

The Biden administration has invited Taiwan to its “Summit for Democracy” next month, according to a list of participants published on Tuesday, a move likely to infuriate China, which views the democratically governed island as its territory.

The first-of-its-kind gathering is a test of President Joe Biden’s assertion, announced in his first foreign policy address in office in February, that he would return the United States to global leadership to face down authoritarian forces led by China and Russia.

There are 110 participants on the State Department’s invitation list for the virtual event on Dec. 9 and 10, which aims to help stop democratic backsliding and the erosion of rights and freedoms worldwide. The list does not include China or Russia.

Taiwan’s Foreign Ministry said the government would be represented by Digital Minister Audrey Tang and Hsiao Bi-khim, Taiwan’s de facto ambassador in Washington.

“Our country’s invitation to participate in the ‘Summit for Democracy’ is an affirmation of Taiwan’s efforts to promote the values of democracy and human rights over the years,” the ministry added.

The invite for Taiwan comes as China has stepped up pressure on countries to downgrade or sever relations with the island, which is considered by Beijing to have no right to the trappings of a state.

Self-governed Taiwan says Beijing has no right to speak for it.

Sharp differences over Taiwan persisted during a virtual meeting earlier this month between Biden and Chinese President Xi Jinping.

While Biden reiterated long-standing U.S. support for the “One China” policy under which it officially recognizes Beijing rather than Taipei, he also said he “strongly opposes unilateral efforts to change the status quo or undermine peace and stability across the Taiwan Strait,” the White House said.

Xi said that those in Taiwan who seek independence, and their supporters in the United States, were “playing with fire,” according to state news agency Xinhua.

Rights groups question if Biden's Summit for Democracy can push those world leaders who are invited, some accused of harboring authoritarian tendencies, to take meaningful action.

The State Department list shows the event will bring together mature democracies such as France and Sweden but also countries such as the Philippines, India and Poland, where activists say democracy is under threat.

In Asia, some U.S. allies such as Japan and South Korea were invited, while others like Thailand and Vietnam were not. Other notable absentees were U.S. allies Egypt and NATO member Turkey. Representation from the Middle East will be slim, with Israel and Iraq the only two countries invited.

*Reporting by Humeyra Pamuk; Additional reporting by Ben Blanchard in Taipei; Editing by Peter Cooney and Michael Perry*

*The views and opinions expressed in this article are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the views of The Kootneeti Team*

Facebook Comments