

Notes for remarks by the Right Honourable Joe Clark, PC, CC to the Jeju Forum for Peace and Security, 2015, Jeju Island, Republic of Korea, May 21, 2015.

I am honoured to be back in the Republic of Korea and to participate in the Jeju Forum. I celebrate the forward-looking and inclusive approach which this Forum takes to improving the security and strength of Asia Pacific.

This is a troubled time, when much of the world is tempted to turn inward. Yet the Jeju spirit is to reach outward, and to encourage different countries, with different capacities, to face rising challenges -- and to face them together -- making the Asia-Pacific region as a whole much stronger than its considerable parts. I will pursue that theme of building our capacity to grow together.

The partnership between Canadians and Koreans reaches back into the 19th century, and has grown materially as times have changed. More than 25,000 Canadians served in the Korean War, and more than 500 died, re-enforcing a profound human bond between our peoples. More than 170,000 Koreans have chosen to live in Canada, and are among the most accomplished of our citizens, and a key part of a thriving cultural bridge across continents. Canada is proud to be an immigrant nation and, for decades, now, the largest proportion of our new citizens – more than 50% last year – comes from Asia-Pacific, with the result that Canada's population and perspective become more Asian every day.

A signal development in the Canada-Korea partnership is the new Free Trade Agreement between our countries which came into effect on January 1, this year. It is Canada's first free trade agreement across the Pacific – and it accompanies a new strategic partnership

which is broader than trade, and will stimulate our growing co-operation on other common interests, including international development, modernized multilateral arrangements, and the innovation and technology to safely develop the Arctic.

A quarter century ago, multilateral and regional initiatives in Asia-Pacific were relatively rare, outside ASEAN. Today, trade and other agreements, and multilateral co-operation, have been catalysts of unparalleled economic growth and integration. Multilateralism and prosperity grew together. Security co-operation has been slower and, as international turbulence increases, we all must emphasise that vital dimension of our co-operative action, both among formal governments and on track two levels.

Let me reflect on one lesson which Canada and Korea learned by working together. In 1990 Canada initiated the North Pacific Co-operative Security Dialogue – a track-two process -- to encourage a common approach to the tensions in North East Asia. I was Canada's Foreign Minister at the time, and recall, in particular, the leadership in that process of the late, and far-sighted, Dr. Kim Kyung Won. That modest but important initiative encouraged and allowed a frankness and discussion among parties in North-East Asia who had rarely had the chance for broad dialogue.

What is noteworthy is that this dialogue was the sort of initiative which only middle-powers could take, because larger powers were imbedded in, and protective of, their own security arrangements. Indeed, it was an initiative which the relevant larger powers in the region did not encourage. But we went ahead.

Today, there is a natural and enormous role for countries which have the capacity to be dominant powers – specifically the United States of America and the People's Republic of China. There is absolutely no

doubt that their inherent ambition and power, the interests they share, and the tensions between them, are of paramount importance. But other actors matter too, including the growing capacity of the growing number of significant “middle powers”. Korea recognizes that exciting reality, including in the MIKTA consultation group it has initiated with Mexico, Indonesia, Turkey and Australia.

Middle powers matter more today than we once did, because the tensions between dominant powers can lead them to narrow their focus, and often, therefore, to limit their capacity to lead or stimulate change. Middle powers, by contrast, often have much more flexibility in opening new dialogues, reaching across existing boundaries, and encouraging the skeptical or the constrained to explore new options.

There is a long list of essential work in international relations for which middle powers are often better suited than stronger powers:

- * mediation in cases where stronger powers are mistrusted;
- * moderation on issues which might be unpopular or contentious in Washington or Beijing;
- * experimentation when new approaches are necessary;
- * compromises which are often easier for smaller powers to initiate; and
- * simply being in the “middle” and not in the lead.

Often, in a superpower age, leadership had to come from the top. In this era, where several nation-states have significant power, and some non-state actors have increasing influence, there is a need for more leadership from beside. What is central is not who sits at the head of the table, but rather what the various members at that table can accomplish together.

That is unusually important in a period where the challenge is not to provide new pews for those who think alike, but to build opportunities, and alliances, where there is a chance to express, and to reconcile, the significant differences which mark modern times. In significant cases, that broader process can also take account of the rising power of forces that are not nation-states – such as non-governmental organizations, foundations like the Gates Foundation, environmentalists, and socially-responsible corporations – all of which have acquired new prominence, influence and capacity in this modern era.

Being “in the middle” is familiar to both Korea and Canada. We are “middle powers” in both our capacity, and our geography. We each live beside a dominant power.

At Canada’s best, our foreign policy pursued simultaneously two priorities which might be seen as inconsistent. We maintained as close as possible a partnership with our proud and powerful neighbour, the USA, and we pursued as independent and innovative a role as possible in the wider world, with a particular emphasis on relations with countries which were not wealthy, and on encouraging multi-lateral co-operation. We, and other middle powers, were able to lead on issues like development, and peace-keeping, and the Commonwealth campaign against apartheid, and land-mines, and treaty-making, and others.

Each contemporary middle power has its specific interests and strengths. However, we also have a strong shared interest, and that is to make the multilateral system work, because that contributes to an international order based on agreement, not simply power, or force -- and smaller powers, and middle powers, have a greater need for rules and order.

Advancing that shared interest is never easy, and it is clearly important here and now -- now in a period of increasing internal and international conflict, and here, in the broad Asia-Pacific, where there has always been potential turbulence. One urgent defensive issue is to help stabilize the Asia-Pacific region during a dramatic shift in the balances of power and capacity.

But other urgent opportunities also counsel new co-operation, in an era where traditional power is dispersing, new discoveries are becoming commonplace, and genuine partnerships can be more possible and more productive than in earlier times.