

## JU CHUL-KI

Senior Secretary for Foreign Affairs and National Security, Office of the President of the Republic of Korea

**Choi Young-Jin, Professor at Yonsei University Graduate School of International Studies, former Ambassador to the US, former Head of the UN Mission in Côte d'Ivoire**

Thank you, Thomas, for your presentation. I think it is very important for you to underline the differences rather than the similarities between Germany and Korea because from Korea's perspective, when dealing with North Korea, the most serious obstacle comes from North Korea itself, as Pyongyang is very much afraid of contact with South Korea, the rapprochement and interaction. That is the most important difference between the Korean and German cases. In the case of Germany, East Germany was eager to embrace and follow suit with West Germany's overture for rapprochement between the two Germanys, but in the case of Korea, North Korea is still very reluctant and afraid of any gestures from South Korea because they see all of them as Trojan horses.

We have an expert on this issue, JU Chul-Ki, who served as ambassador to France, Morocco and Mauritania, and currently serves as the senior advisor for foreign policy and security for the President of the Republic of Korea. He will explain, I hope, the current government's approach to the reunification policy in Northeast Asia.

**Ju Chul-Ki, Senior Secretary for Foreign Affairs and National Security, Office of the President of the Republic of Korea**

It's my pleasure to join such a distinguished group of speakers today.

Also, my congratulations to President de Montbrial and the WPC on this timely and important conference. Indeed, it's hard to overstate the significance of today's gathering, given all that is happening in this part of the world.

Given the growing geopolitical and economic heft of this region, what happens here inevitably has broader repercussions elsewhere in the world.

The views presented at this conference, particularly by those from outside this region, will help enrich the debates that help shape dynamics in Northeast Asia in a positive direction.

In the interest of time, I will give a brief lay of the land on the Korean Peninsula and Northeast Asia,

### **The Korean Peninsula**

Next year marks the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the division of the Korean Peninsula. During those seven decades, South Korea evolved into a vibrant democracy with one of the most dynamic economies, while North Korea has been undergoing deeper international isolation and economic disfunction, not least because of its pursuit of nuclear weapons. It is the people of North Korea that suffer as a result.

North Korea's nuclear program poses a direct threat to the security of all countries in this region and beyond. Left unchecked, it could potentially jeopardize the entire non-proliferation regime. Over the last twenty years, collective efforts have been made to achieve North Korea's denuclearization. Yet, very little progress has been made to date. Whereas the P5+1 continues to engage in intense diplomacy on the Iranian nuclear issue, the Six Party Talks is in its sixth year of hiatus, and counting.

If we are to prevent the next twenty years, or the next seventy years, from being a repeat of the last twenty when North Korea was able to build up its nuclear stockpile, or the last seventy when South and North Korea faced each other off, we must be serious about taking a fresh and creative look at moving forward.

The Korean Government is pursuing a multi-pronged process. We seek to restart the Six Party Talks, while



simultaneously pushing for direct inter-Korean dialogue with Pyongyang to cooperate in ways that would help lay the groundwork for our eventual reunification. These include tackling humanitarian challenges, ways to help improve the livelihood of ordinary North Koreans, and ways to restore a sense of common identity as one people. We will of course observe UN sanctions in this process.

We also believe that North Korea's dire human rights situation must be improved. In this regard, we welcome the increased international momentum that this year has seen.

At the same time, North Korea's provocations will be met firmly. In this respect, maintaining a strong Korea-US alliance is very much valid.

Success in denuclearizing North Korea will offer a test-bed for spurring progress in achieving broader non-proliferation goals around the world.

Ultimately, as President Park has been saying, unification can be the silver bullet to resolving many of the key challenges that plague the Korean Peninsula such as the nuclear issue, human rights abuses, and North Korea's social economic challenges. A unification preparation committee has already been launched with a view to paving the way to unification. And we deeply appreciate the support of our partners in the international community for unification.

### **Northeast Asia**

Our approach to the North Korean nuclear issue could also be aided by a regional multilateral security dialogue. For such a framework can help address insecurities that North Korea might have about giving up its nuclear weapons.

But the significance of a regional architecture in Northeast Asia would go beyond its potential contributions to resolving the North Korean question.

This region lies at the intersection of the three largest economies in the world, and has benefited tremendously from globalization. Yet, historical and territorial tensions stand in the way of Northeast Asia's ability to unleash its full potential. A regional mechanism has the potential to mitigate geopolitical tensions and rivalries in the region.

The need for a regional architecture in Northeast Asia is widely recognized, not least by our partners in Europe who are at the avant-garde of regional cooperation.

Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon also stressed a similar point at last month's East Asia Summit in Myanmar. He pointed out that Northeast Asia remains the crucial missing link in UN engagement with regional or sub-regional organizations under Chapter VIII of the UN Charter. He called on the region to explore creating a new security architecture and applauded the Korean Government's initiative to fill this gap.

Such regional mechanisms obviously don't come overnight. Habits of cooperation need to be cultivated. And it is easier to build up such habits of cooperation from soft issues rather than from hard security issues. As countries in the region get used to mutual collaboration in areas like nuclear safety, disaster management, climate action, energy security, they can develop a level of trust necessary for tackling more challenging political and security issues.

Such multilateral cooperation in Northeast Asia can also reinforce the momentum for progress on the nuclear front and in inter-Korean dialogue.

A strengthened security-dialogue structure in Northeast Asia can also interact with other regional groupings like ASEAN, ARF, ASEM as a way of inter-regional cooperation to support world peace and stability.

I hope that the WPC can serve as platforms that generate support for filling the missing links of global connectivity.

### **Global challenges**

As Northeast Asia continues to grow in geopolitical and economic importance, it is increasingly being looked upon to play – one way or another - a greater role in tackling global challenges, be it the fight against climate change, contagious diseases, or terrorism.

Until now, it was the West that has widely been expected to bear the lion's share of contributions for the global commons. Today, it is difficult to imagine plausible solutions to global challenges that do not include Northeast Asia.

And there is cause for optimism. In the campaign against the Ebola virus, for instance, we see China making huge contributions in manpower and treasure, following the leadership demonstrated by the US and key European countries. Japan is providing sizable financial assistance and Korea is also stepping up to send health workers to fight the Ebola virus in West Africa. Likewise, Northeast Asian countries have recently announced significant steps to



tackle global warming.

Hence, the role that Northeast Asia is expected to play, and will be playing, to meet the host of challenges facing humanity, will likely grow. Indeed, Northeast Asia's cooperation is becoming increasingly indispensable to dealing with global issues, and I hope to see it increase.

### **Final remarks**

As I mentioned earlier, next year will mark seventy years since the Korean Peninsula was divided. But it is also an immensely symbolic year for virtually all the countries that are represented in this conference.

And as the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the end of a war that has shaken every corner of our world approaches, we see how every region continues to be beset with its own set of challenges.

This is not cause for despondence, but for renewed determination to learn from the past and do more to improve our world.

Only then will we be able to tell our children that the world is more peaceful, safer, better, and cleaner than it was some 70 years ago.

This is what we seek to achieve here on the Korean Peninsula.

And we count on your continued support along this journey.