

Visions of Peace and Prosperity in East Asia

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My relationship with former President Ramos began long ago. I was part of the first group from the Japanese Youth Overseas Party, and was sent to the Philippines. This took place forty years ago. I visited the farmlands near Mt. Apo on Mindanao Island with my colleagues Mr. Konoyohei and Mr. Hujinami Dakai. Even more memorably, in 1992, after I finished my term as Prime Minister, I attended President Ramos's inauguration ceremony as the representative from Japan. I've also known former Prime Minister Primakov for a long time. We met often during the London summit meeting of 1991. During the Gulf War, Prime Minister Primakov took a leading role in trying to end the fighting by meeting with Saddam Hussein. I also met Prime Minister Lee, Hae-Chan in 2002 in Japan. We had a productive meeting during his visit.

My fellow participants, I am very thankful for being given this opportunity to speak at and take part in the 4th Jeju Peace Forum. I sincerely hope that this meeting on the beautiful island of Jeju will have a lasting effect. Before I go any further, I would like to say something about my history with Korea. I was elected to the Japanese Diet in 1960 as its youngest ever member. My young colleagues and I shared a first goal of building peaceful and friendly relationships with our neighboring countries. At the time, Japan had no basic agreement with Korea, but I was able to visit various parts of Korea with assistance from the Korean National Assembly, sharing our views together. I also visited

the 38th parallel. After the establishment of a basic agreement, I spoke in Japan about the role of the peaceful diplomacy among young generation in reaching the agreement. This was over forty years ago. Afterwards, when I was prime minister in 1990, I met with former president Roh, Tae-Woo over the fingerprinting problem with Japanese-Koreans. The resolution of the problem improved relations between our countries. The Korean government requested that Japanese-Koreans follow the law and act as good citizens.

There is a vital step which must be taken to ensure peace and stability in Northeast Asia. This is the resolution of the ongoing conflict on the Korean peninsula. The issue of kidnapping is a significant problem between Japan and North Korea that has yet to be resolved. South Korea and North Korea have a similar problem. In order to solve the problem and normalize relations with North Korea, Japan has confirmed the intent to resolve the problem in the Pyongyang Declaration during the Six-Party Talks. This was not an easy task, but we expect North Korea's sincere and speedy response. I believe that in speaking of Northeast Asian peace and security, it would be well to speak of peace and security on the Korean peninsula as the same thing. The progress that has been made during the six-party talks by South Korea and the other participants is a positive trend. We strongly urge North Korea to implement its initial promises.

This year is the 400th anniversary of the Chosun Embassy to Japan. My Japanese ancestors received many cultural gifts from the Korean peninsula long ago. I believe that such personal exchanges are important today, especially between the younger generations of our countries. I myself was friends with the famous ceramics artist Shim Soo-Kwan when he was working as the secretary for a member of the Japanese Diet when he was younger. We were college classmates, and he was using the name Osako Keikichi. Annual travel between our countries has grown from 10 thousand in 1965 to over 5 million today. Korean movies, music and food are popular among Japanese people of all ages today. I believe that this is related to and will help advance Korea-Japan relations in the future. I also expect that this growing cultural exchange will lead into increased political exchange as well. The

Japanese government plans to invite six thousand young visitors to Japan annually through the “Plan of Big Exchange for Youth in East Asia.” We expect about a thousand visitors to come from Korea. In the future, Japan plans to cooperate with Korea in working towards peace and security in Northeast Asia, and will do whatever we can to fulfill our role. During my summit with former President Roh, Tae-Woo, we agreed to work towards overcoming the historical differences of the past and creating a better future for the Asia Pacific region. In the future, Japan’s senior volunteers will fulfill their roles when called upon. Thank you for your attention.