west city of Kaohsiung? How do you explain this decision?

Dr. Kuan: In the past, maritime affairs were scattered across 22 agencies. To ensure comprehensive maritime policies, the government started

working to establish a dedicated agency. This initiative started in 2004 and endured through two changes in political parties and three presidents, finally resulting in the establishment of the Ocean Affairs Council in Kaohsiung on April 28, 2018. The Ocean Affairs Council stands as one of the few newly established ministries in recent administrative reforms. More importantly, it is the first cabinet-level agency to be located in Kaohsiung. This not only alleviates pressure from the capital but also crucially balances regional development between the north and south.

The reason the Ocean Affairs Council, the competent central authority for marine affairs, was established in Kaohsiung was to capitalize on the city's status as Taiwan's "marine capital". We hoped that, with local and central agencies and policies working together, we would be able to expand marine affairs on the foundations of our existing fisheries and support the development of other marine industries such as yachting, cruises, offshore wind energy, and more. We also want to take advantage of Kaohsiung's geographical advantages such as local resources and markets. The Port of Kaohsiung is Taiwan's largest commercial port and cargo hub as well as the world's 18th largest container port in the world. Taiwan's distant water fishing industry also ranks among the top three globally, with the Chien-Chen Fishing Harbor being the most important distant water-fishing base in Taiwan. Kaohsiung hosts the most important clusters of the shipbuilding industry. The city boasts a comprehensive maritime industry cluster and supply chain, fostering substantial growth in the marine industry.

FRS: In 2019, the government adopted the Ocean Basic Act, which was followed a year later by the first National Ocean Policy White Paper. Could you give us an overview of these two documents and of how they structure the government's maritime action?

Dr. Kuan: The Ocean Basic Act outlines a far-reaching, macroscopic, and comprehensive blueprint for maritime policies and defines the fundamental principles and directions for Taiwan's marine development. This includes strengthening maritime capabilities, promoting the conservation and sustainable use of oceans and marine resources, developing marine industries, enhancing marine research capabilities, preserving traditional maritime culture while establishing a new marine civilization, advancing marine education,

and defining principles for participation in international marine affairs. The Ocean Basic Act serves to establish guiding principles to facilitate integrated maritime policy and administrative coordination.

The National Ocean Policy White Paper, compiled in accordance with the Ocean Basic Act, states the vision, goals, strategic directions, and specific measures for maritime development from a holistic and national perspective. The White Paper offers a top-down approach where maritime policies across various dimensions are first established. Then, responsible agencies will draft specific implementation plans according to the policies and then collaborate with local governments to execute their plans. The National Ocean Policy White Paper describes six policy objectives: 1. Develop strategic regional thinking and defend Taiwan's maritime sovereignty; 2. Enforce maritime law and promote cooperation on regional security; 3. Ensure the ocean's ecological health and improve the quality of the marine environment; 4. Establish industrial development goals and encourage the upgrading of "blue industries"; 5. Create a culture of appreciation for the ocean and cultivate thinking as a maritime nation; and 6. Encourage scientific development and strengthen academic research capabilities. These objectives shall be collectively driven by relevant government bodies working together. The government should also work with civic groups to promote the comprehensive and robust development of ocean affairs.

FRS: The United Nations has designated June 8 as World Oceans Day. Since 2020, Taiwan celebrates its own National Oceans Day on the same day. What is the role of the OAC for that particular event, and more importantly, what is its objective?

Dr. Kuan: Under Article 18 of the Ocean Basic Act, June 8 is our National Oceans Day. In 2020, we celebrated our first National Oceans Day, taking action to support this important initiative.

The objective of National Oceans Day is to raise awareness among citizens about the benefits humankind derives from the ocean and to encourage the government and the public towards Clean Seas, Ocean Literacy, Ocean Engagement, and Ocean Usage.

As a cabinet-level agency coordinating Taiwan's maritime affairs and leading the promotion of sustainable ocean development and utilization, the

Ocean Affairs Council finds National Oceans Day particularly invaluable. Each year, the Council organizes annual events, providing a unique opportunity for us to celebrate the significance of our oceans to our daily lives. It also inspires and encourages people to take action to protect and restore our oceans. There is a wealth of events organized across Taiwan to celebrate the National Oceans Day. For example, there are educational activities, lectures, forums, awards ceremonies, etc. that demonstrate the Council's commitment to a flourishing National Oceans Day and our resolve to take effective action for our oceans.

FRS: Established in 2000, the Coast Guard Administration (CGA) was subordinated to the OAC in 2018. What are the main maritime threats from the surrounding maritime area? As regional tensions increase, are there any plans to strengthen the capacity of the CGA?

Dr. Kuan: A stable maritime environment is crucial for Taiwan's security and prosperity. In recent years, tensions in Taiwan's surrounding waters have escalated. We are confronted with several significant challenges. Firstly, various types of Chinese vessels frequently engage in illegal fishing and sand dredging. This is harming our marine ecosystem, fisheries resources, and maritime order. Secondly, China is unilaterally attempting to alter the *status quo* across the Taiwan Strait through frequent incursions by Chinese military aircraft and vessels into Taiwan's surrounding waters. Thirdly, past disputes over overlapping exclusive economic zones (EEZs) with Japan and the Philippines have led to several run-ins between our fishing and research vessels and vessels under the Japan or Philippine Coast Guard. Such incidents have significantly reduced following the signing of the Taiwan-Japan Fisheries Agreement and the Agreement Concerning the Facilitation of Cooperation on Law Enforcement in Fisheries Matters with the Philippines. However, we have yet to reach a consensus regarding disputes related to research vessels.

Recognizing the increasing importance of a secure and stable maritime environment in the Indo-Pacific region, Taiwan's Coast Guard Administration has launched shipbuilding projects in accordance with the Indigenous Submarine Building policy to strengthen our law enforcement capabilities and increase our patrols. To further protect the interests of Taiwanese fishing vessels, we also developed the Government Fishing Protection

Standard Operating Procedures and deployed additional patrol vessels to overlapping EEZs. In response to the growing intrusions by Chinese vessels into our jurisdictional waters, we have analyzed Chinese fishing vessels and other entities like maritime militia, the China Coast Guard, and the People's Liberation Army Navy's vessels. This analysis guides the development of response strategies for unforeseen incidents, strengthening our ability to respond effectively.

FRS: In the last five years, the Coast Guard Administration (CGA) has expelled more than 6,000 fishing boats and 5,000 sand dredgers. Chinese dredging ships are swarming Taiwan's Matsu Islands in what seems to be part of Beijing's escalating campaign of irregular gray zone warfare. Could you explain the challenges Taiwan faces?

Dr. Kuan: Sand dredging is extracting large amounts of sand and water onto ships, causing severe damage to the seabed's ecological environment. This significantly affects fisheries resources and erodes Taiwan's maritime territory. The resulting loss of sand on the seafloor can expose and damage cables and pipelines buried underneath. Residents in outlying islands are concerned that ships that anchor in certain parts of the seabed where sand is excavated may lead to disruptions in utility supplies and communication. Furthermore, dredging vessels primarily operate on the coasts of outlying islands. The resulting low-frequency noise has negative impacts on the quality of life and health of the local population and leads to intense public backlash.

Taiwan has acted with resolve against China's illegal dredging. In 2021, we amended Article 18 of the Law on the Exclusive Economic Zone and the Continental Shelf of the Republic of China and Article 36 of the Sand and Gravel Excavation Act. We also amended laws to impose severe penalties in an attempt to curb illegal practices. Penalties for illegal sand extraction from our waters have now been toughened up to "imprisonment for no less than one year and no more than seven years; in addition thereto, a fine of no more than one hundred million New Taiwan Dollars may be imposed". The Coast Guard Administration (CGA) uses radar, surveillance, and patrols to monitor closely the movement of dredging vessels in the waters around the Matsu Islands. Depending on the situation, the CGA may strengthen law enforcement and carry out special

missions targeting dredging vessels engaged in illegal activities.

The CGA is also strengthening the quality and intensity of collaborative cross-strait law enforcement through cross-strait mechanisms to combat crime, where both parties agree to engage in simultaneous law enforcement in their own maritime spaces, and jointly combating illegal activities like sand theft.

In the meantime, the Ocean Affairs Council launched a four-year cross-agency monitoring and investigation plan in the waters around the Matsu Islands starting in 2022. The plan aims to gather information and scientific evidence regarding the damages caused by sand dredging activities in the Matsu waters. The data collected serve as evidence in Taiwan's courts and can be used to hold China accountable for sand dredging violations.

The Council also organizes international symposiums, lectures, and discussions to understand the environmental and ecological impacts caused by China's illegal dredging. And we draw upon international experience in addressing the issue of illegal sand dredging by Chinese vessels.

Since the amendments to the Law on the Exclusive Economic Zone and the Continental Shelf of the Republic of China and Sand and Gravel Excavation Act in 2021, and with robust enforcement by the CGA and heavier penalties, the number of Chinese sand dredging vessels expelled has significantly decreased from 665 instances in the past year to 224 in 2022. This reduction in the expulsion of sand dredging vessels indicates that our efforts have successfully deterred illegal dredging activities.

FRS: Taiwan has a unique marine biodiversity and is home to five of the world's seven species of sea turtles. Yet, the average garbage density on Taiwan's west coast, due to maritime traffic in the Taiwan Strait, is around 102 kg per square kilometer – nearly 50 percent higher than the global average. What initiatives is the government taking to promote biodiversity and limit marine pollution, including plastic pollution?

Dr. Kuan: The Taiwanese government established the Wildlife Conservation Act in 1989 and passed the Marine Pollution Control Act in 2000 as basic laws to protect biodiversity and prevent

marine pollution. The Ocean Conservation Administration (OCA) was established under the Ocean Affairs Council to manage marine environmental and resource conservation. Related actions taken by the OCA include:

Firstly, to support relevant international conventions, the OCA is actively promoting the Marine Conservation Act. The amendment to the Marine Pollution Control Act has already been passed (May 2023). Both aim to strengthen the legal basis for the conservation of marine ecosystems and environments and marine biodiversity. Secondly, the OCA has launched four major programs: Taiwan Marine Ecosystem and Environment Protection Plan (2021-2024), Marine Pollution Monitoring and Response Plan (2020-2023), Coastal Cleanliness and Maintenance Plan (2020-2023), and Major Marine Pollution Emergency Response Plan (2022).

In terms of promoting biodiversity, the OCA is conducting surveys of various marine wildlife like whales, dolphins, sea turtles, and seabirds; promoting the conservation program for the endangered Indo-Pacific humpbacked dolphin; encouraging fishermen to adopt measures that reduce bycatch; and collaborating with government agencies, the public, and experts to establish the Marine Animal Rescue Network (MARN). Between 2019 and 2023, the OCA established two emergency rescue stations for marine wildlife and upgraded equipment in eight rescue stations for whales, dolphins, and sea turtles; increasing their capability to house marine wildlife to ten whales and dolphins and 135 sea turtles. The number of Marine Protected Areas has also increased to 69 sites, which benefit from surveys and patrols that can assist to better protect a wide range of conserved marine species and resources.

The OCA also added 20 fishing facilities and safety equipment to offer the public friendly fishing environments while encouraging them to release smaller fish, raising their awareness of conservation.

Other efforts include establishing marine education centers, training marine conservation volunteers, organizing various innovation, photography, and theater contests, encouraging civic marine scientists, and subsidizing civic groups for marine conservation activities to increase the public's understanding of marine conservation.

Efforts to curb marine pollution emphasize the management of land-based sources (such as

banning plastic straws and the sale of cosmetics and personal care products containing plastic microbeads). The Marine Debris Governance Platform of Taiwan, formed jointly by the Executive Yuan's Environmental Protection Administration (now the Ministry of the Environment) and civic environmental groups, focuses on reducing waste at the source, incineration, and reuse at the end. Efforts include intercepting river debris, beach cleaning, and inspecting facilities for coastal and riverbank garbage disposal. With marine water quality monitoring and pollution prevention as our primary focus, the Council conducts regular water quality monitoring at a minimum of 105 locations each year. Audits, compilation of information on response measures, education, training, and drills have effectively reduced the risk of marine pollution. By the end of 2022, 5,327 fishing vessels as environmental fleets, 3,637 divers as eco-warriors, and 21 coastal cleanup outposts collectively cleared 17,257.5 metric tons of marine debris across Taiwan. We also collaborated with 42 civic groups to establish the Marine Debris Recycling Coalition to recycle and reuse disposed fishing nets, oyster aquafarming strings and polystyrene (from buoys). A microplastic sampling and monitoring mechanism was also established to investigate the density and types of microplastics in coastal waters and marine organisms. In 2022, microplastic concentrations in seawater ranged from 0.02 to 1.63 piece per cubic meter, while in marine organisms, it ranged from 0.01 to 2.58 pieces per gram of wet weight.

International cooperation and exchanges are vital sources of information for Taiwan in enhancing marine conservation management. We actively participate in the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC), Our Ocean Conference (OOC), Agreement on the Conservation of Albatrosses and Petrels (ACAP), Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), and other marine conservation-related conferences. We have also signed agreements or memoranda with the United States and Japan, all of which have contributed to strengthening Taiwan's marine conservation capabilities and practices.

Overall, over the past three years, funding in New Taiwan Dollars amounting to €1.8 billion has been invested in marine conservation, aiming to effectively achieve our goal and vision of sustaining Taiwan's oceans.

FRS: In 2021, Taiwan signed a MoU with the United States to establish a Coast Guard Working Group (CGWG). Could you tell us more about this initiative? What are other major international cooperation projects led by OAC?

Dr. Kuan: Under the MoU to establish a Taiwan-US Coast Guard Working Group, our Coast Guard Administration (OCA) and the U.S. Coast Guard established a roadmap for future collaboration in February 2022 to expand cooperation in areas such as search and rescue, environmental protection, fleet drills, information exchanges, and aerial capabilities. Both sides will continue to strengthen maritime cooperation to jointly uphold a free, open, and rules-based international order in the Indo-Pacific region.

In addition to cooperation with the US Coast Guard, we joined the Taiwan-US Agreement for Technical Cooperation in the Field of Environmental Protection in 2020, becoming one on the partial list of implementing partners for the Marine Litter project. Under this agreement, the Council's OCA works closely with the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and organizes an annual Youth Innovation Challenge with the Global Environment Education Partnership (GEEP) to inspire innovative thinking in our youth in handling marine debris.

Our US partners include the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA). We signed an Agreement for Technical Cooperation associated with Establishing Satellite-Based Marine Oil Pollution and Marine Debris Monitoring Collaborative Activity with them in 2022. This Agreement provides a framework for cooperation in satellite applications for oil spill and marine debris detection, monitoring, and analysis between the NOAA, OAC, and Taiwan's National Central University's Center for Space and Remote Sensing Research (CSRSR).

We partnered with the Stimson Center (US) and the International Cooperation and Development Fund (Taiwan) and consolidated the research capabilities of the National Academy of Marine Research to assist allied countries in building climate resilience and adaptation capabilities. Such collaborative efforts helped St. Kitts and Nevis and Belize launch the Climate and Ocean Risk Vulnerability Initiative (CORVI) in 2021 and 2023 respectively. Through CORVI, we use research to develop risk assessment indicators and reports

that can serve as references for our allied countries when formulating policies and applying for climate funds from international financial institutes to strengthen climate resilient infrastructure.

In Asia, we expanded and deepened cooperation with neighboring countries like Japan and the Philippines. For instance, Taiwan and Japan signed a memorandum of understanding on tackling marine debris in 2023, connecting efforts in managing marine debris. The Philippine Coast Guard also selected outstanding officers to study at the Central Police University in Taiwan.

To further strengthen friendly relations between Taiwan and our allied countries, starting in 2018, we have signed Agreements on Coast Guard Cooperation with four allied nations: the Marshall Islands, Palau, Tuvalu and Belize. These agreements enable us to organize joint patrols, drills, and training to facilitate cooperation in law enforcement, search and rescue. We hope that we can foster deeper relations with our allied countries within the agreement framework.

FRS: Finally, what is the potential for maritime cooperation between Taiwan and France? And what are the OAC's expectations towards its partners?

Dr. Kuan: Recent collaboration between France and Taiwan on maritime issues has been primarily focused on addressing marine pollution. To cultivate professionals in marine pollution response for Taiwan, the Ocean Conservation Administration (OCA) signed a memorandum of understanding with the Centre of Documentation, Research and Experimentation on Accidental Water Pollution (CEDRE), a French institute consisting of international experts in accidental water pollution. The OCA also regularly dispatches personnel to France for a training course on Cultivation of Manpower to Handle Marine Pollution Caused by Oil and HNS Spills.

France's overseas territories in the Pacific region and Taiwan share similar biogeographical environments, unique species, and climate impacts on ecosystems. Both regions are facing significant challenges due to climate change. In the face of biodiversity loss, we urgently need to improve communication between scientists and policymakers. In the future, Taiwan and France can strengthen academic and official exchanges on biodiversity issues to explore practices and actions for nature conservation.

France is also known for its diverse and advanced marine technology development, including offshore wind power, satellite applications, noise monitoring, and research vessel management. These areas represent potential topics for cooperation between Taiwan and France that have yet to be fully explored. We hope to build connections with international marine research institutes to facilitate international cooperation and exchanges. For example, we look forward to working with the French Research Institute for Exploitation of the Sea (IFREMER), Genavir (a French organization that operates and maintains research vessels), and Ocean KAN to increase our capabilities in regional marine research and address the challenges posed by climate change. We would also like to deepen cooperation with France in areas such as search and rescue technology development and transnational crime intelligence exchange to strengthen and elevate our strategic and global partnership within the international community.

The Taiwanese government has always sought to ensure increased engagement and interactions with the international community. Given that global maritime affairs require collaborative efforts from the international community, I look forward to exploring how cooperation on maritime issues can deepen our bilateral relationships with more like-minded nations. This cooperation aims to address collectively the global challenges we share.

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