

14th Jeju Forum Opening Ceremony

[Keynote Speaker]

Malcolm TURNBULL Former Prime Minister of Australia



Governor Won Heeryong. Thank you so much for holding this forum and inviting us here today. Your vision for a resilient peace in our region is as inspiring as it is timely. I want to thank you for the extraordinary hospitality that you have shown and the way in which the forum is addressing so many of the threats to peace and the ways in which we can work together to meet them. Your invitation for Chairman Kim Jong-un to come to Jeju for the peace forum next year is very timely. It really is and if Kim Jong-un walks up Mt. Hallasan, like me and the US Ambassador Admiral Harris did yesterday, he will be doubly inspired to work harder towards peace.

Peace here on the Korean Peninsula has been hard won. Australians – 17,000 of them – served to defend South Korea’s freedom nearly seventy years ago, and 340 paid the supreme sacrifice. The battlefield was far from Australia, but the cause of freedom was close to our heart.

We stand side by side in supporting the rules-based order. The rule of law is the foundation for peace and prosperity in this vibrant region of much economic opportunity. Our nations understand that the key to maximising those opportunities is our support for free

and fair trade and open markets. As former President of Austria Heinz Fischer just reminded us – economic cooperation makes political cooperation easier.

Korea is Australia’s fourth-largest two-way trading partner. The Korea-Australia Free Trade Agreement (KAFTA) came into effect on December 2014, slashing tariffs and ensuring 99% of Australian exports into Korea enter either duty-free or with preferential access. Those deals make our economies stronger and they create more opportunities for our people. But perhaps, just as importantly, they create strategic partnerships that aid in upholding that rules-based order.

We are stronger when we work together. We understand that more than ever, as the world enters uncertain geopolitical times, that the Asian region is the centre of the global economy today. Japanese Prime Minister Abe Shinzo and I showed how influential our region could be when we revived the Trans-Pacific Partnership after President Trump withdrew in 2017. Many said the Trans-Pacific Partnership was dead. However, Shinzo and I found a way to keep it going and to convince the rest of the region, the rest of the parties to the TPP, it was not. So it had been the TPP-12, now it is the TPP-11, but it is

still one of the world’s largest trade deals, joining \$13 trillion worth of economies together. I hope that before too long the Republic of Korea will join the TPP and it will be a TPP-12 once more.

The region has seen the greatest economic growth and human advancement the world has ever known over the last 40 years. Just 40 years have seen this extraordinary growth. And these times in which we live, of change that is unprecedented both its scale and its pace are the most exciting times in human history and we should be optimistic about the future. But with all of those opportunities come risks. Strong economies create stronger militaries and military capability. Increased wealth creates a stronger strategic ambition among nations. Combine strategic ambition with military strength and you create potential regional flashpoints – flashpoints to which we must be alert. That is why more than ever before we have to share these challenges with trusted allies and friends in our region.

While the Cold War is long behind us – and again President Fischer spoke so magnificently about the history of Europe, of the Cold War and its legacy – there is a tendency still to focus on the superpowers – China and the United States – and certainly recent tensions encourage them to do that. But it is the wrong perspective. We should not think of the nations in our region connecting only via the capitals of the superpowers like spokes connecting to the hub of a wheel, but rather as an interconnected mesh supporting each other, defending the rule of law which ensures that might is not right.

Graham Allison is here at this conference and he wrote a superb work about the Thucydides Trap. He refers to the first chapter of the Athenian General Thucydides’ history of the war between Athens and Sparta in which Thucydides goes through all the various events that caused this great war. But summing it up he said the real reason was that the Spartans were anxious about the rising power of Athens. This Thucydides Trap President Xi Jinping has talked about being an important one for China to avoid as its power rises and the anxiety about rising power can cause conflict in and of itself. And that is a

very important insight and Professor Allison has done an enormous service in reacquainting everyone with that great history.

The real objective for us in this region however, for countries that are not one of the two great superpowers – not China or the United States – is to ensure that we do not fall into the situation described in another book of Thucydides history – book five – where the Athenian ambassadors go to the island of Melos and demand that it submit. The Melians said “we want to stay independent, we want to be free,” and the Athenians said “you know, as well as we do, that in the world justice is found only between equals in power because the strong do as they will and the weak suffer as they must.” And that is what we must not allow in our region. We must work together to defend the rule of law to ensure that might is not right. This was the objective of my Government’s foreign policy, explained in the Foreign Policy White Paper and evident in practical outcomes, not just the TPP-11, but also a free trade agreement and Comprehensive Strategic Partnership with our closest neighbour Indonesia. One of whose former Foreign Ministers Marty Natalegawa is here with us today.

You can see how important this reaching out has also been in Prime Minister Abe’s foreign policy. While Prime Minister Abe has been a very generous host to President Trump – especially in the last few days – note how he is also busy in every other capital, extending Japan’s global reach and influence.

Now, Australia has always been rock solid in its support for South Korea as it stands up to threats from the North Korean regime. As Prime Minister, I supported the imposition of tougher sanctions on North Korea and our military are working with our allies to support the enforcement of them.

China’s enforcement of sanctions has been particularly important and while China is absolutely not responsible for the reckless conduct of North Korea it does have the greatest economic leverage over the regime. So China’s cooperation in putting pressure on the North Korean regime has been absolutely critical.

Ultimately the deal that can be done would – as Governor Won described – be a security guarantee, from the United States and China, in return for complete denuclearisation. There has been talk about historical precedents and at one point Libya was mentioned, which was hardly an encouraging one from Kim Jong-un’s point of view.

The better precedent was Cuba, where more than fifty years ago the United States agreed with the Soviet Union that if the nuclear missiles were removed, it would not seek to overthrow the communist regime in Havana. That assurance has been complied with ever since, notwithstanding the fall decades ago of the Soviet Union. The mistake the United States made with Cuba however was for domestic political reasons within the United States to maintain an economic embargo on that island which simply served to entrench the Castro regime. That is a lesson that can be recalled in future discussions and negotiations with North Korea. So in my view President Trump has the right objectives for North Korea – in return for

denuclearisation, an end to sanctions and an assurance that the United States will not take advantage of that denuclearisation to overthrow the regime.

Our region is the most dynamic in the world and it is of unlimited economic opportunities and growth. We should continue to encourage free trade and open markets. We want to see the Trans-Pacific Partnership expand and in due course the United States return to the TPP. Greater strategic alliances enable us to welcome and work with China and its economic advancement.

The growth of China’s economy has been the most remarkable achievement – hundreds of millions of people lifted out of poverty. A country when Deng Xiaoping went south and evoked the memory of the great Chinese admiral Zheng He who ventured across the Indian Ocean. When Deng did that China’s trade was a tiny fraction of global trade. Now China is – depending on the measure – either the largest or the second-largest economy in the world. It has been a remarkable transformation and the region has



benefited from it. But what has enabled it has been the maintenance of peace and the rules-based order and that is what we must continue.

It is vital that like-minded nations like Korea, like Japan, like Australia, are part of a united coalition. We achieve so much more when we work together. President Fischer, again, reminds us of how important that shared democratic vision is to secure peace.

So I thank you again. Governor Won for inviting me here today. It is a great honour, it is inspiring to be here with you all committed to peace and the maintenance of the rules-based order in Asia which has seen the most remarkable transformation from poverty to prosperity in all of human history. Peace has made it possible; the maintenance of that peace must be our goal. In the words of the 34th Psalm “we should seek peace and pursue it,” pursue it relentlessly, tirelessly regardless of how many disappointments there are along the way because that goal is what will enable us to maintain our prosperity and our freedom in the years ahead.

Thank you.