

After the DPRK's nuclear test and missile tests earlier this year, the Security Council unanimously tightened sanctions with Council Resolution 2270. I hope its implementation will advance denuclearization on the Korean Peninsula.

The world must hold on a firm line. The DPRK's pursuit of nuclear weapons and ballistic missiles only undermines its own security and hurts its citizens. Military spending remains high while children are wasting. Human rights are systematically abused. The authorities of the DPRK must correct these wrongs.

We must find the path back to dialogue. I encourage the DPRK to cease any further provocations and return to full compliance with international obligations. The rise in tensions on the Korean Peninsula could cast a shadow across Northeast Asia and beyond. I welcome all efforts to move forward. And I stand ready as Secretary-General of the United Nations and also personally to contribute in any way that might be helpful. Good relations between the two Koreas are essential for lasting peace – not only on the Korean Peninsula but throughout the region.

There has been progress in Asia on human rights, my fourth focus. But countries and the region as a whole must do more. The countries of this region are important trading partners. Now they should expand regional cooperation to include human rights.

There has been progress. I welcome the establishment of the ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on human rights and the development of an ASEAN human rights declaration. Many countries across Asia have engaged with the Human Rights Council's Universal Periodic Review. These advances show Asia's potential to confront and end abuses. Success demands freedom for civil society organizations. I am deeply concerned about shrinking democratic space in a number of Asian countries.

I also worry about rising intolerance, hate speech and violence in parts of Asia. Countries must end violations against religious minorities, migrants, refugees, women and girls as well as lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender persons. Many Asian countries show great compassion. When it comes to refugees, Pakistan has been among the world's top host countries for decades in Asia.

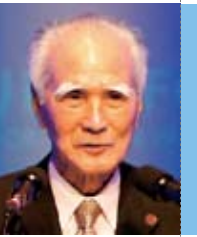
Let us remember that there are Asians in Diaspora communities around the world. They have worked hard, often in tough jobs. They have overcome racial prejudice. They have risen to high ranks in their new societies. They are leaders in business, entertainment and politics and more. These eminent Asians abroad prove the value of embracing others. Migrants and refugees here can enhance Asia.

I call on Asian countries to give new arrivals the chance to make a difference. I treasure Asian culture so much, I study as an amateur calligrapher. One saying I frequently practice writing is “上善若水” which means, “The highest virtue is to act like water.” Water represents wisdom, flexibility and soft power. Asia has the potential to manifest these invaluable qualities. Let us join forces to enable this continent to create a better future, and a better future for all the people around the world. I thank you very much for your leadership.

[Keynote Speech]

A Genuine Apology for Reconciliation

Tomiichi MURAYAMA Former Prime Minister of Japan



For the sake of regional peace and cooperation, the East Asian countries need to bury their legacies of colonial rule and wartime aggression and reach reconciliation amongst themselves. Japan was reborn as a peaceful state after losing the war in 1945. Unfortunately, it did not have enough time to reach a correct historical understanding of its wartime past. In 1995, while serving as the Prime Minister of Japan, I issued what is known as the “Murayama Statement” on the 50th anniversary of the end of World War II. In the statement, I acknowledged Japan's responsibility for the past, stating, “During a certain period in the not too distant past, Japan, following a mistaken national policy, advanced along the road to war, only to ensnare the Japanese people in a fateful crisis, and, through its colonial rule and aggression, caused tremendous damage and suffering to the people of many countries, particularly to those of Asian nations.”

Japan took over Taiwan from China's Qing Dynasty after winning the 1894-1895 Sino-Japanese War and colonized Korea after winning the 1904-1905 Russo-Japanese War. The Murayama Statement offered apologies for the entire history of Japan's 50 year colonial rule over its neighbors, which started with the wars against China and Russia.

The Murayama Statement, which settled as Japan's national policy after I resigned, has been succeeded by prime ministers of the conservative Liberal Democratic Party. In 2010, Prime Minister Naoto Kan of the Democratic Party further acknowledged Japan's responsibility for the past in his statement on the 100th anniversary of the Japan-Korea Annexation Treaty.

The suggestion for a reconsideration of the Murayama Statement, however, by Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, who took office in late 2012, raised concerns both at home and abroad. I was also deeply worried. The Abe government finally issued a statement last August, on the 70th anniversary of the end of World War II, promising that the Murayama Statement will be respected.

The Abe Statement is lengthier and more complicated than the Murayama Statement. Abe's statement says, “after the Great Depression, Japan lost sight of the overall

trends in the world and after the Manchurian Incident, Japan gradually became a challenger to the new international order. ‘Japan took the wrong course and went on a path to war.’” He recognized Japan’s responsibility for the 15-year-long war following the Manchurian Incident. The Abe Statement additionally assesses, “the Russo-Japanese War gave encouragement to many people in Asia and Africa.” The statement did not, however, mention the Sino-Japanese war. In other words, the Abe government refused to reflect upon the Sino-Japanese and Russo-Japanese wars. Without such reflection, the statement did not contain an apology for Japan’s colonial rule over Taiwan and Korea. I might say that the Abe Statement confirmed only half of the Murayama Statement. It is regrettable that the statement showed little considerations for the Korean people.

The Abe Statement, of course, cannot take the place of the Murayama Statement. I assure you that the Murayama Statement will continue to remain as Japan’s national policy.

Being responsible for the wrongdoings of the past is not only about awareness, but also about continued apologies and efforts of penance for Japan’s aggressions and colonial rule. For the last 25 years, many people paid attention to and called for the resolution of the comfort women issue. While running for the Liberal Democratic Party presidency in 2012, Abe pointed to the “necessity for a new statement” to replace the Kono Statement, which is “misunderstood as admitting to the forcible recruitment of comfort women.” Abe’s remarks raised suspicions of a hidden intention, invited strong criticisms from both South Korea and the United States, and drove Japanese-Korean ties into a crisis.

Last December, however, thanks to the continued efforts of South Korean President Park Geun-hye, the foreign ministers of the two countries reached an agreement to resolve the comfort women issue. They determined that the Abe government will apologize to the surviving Korean comfort women and offered to entrust one billion Japanese Yen to the Korean government. I welcome that Prime Minister Abe acknowledged the Japanese government’s responsibility for the comfort women issue and apologized to the Korean victims who suffered as comfort women.

I hope that the accord will be fully implemented and accepted by the Korean victims and activist groups, thus solving the issue and allowing the two countries to move towards reconciliation. To that end, I propose that Prime Minister Abe’s apology, as expressed in the agreement between the two countries on Dec. 28, 2015, be delivered in a letter to the comfort women victims in person. In the past, a letter of apology signed by Ryutaro Hashimoto, Keizo Obuchi, Yoshiro Mori, and Junichiro Koizumi was sent to the Korean victims via the Asia Women’s Fund, which was established when I was in office, but it was unfortunately rejected by most of the Korean victims. I think it is now appropriate for Prime Minister Abe to have it delivered to each victim via the Japanese ambassador to Seoul. I hope that the surviving victims, many of whom are elderly and sick, accept the letter and take it as a sign of a heartfelt apology.

I recently met with Foreign Minister Fumio Kishida to propose this apology letter. I also hope that the discussions in Seoul and consultations between Seoul and Tokyo proceed towards solutions.

I would like to additionally stress the efforts to prevent another war, an essential condition for the peace and common prosperity of the Asian region. Already torn apart by Japanese aggression for 50 years, Northeast Asia was damaged again by a succes-

sion of wars, including the Chinese Civil War, the Korean War, and the Vietnam War, for another 30 years. Today, 40 years after the Vietnam War’s end, North Korea is causing tensions to rise in Northeast Asia. North Korea’s nuclear arms tests and missile launches are followed by repeated sanctions by the United Nations Security Council, led by the United States and Japan. As North Korea is driven towards adverse conditions, and stronger sanctions are imposed, the situation cannot but turn for the worse, and North Korea must be increasing its stock of nuclear weapons. If the young leader of North Korea misjudges the situation, it is likely to end in military conflict.

When a war breaks out on the Korean Peninsula, Japan has no choice but to join because North Korean missiles are capable of reaching Japan. This situation would be a fatal catastrophe for South Korea, North Korea, and Japan. This is why military conflict must be avoided at all costs, and why North Korea should also refrain from provocative actions.

North Korea does not have diplomatic ties with the United States and Japan. Moreover, North Korea is the only country with which the United States and Japan have no diplomatic relations. Japan has to resolve the colonial rule issue with North Korea. The United States is independent, but Japan cannot afford to live in conflict its neighbors. Japan should consider improving relations with North Korea through whatever means it takes. If Japan wishes for North Korea to abandon nuclear ambitions, Tokyo needs to start by establishing diplomatic ties and building a friendly relationship with Pyongyang.

As trade between Japan and North Korea was terminated, maritime traffic between the countries is not allowed. This means, in fact, that Japan is hostile towards North Korea. Opening diplomatic ties between Japan and North Korea will help the two Koreas improve their relationship as well.

Another Northeast Asian issue is the Senkaku Islands dispute between China and Japan. Although tensions over the island eased recently, China and Japan have experienced tense moments regarding the islands. The Abe government is making efforts to solicit United States forces’ cooperation in cases of contingencies, as the Self-Defense Forces of Japan are primarily designed to defend its remote islands. Japan and China are both making territorial claims that directly clash over the islands. In my opinion, Japan has to acknowledge that the territorial dispute is inevitable as both sides have their own rationales for making the claims. When it was reborn as a peaceful state, however, Japan pledged to not stage war against China. With that in mind, there should never be an armed conflict over the Senkaku Islands. I suggest that Japan and China join hands and develop the Senkaku Islands into an island of peace.

My speech has focused on Northeast Asia and issues involving the region. The views expressed today, I believe, are in line with the principles of the Japanese Constitution. Japan has chosen for the last 70 years to stay away from war. It is now time for Japan to open a path to peace. Today, Japan is seriously divided over Abe’s remarks on revising the country’s pacifist Constitution. The path to peace is a long and winding road. We desperately need the understanding and cooperation of each country in East Asia.

Last year I had a chance to visit Beijing. I had a meeting with President Xi Jinping at Tiananmen Square. He told me, “China will never pursue imperialism under any circumstances. China, if possible, would like to team up with Japan to contribute to Asia’s peace and prosperity.” His remarks greatly impressed me. Let’s join hands and march towards peace together.