



THIERRY DE MONTBRIAL

President and Founder of the World Policy Conference

Madam President, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Since the first World Policy Conference in 2008, in Evian, Korea has been one of its most important partners and its main partner in Asia. This is no surprise, this nation being one of the leading “middle powers” on the planet, with values similar to those that underpin the European Union. Madam President, your diplomacy is working toward peaceful reunification across the peninsula, and recommends that confidence building measures be implemented in East Asia (“Trust Politik”). It also recommends an ambitious policy toward openness for the whole of Eurasia. Korea is a prominent and active member of the most important international organizations and successfully organized the 2010 G20 meeting.

By agreeing to open the 7th edition of the World Policy Conference, which is also a club, Madam President, you showed that the WPC and thus its objectives are welcome in your country. We aim to contribute to improving all aspects of local and regional governance, with a view to promoting a world that is more open, more prosperous, fairer and more respectful of the diversity of States and nations. We believe that collective security and Balance of Power are complementary goods and that, although the greatest powers hold special responsibilities for a world order to exist, such an order, in the in the XXIst century, should not look like a division of the planet into spheres of influence. To that end, regional organizations should be strengthened within the United Nations framework. They should emphasize the role of Middle powers, such as Korea, which are both eager to dedicate resources to the international system’s structural stability, above and beyond their immediate interests, and capable of doing so.

Since our last meeting in Monaco a year ago, the state of the world has not improved in any way. The absence of a regional security system in East Asia puts stability at stake in this part of the world. Nonetheless, the diplomatic effort toward closer relations currently emerging between Japan and China must be hailed. It is indeed a constructive step forward when the existence of disagreements can be recognized and progress nonetheless sought on other issues. In the Middle East, where our civilization is challenged by barbarian forces, there is a glimmer of hope that an agreement will be reached with Teheran on nuclear arms, which would then pave the way for broader cooperation in a region that has become even more chaotic since the sudden advent of the so-called “Islamic State”. However, it is a flickering glimmer and the status of domestic politics today, both in the United States and Iran, do not bode well for a major breakthrough. Terrorism is also rearing its ugly head in Africa, where the havoc wrecked by the Ebola virus offers a reminder that human health and the climate are central factors in global governance. Year 2014 has also been shaped by the severe decline in the relations between Russia and the West around the question of Ukraine, with multiple geopolitical and geo-economic consequences, including the weakening of the European security system built during the Cold War. All that beg for apt analysis. The rise of nationalism and populism is not specific to Russia; it is a potentially serious threat to the lasting prospect of an open world, especially in case of a new major economic or financial crisis.

These and other major issues, such as inequalities, will be addressed at this 7th edition of the WPC, where it will also be our responsibility to strive for a better understanding of how these different issues interconnect. More than at previous sessions, we will naturally take an Asian perspective, though never losing sight of the fact that WPC’s soul is European. Let me emphasize again in concluding that the WPC, at its annual meeting, which is on a human scale, brings together leading figures from the five continents – political and business leaders, representatives of civil society, academics and journalists – in a climate of trust and a spirit of tolerance, to examine, discuss and suggest constructive solutions to major regional and international challenges.