

Keynote Speech

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Distinguished former President, Fidel Valdez Ramos of the Philippines; former Prime Minister, Toshiki Kaifu of Japan; former Prime Minister, Yevgeny Primakov of Russia; Governor, Kim, Tae-Hwan of Jeju Special Self-Governing Province and guests from home and abroad. I congratulate you on the opening of the 4th Jeju Peace Forum. I wholeheartedly welcome all the participants who came from afar. Jeju is an island of beauty and peace where everyone wants to visit and to stay as long as possible.

This island, however, sustained an unspeakable tragedy 59 years ago when tens of thousands of people were victimized under the unfortunate history caused by Cold War rivalries and the division of the country. The Government belatedly embarked on a truth-finding investigation into the heartbreaking incident only after a half century had already passed. I made an official apology in 2003 on behalf of the Government for the illicit exercise of power by authorities in the past. Then, Jeju citizens responded with a spirit of forgiveness and reconciliation.

With the aim of translating the unfortunate historic experience into a spirit of reconciliation and peace, we designated Jeju as the Island of World Peace in 2005 while empowering the island to take the lead in the peace-making process for the Korean peninsula and Northeast Asia. I hope this forum will give rise to opportunities for Jeju to further solidify its standing as the Island of World Peace once again and to disseminate the spirit of peace throughout the world.

Distinguished participants, the theme of the forum is “Peace and Prosperity in Northeast Asia,” which is also one of the most important guiding principles of our Participatory Government, and which constitutes the basis of its foreign and security policies as well. Just before I was inaugurated as President, the so-called second North Korean nuclear crisis erupted, plunging the security environment surrounding Northeast Asia into an unpredictable tense situation of zero visibility. In response to the US decision to halt oil shipments, the North removed seals and surveillance equipment from its nuclear facilities and expelled the IAEA nuclear inspectors from the country. At that time, even talk of a possible military strike by the United States percolated. Concerns over the North reached another peak last July and October when the country first test fired missiles and then conducted a nuclear test.

Preventing the situation from being blown out of proportion, the Participatory Government has brought inter-Korean relations under stable management with consistent principles. With a firm policy of “peace first,” we have worked toward building trust with the North through dialogue and persuasion while rising to the challenge of political difficulties at home and patiently restraining any hostile action in response. The North Korean nuclear issue is now moving on to take the path to peaceful resolution. The North recently invited back the IAEA delegation after the stalemate stemming from frozen North Korean funds in Banco Delta Asia finally came to an end. The initial steps delineated in the February 13 Agreement are now being implemented. The Six-Party Talks are also likely to resume soon.

Inter-Korean exchanges and cooperation have vastly improved as well. More than 100,000 people traveled between the two Koreas last year, and inter-Korean trade is forecast to reach US\$1.7 billion this year. In the Gaeseong Industrial Complex, there are currently 15,000 North Korean workers working with South Korean entrepreneurs, and their number will rise to 70,000 once the first phase of the industrial park is completed. What once used to be a North Korean strategic military post has been reborn as the nexus of inter-Korean economic cooperation. Last month, trains crossed the DMZ and ran along the Seoul-

Sinuiju and East Coast Lines for the first time since the division of the peninsula.

All these events took place against the backdrop of confrontation and tension stemming from hard-line sentiment toward North Korea within and outside South Korea in the wake of the North's test-launch of missiles and its nuclear test. What has been achieved despite these circumstances is the fruit of our efforts to persuade North Korea and build trust by showing tolerance and patience to the maximum extent possible. My government will continue to hold fast to the principle of reconciliation and cooperation with North Korea.

Fellow participants, my government is moving forward with a peace policy that looks far ahead. Looking far beyond the existing narrow confines of inter-Korean relations and the ROK-US alliance, the Participatory Government plans for a future order in Northeast Asia shaped by changing circumstances in relations between Japan, China and Russia. In this way, we seek to bring security in the present and future into harmony. In Northeast Asia, there remains a residual bitterness over history and ideology that has arisen from years of imperialism and the Cold War era. Unless the mistrust and instability concerning the potential confrontation among the US, Japan, China, and Russia are clearly resolved, the arms race among them might continue and escalate.

Northeast Asia needs to address its confrontational approach at its core. Unless the region establishes a community of peace, it stands no chance of becoming a center of civilization no matter how much it develops economically. Each nation in Northeast Asia needs to look beyond its own self-interest and make an effort to create an order of coexistence through mutual respect and cooperation. This is the basis of the idea for the era of Peace and Prosperity in Northeast Asia that we have pursued. With this vision in mind, the Korean Government has coped with the issue of the North Korean nuclear program in the context of broad concerns about peace on the Korean peninsula and in Northeast Asia. This approach has focused on delivering a fundamental resolution of the issues surrounding peace and security in Northeast Asia, as opposed to merely dismantling North Korea's nuclear

program.

It is my belief that the Six-Party Talks, even after the North Korean nuclear issue is settled, should be developed into a multilateral consultative body devoted to peace and security cooperation in Northeast Asia on the strength of its experience and capacity for resolving the nuclear problem. The consultative body should function as a permanent multilateral security cooperative organization that will control armaments and mediate disputes in Northeast Asia where competition in an arms race is feared. We already included this aspiration in the September 19, 2005, Joint Statement.

The Northeast Asian cooperative organization should not limit its functions to only security matters. It should evolve into cooperation in logistics, energy, intra-regional free trade and monetary and financial policies, ultimately putting a Northeast Asian economic community in place. Another task that has to be solved for the future of Northeast Asia is the history issue involving Korea, China and Japan. More than anything else, Japan is called upon to change its recognition of past history as well as its attitude. It should reflect on its past sincerely, and demonstrate clearly that it does not have any intention of repeating what it did to other countries by changing its behavior so that it corresponds to the apologies it has offered a number of times. Since resolution of history issues will require a long time, they may be able to be tackled as we endeavor to bring about a regional economic community.

Distinguished ladies and gentlemen, the evolution process of the EU gives Northeast Asia ample guidance for its future course of action. Reeling from World War II, European countries embarked on the Helsinki Process to realize the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe while launching the European Coal and Steel Community with a view to eventually inaugurating the European Union; the European experience should serve as a good model for Northeast Asia. Also the German experience of thoroughly reflecting on its past, settling issues and publishing joint history textbooks should give Northeast Asian countries a good clue on how to go about resolving history issues.

An integrated regional community will signal the dawn of a new era in Northeast Asian history, indeed, contributing to world peace and common prosperity. The first step is to advance the peace regime on the Korean peninsula. The most urgent thing to do is realize denuclearization of the peninsula without delay. The armistice regime that is more than half a century old will have to be turned into a peace regime as well. Normalization of diplomatic ties between Pyongyang and Washington and between Pyongyang and Tokyo will have to be pushed, too. Through bringing about peace on the peninsula, the last relic of the Cold War, Northeast Asia will have established a firm foundation for regional economic and security collaboration.

There is no doubt in my mind that a new, bright future is in store for Northeast Asia. We all have to work together to carry out the September 19 Joint Statement and February 13, 2007, Agreement, the two milestones laid by the Six-Party Talks; in this way, we will nurture our hopes for peace. I expect that the Jeju Peace Forum will yield many viable ideas for materializing the peace process on the Korean peninsula and in Northeast Asia. I am grateful to Jeju citizens as well as the staff and affiliates of the International Peace Foundation and East Asia Foundation for preparing such a nice meeting. Thank you.