

*Mr. Lin's Speech in 2015 CALRE World Forum in Milan (Oct. 23)*

Elections are the foundation of democracy. In the Chinese-speaking world including Taiwan and Mainland China, electoral systems did not exist until the ROC Government was forced to move to Taiwan in 1949. In the next year, in 1950, Taiwan held its first ever local elections. Compared with Europe and the United States however, Taiwan's 65 year-old election history is relatively short.

The electoral system in Taiwan is the same as in Japan. In addition to nation level elections for legislators, the two-tier local elections are designed to elect mayors, councilors and other elected officials. In an area of 36 thousand square kilometers with a population of 23 million persons, we elected 22 mayors, 907 councilors for the first tier of the local government and 2,087 municipal councilors for the second tier.

As a Taipei City Councilor for 25 years, I have been actively taking part throughout over one third of Taiwan's 65 years of local autonomy. Although the Taiwanese people have been living under a democratic system, there has been a tendency for governments to centralize power over local autonomy. In the Local Government Act, it is easy to see how badly the councilors' powers have been restricted.

The "Taiwan Local Councils Representatives Community Forum (TCF)" not only operates as a platform for exchange between the councilors and the government, but is also designed to protect the councilors' legislative power from the national government.

As we know, there is a global organization the members of which are MPs, like IPU. To my knowledge, many countries have their own national or regional legislative assembly like CALRE, the American NCSL, the South America UNALE, the Japanese Local Councilors Alliance, the Australia ALGA and the Philippines PCL. However, it seems that there has not yet been established a global organization with members from Legislative Assemblies of national as well as international Institutions from different continents. This is the reason why I strive to set up the "Global Councils Forum (GCF)".

The first GCF meeting was held in Taipei Taiwan in June 2014. Last year we had special guests from CALRE– Ms. Noguera, NCSL – Senator Bruce Starr and Japanese Local Councilors Alliance – Mr. Yoshiaki Matsuda to the GCF forum. This August, we invited President Cattaneo from CALRE, President Matsuda from the Japanese Local Councilors Alliance, and National President Fernandez from the Philippines. We also invited international scholars from France, South Korea and Mainland China to attend the meeting, whose speeches were really impressive and remarkable.

Considering that Japan, the Philippines and Taiwan have already had their own local councilors alliances, all of these three alliances have agreed to establish a regional assembly named "Asia Councils Forum (ACF)" in the area of Asia, and decided to hold the first ACF meeting in December 2016 in the Philippines. We are expecting that Malaysia and South Korea will be our new partners in the ACF. We look forward to seeing all of you next December in Philippines.

As we know, CALRE and NCSL have signed a mutual cooperation agreement this August in Seattle, U.S.. If the ACF can be run successfully in Asia in the future, according to CALRE President Cattaneo's proposal, I think establishing the Global Councilors Forum will not be far away anymore.

In the process of Globalization, it is inevitable that, to a degree, a country has to transfer national sovereignty to supranational form of government or international institutions. However, in my personal opinion, if giving away national sovereignty means to erode a country's autonomy and ability to make political decisions, I have to voice my objection.

Within a country's territorial jurisdiction, a nation's sovereignty is exclusive and absolute. One of the fundamentals of democracy is that the power of an elected representative is legitimized by the people. In bottom-up politics, the higher powers are derived from the lower level institutions. According to this theory, the power of MEPs comes from the regional voters, and the country then empowers the MEPs when negotiating with supranational institutions. If we adhere to this principle, we are wondering, how could supranational institutions take away regional and sub-national sovereignty?



Facing globalization, at times States have to transfer parts of their powers to central institutions, for example the EU. Personally, I am impressed that the CALRE working group on Subsidiarity has done spectacularly well in assessing the balance of powers between the EU and the Member States. In addition I also admire CALRE's democratic deficit efforts to prevent the EU from moving toward an increase in executive power and a decrease in national parliamentary control.

I am glad to have this opportunity to be here to discuss the topic of "Regional and local representation for true global democracy" with each of you. This is a very meaningful event and I am glad to be here. Thank you for listening.