**World Cities Summit 2016**

**Innovative Governance in Taipei**

Good afternoon, everyone.

In 2014, the people of Taipei elected me as their first independent mayor with 57 percent of the vote. All of us here today are mayors, so I will tell you the real reason for this landslide win: they didn’t elect me because I am good; they elected me because they are desperate.

They are desperate because, for years in Taiwan, politicians have been the same. Most of them. Political parties are the same, and empty promises are the same. I am the only one around who is different. For most of my life, I was a critical care surgeon—I had never been in politics. It was very risky, but they took a chance and invested in me.

That’s why I consider myself a “political venture capitalist”, a startup in the political field. And this is what we are here to talk about: Innovation.

As the first independent to be elected mayor of Taipei, I am free from the usual bipartisan politics of Taiwan. Instead of short-term political gain, I want to get the public to think more about fundamental universal values, such as human rights, justice, democracy and sustainability. In this way, we can promote policies to realize the long-term vision I have for Taipei. One element of this vision is to make the city the most innovative, progressive and open Chinese-culture society in the world.

How do we achieve that and what is the role of city government? Instead of promoting any particular industry, city government should, I believe, be a platform that provides an environment with efficient infrastructure and the rule of law for all. The people are the masters of their destiny. Because whenever the government tries to intervene in industry, it usually results in failure. Why? Nobody knows the market, its products and its services better than the people who need them.

It is only 9 years ago that the first iPhone was launched. Could you imagine the world without it now? It changed the world, and not because the government had a plan for it.

This is why it is more important to create a culture and spirit of innovation, to foster positive attitudes towards innovation, rather than drawing up a 5-year or 10-year plan. I see government as a platform that can adapt to change in modern times.

Attitude is a little thing that makes a big difference. But most Taiwanese politicians cannot afford to be innovative themselves. They want a safe bet. They calculate the risk. If a venture has an 85 percent chance of success, they won’t do it. Instead, they look at the 15 percent chance of failure and focus on that. Now, I consider myself only an amateur politician, so perhaps this rule doesn’t apply to me.

In February 2016, I embarked on a 520-kilometer bike ride. I wanted a challenge. I started from the northernmost lighthouse in Taiwan at 5 o’clock in the morning and finished at the southernmost lighthouse just under 28 hours later. People ask me how I did it. I don’t exactly remember. I just remember the first push.

I wanted to show the people of Taiwan that if I—a 57-year-old—can do it, so can you. If you set your heart on it, and you do your best to prepare, then you just do it. And you might fail. You might. But it’s okay to fail. What’s not okay is not to try.

That’s the kind of culture we want to create and to nurture in Taipei. So I started with myself. It’s very difficult to break old habits and create a new culture and it may take a long time to achieve, far longer than my term, but I want to be the one to get it started.

One thing the city government can do to encourage people to realize their dreams is to minimize the cost of failure. That’s why we’re turning Taipei into an IoT lab by providing free or almost free infrastructure. Currently, we’re working with IBM and Gemtek to deploy a long-distance, low-frequency LoRa experimental platform that has been tested in countries such as the Netherlands, the UK and France. In Asia, only a small number of city governments are experimenting with this new concept.

Using this platform, Taipei developers of all sizes can test their IoT services free of charge on a city-wide scale. We hope this approach will provide a training ground for local developers, allowing both hardware and software businesses to conduct continuous testing and experimentation. We look forward to seeing many successful demonstrations of proof-of-concept at major international events such as the Summer Universiade and the World Congress on Information Technology in 2017. These events will act as a stage to showcase the Taiwan experience to a global audience.

I have two old friends as speakers today: Mayor Park and Mayor Wade-Brown. Mayor Wade-Brown visited Taipei in February and we had a great conversation. Soon we will see Wellington holding a Taipei Day to showcase our partnership, and I am very grateful for that.

Mayor Park received me warmly when I visited Seoul which is Taipei’s sister city, and I was very much impressed with its development.

Both Mayors inspire me greatly. They have set great examples for Taipei, showing that cities and mayors can help to lead the nation. I stand before you most humbly, hoping to learn all I can from you, so that I can take this knowledge and best practices back to Taipei, help Taipei citizens to fill it with their native sense for entrepreneurship and make the innovation bloom and boom.

It’s hard to see exactly what the future holds, but we know humans will play a decisive role in shaping it. Looking back over history, we see that humans are always inventing and making progress in so many areas, whether it be freedom, human rights, sustainable development or the rule of law. It is always too early to say whether you have succeeded or failed, because it depends on the time frame: a year, a decade, a century or a millennium. But the most important thing is to start with the first push.

Thank you.