

**Korea-UN : Global Partnership in a
New Era**

Remarks by

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At a luncheon to commemorate United Nations Day

October 20, 2004

Seoul

**Ambassador Park Soo-gil, President of the United Nations Association of the Republic of Korea,
The Honorable Kang Young-hoon, Former Prime Minister,
Excellencies, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,**

It is indeed a great pleasure to be here with you to commemorate the 59th United Nations Day. I would like to begin by extending my thanks to the United Nations Association of Korea for giving me the opportunity to address such an eminent audience on this important day.

The United Nations brings countries together. It is also in the face of common threats that countries unite. In the times in which we live, there is perhaps no greater common threat than that posed by international terrorism.

The tragic events of September 11 in the United States not only represented the beginning of a new era for the American people but indeed all people of the world. Unfortunately, the stark reality is that there is no sanctuary from terrorism on this planet.

The Republic of Korea is no exception : we ourselves are not immune from the fear of terrorism. The heinous murder of a young Korean in Iraq last June at the hands of a terrorist group is vividly imprinted on our minds. Undeniably, we are in the midst of a war against terrorism.

The containment and eventual eradication of terrorism are of crucial importance for the maintenance of world peace and security. The United Nations, a universal organization, should be at the forefront in the war against terrorism. It is against this backdrop that we are pleased to join in the efforts of the United Nations to restore peace and democracy in Iraq.

It is our solemn duty to assist the United Nations in discharging its mandate in maintaining peace and security in the world. This duty may stem from the fact that the Republic of Korea is a member of the organization. But the sense of duty we feel may be more a demonstration of the inseparable and long standing links between the Republic of Korea and the United Nations.

The Republic of Korea is a great champion of the values the UN espouses and is a testament to the peace and prosperity that spring from them. The ideals that have served as a guiding light for the global body are one and the same as those that have enabled this nation to flourish.

In keeping with our firm belief in the mission of the United Nations, we are playing a full part in the work of the United Nations. This has been growing also with the increasing economic and political standing of our country on the world stage.

I am very proud of our successful carrying out of the Presidency of the 56th Session of the General Assembly of the United Nations. I served as a Chef de Cabinet of the Presidency. It was under our Presidency that the UN overcame a time of great turbulence and untold sorrow in human history, created by a barbaric terrorist group on September 11, 2001. The leadership the ROK demonstrated was greatly appreciated by the world community.

Our contribution to the activities of the United Nations extends also to its budget. As you are well aware, we rank as the eleventh largest contributor to the United Nations in financial terms.

One indication of our great commitment to the UN is that we are pursuing non-permanent membership in the Security Council for the period of 2007-2008. In this regard also we are actively participating in the debate for the reform of the Security Council and the United Nations as a whole.

(Reform of the United Nations)

Distinguished Guests,

Last month I visited New York to speak at the General Debate of the UN General Assembly. Throughout, the calls from Member States for reform of the world body were to be heard resonating around the Plenary Hall.

As the Secretary-General has indicated, the world body now stands at a fork in the road. Its principles and goals are as just and relevant as they were at its inception. But the question has arisen of how the United Nations can be strengthened, how it can become more efficient and effective. These are questions that need to be answered. The answers to these questions entail a number of undertakings on which we must all work together.

No doubt, the reform of the Security Council will continue to be a crucial task. In light of the growing interest in this at the domestic and international levels, I wish to underline the guiding principles that the Korean government has embraced in this regard.

First of all, we share the view that the Security Council should be expanded to adequately reflect the increase in the membership of the United Nations in recent decades. Moreover, in light of its importance to all Member States, we believe that reform must be conducted with the general agreement of the Membership. This will be the path to unity in the international community rather than division among nations.

The reform of the Council must be carried out in such a way as to make it more representative and democratic. In other words, the expansion of the Council should enable more countries to participate more often on a basis of more equitable geographical distribution.

An increase in permanent members in the Council would not serve these goals. The Korean government supports the alternative option of expanding the number of democratically elected members. This would accord those member states willing and able to contribute to international peace and security, greater opportunities to serve on the Security Council.

As the eleventh-largest donor to the United Nations budget, it is appropriate that Korea should play a greater role, one concomitant with our level of financial commitment. It is against this backdrop that we envision a reformed Security Council in which active players such as Korea are given the opportunity to play an even more constructive role.

(Situation on the Korean Peninsula)

Distinguished Guests,

I would now like to take this opportunity to share with you today some brief comments on Korea's major foreign policy issues which are related to the maintenance of peace and security on the Korean Peninsula. I believe that touching upon these issues is timely and relevant in the sense that the UN has been involved in the security situation on the Korean Peninsula.

Since the launch of the current administration in February of last year, we have taken steps forward in efforts to cope with the major issues on the security agenda. Key amongst these, of course, are the North Korean nuclear issue, inter-Korean relations and the realignment of the ROK-US alliance.

As we rise to the host of challenging issues before us, the paramount task for the Korean government is the pursuit of its underlying goal of promoting peace and prosperity on the Korean Peninsula and beyond.

I wish, therefore, to offer some brief comments on the North Korean nuclear issue, one of the most crucial tasks that lie ahead of us.

The government of the Republic of Korea has been actively striving to achieve a peaceful resolution to this issue through the Six-Party Talks, which have developed into an institutionalized dialogue process.

It is our heartfelt wish that North Korea will make the strategic decision to renounce all nuclear programs, including uranium enrichment programs, in a thorough and transparent manner.

I very much hope that the DPRK will return to the negotiating table without preconditions, so that the fourth round of the talks may be held as soon as possible. It is again my earnest hope that we will soon be able to engage in substantive discussions on concrete steps toward the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula.

Distinguished Guests,

Under the peace and prosperity policy initiative, in tandem with efforts to seek a peaceful resolution of the North Korean nuclear issue, the Korean Government is endeavoring to ensure steady advances in inter-Korean relations.

Indeed, government-level meetings between the two Koreas have been institutionalized. As many as 90 such meetings have been held over the past two years. Furthermore, remarkable progress is also being made in major projects for economic cooperation, notably the reconnection of roads and railways.

In particular, the launch of operations at the Gaesong Industrial Complex scheduled for later this year will mark a significant milestone in inter-Korean cooperation. This project will provide an invaluable opportunity for small and medium-sized enterprises from South Korea to gain even greater competitiveness and benefit from the labor and land North Korea has to offer.

As a result of such efforts we believe that inter-Korean exchanges and cooperation have now reached something of a point of no return. And we are convinced that inter-Korean reconciliation and cooperation will serve to anchor peace and prosperity on the Korean Peninsula and beyond.

Distinguished Guests

At this point I would also like to clarify the matter of the two cases of past scientific experiments involving nuclear materials in Korea that have been the focus of world attention. Despite my government's report of the recent discoveries of the experiments, there seems to be some misunderstanding and speculation with respect to the transparency of South Korea's peaceful nuclear activities.

The government of Korea wishes to clarify that these experiments were isolated, laboratory-scale research activities that a few scientists conducted on their own for purely experimental purposes. My government, in good faith and with full transparency, has been providing unimpeded cooperation to the IAEA in its efforts to review and verify our declarations on nuclear research activities.

Furthermore, to reaffirm our principle of nuclear

nonproliferation and full transparency, on September 18, my government declared the Four Principles on the Peaceful Use of Nuclear Energy. With these principles we have underlined: that we have no intention of developing or possessing nuclear weapons; that we firmly maintain the principle of nuclear transparency and will strengthen cooperation with the international community to this end; that we will abide by international agreements on nuclear nonproliferation; and lastly that, on a basis of international trust, we will expand the peaceful use of nuclear energy.

Let there be no mistake; the Republic of Korea's determination not to pursue any nuclear programs other than for the peaceful use of nuclear energy remains unflinching. There is no cause whatsoever for doubt about this.

(ROK-US Alliance)

I would now like to turn to the ROK-US alliance, which has served as a linchpin for peace and prosperity in Korea. Currently the structure of the US forces in Korea is undergoing a significant evolution to reflect the changing security environment at the global and regional levels as well as advances in military technology.

As we deal with the reduction and relocation of the US forces in Korea there is a common understanding uniting the two sides. We share a firm conviction that the reduction should be carried out in such a way as to enhance combined defense capabilities, taking into full account the unique security situation on the Korean Peninsula.

There can be no doubt that Korea and the United States will keep their alliance strong, efficient and relevant. The ROK-US alliance will continue to serve as a central pillar for peace and prosperity on and around the Korean Peninsula.

As you know, US Secretary of State Colin Powell is

scheduled to visit Korea next week. His visit will provide a good opportunity for the Korean and US sides to engage in an in-depth exchange of views on a wide range of issues of common interest, such as the North Korean nuclear issue. The scheduling of this visit also serves to illustrate how closely the two countries are consulting with each other despite our heavy domestic political calendars.

(Closing Remarks)

Mr. President, Distinguished Guests,

The international community has great expectations of the United Nations when it comes to meeting the challenges of the 21st century. We look forward to the UN maximizing upon the opportunities this new century brings. This global body provides a unique forum for all the countries of the world to come together in a spirit of mutual respect and cooperation to seek solutions to common problems.

It is for this reason that the Korean people have

been unswerving supporters of the United Nations and always placed great importance on the commemoration of the annual UN Day.

The Republic of Korea reaffirms its commitment to pooling its efforts with other member states to make the United Nations more relevant and efficient, and thus better able to meet the global challenges ahead. The political will of every single member state is crucial to this end. The words of Eleanor Roosevelt are as true today as they were in 1954 when she remarked: “The United Nations functions just as well as the member nations make it function, and no better or worse.”

Thank you.