

# Inter-Korean Summit and the South-North Joint Declaration of June 15th, 2000

## South-North Joint Declaration

In accordance with the noble will of the entire people who yearn for the peaceful reunification of the nation, President Kim Dae-jung of the Republic of Korea and National Defense Commission Chairman Kim Jong-il of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea held a historic meeting and summit talks in Pyongyang from June 13 to June 15, 2000.

The leaders of the South and the North, recognizing that the meeting and the summit talks, the first since the division of the country, were of great significance in promoting mutual understanding, developing South-North relations and realizing peaceful reunification, declared as follows:

1. The South and the North have agreed to resolve the question of reunification independently and through the joint efforts of the Korean people, who are the masters of the country.

2. Acknowledging that there is a common element in the South's proposal for a confederation and the North's proposal for a loose form of federation as the formulae for achieving reunification, the South and the North agreed to promote reunification in that direction.

3. The South and the North have agreed to promptly resolve humanitarian issues such as exchange visits by separated family members and relatives on the occasion of the August 15 National Liberation Day and the question of unswerving Communists who have been given long prison sentences in the South.

4. The South and the North have agreed to consolidate mutual trust by promoting balanced development of the national economy through economic cooperation and by stimulating cooperation and exchanges in civic, cultural, sports, public health, environmental and all other fields.

5. The South and the North have agreed to hold a dialogue between relevant authorities in the near future to implement the above agreement expeditiously.

President Kim Dae-jung cordially invited National Defense Commission Chairman Kim Jong-il to visit Seoul, and Chairman Kim Jong-il decided to visit Seoul at an appropriate time.

## **Background for the South-North Joint Declaration**

*A historic decision by President Kim Dae-jung and Chairman Kim Jong-il*

The leaders of the South and North sincerely discussed the question of the survival and future of the people, and came closer in their opinion that dialogue and cooperation is the only way to prevent the deepening of national division, to achieve common prosperity and advance peaceful unification. The two leaders could reach the historic decision, based on a consensus that peace and reconciliation-cooperation coincided with the national interest, which will head for the future rather than the past.

*The receding of the Cold War and an atmosphere for peace on the Korean Peninsula*

A climate of reconciliation is definitely taking root on the

Korean Peninsula, which has remained the sole remnant of the Cold War over the past decade following the end of the Cold War in other parts of the world. South Korea's positive promotion of policies for reconciliation and cooperation has helped improve cooperative relations substantially between the South and North. In addition, international society, including the neighboring four countries, have continuously called for peace and stability on the Korean Peninsula through dialogues between relevant authorities of the South and North. North Korea has also recognized the need to adjust its domestic and foreign policies in a pragmatic direction, in order to adapt itself to the international climate in the post-Cold War era.

*A basis for understanding and trust between the South and North*

The leaders of the South and North were able to produce the agreement by expanding the scope of their mutual understanding and trust, with their resolve to transform inter-Korean relations hitherto marked by distrust, confrontation and antagonism into one based on cooperation and common recognition of current world trends. President Kim and Chairman Kim fully respected each other's position and worked toward realizing the agreement in their frank and open-minded talks, for the cause of the common interest of the people. They strove to make their dialogue productive and to reach agreement by recognizing differences and discovering common features.

*North Korea's positive recognition of the South's reconciliatory and cooperative policies toward the North*

North Korea has come to understand and trust the South's reconciliatory and cooperative policies, which the Kim Dae-jung administration has pushed through consistently since its inauguration, and this built a foundation for the realization of the summit talks and the adoption of the South-North Joint Declaration.

The South and North agreed on this occasion to respect the principles of the existing agreements and to launch concrete pro-

jects to translate them into action. This testifies that the South Korean government will maintain its reconciliatory and cooperative policies consistently matched the direction of North Korea's policy adjustment.

*Public support and international cooperation for the reconciliatory and cooperative policies toward the North*

Based on public support of the policies for peace and reconciliation-cooperation, the South has been able to maintain its policies in a consistent way, and this has helped the South win extensive support from international society for its North Korea policy and induce the change of North Korea's attitude. Meanwhile, the policy coordination among South Korea, the United States and Japan (Perry Process) based on South Korea's reconciliatory and cooperative policy has helped create a favorable climate for North Korea's participation in the international community. China and Russia also offered positive cooperation toward efforts for the peace and stability on the Korean Peninsula and the international community recommended inter-Korean dialogues.

## **Significance of the South-North Joint Declaration**

*This is the first agreement signed by the leaders of South and North Korea in the 55 years since the division of the nation.*

In view of current inter-Korean relations, the attitudes and thoughts of the top leaders are critically important. The agreement will have binding force on future inter-Korean relations because the two leaders had face-to-face meetings and confirmed their will on peace, reconciliation and cooperation and agreed on concrete action plans, after reviewing their respective stands.

President Kim particularly emphasized that now is the time for the South and North Korean leaders to lead the way for charting the future of the nation, amid the new global order and civilization characterized by the collapse of the Cold War as well as advances in information and globalization.

*The Declaration confirms the principle that inter-Korean issues should be resolved by South and North Korea.*

Establishment of peace on the Korean Peninsula, inter-Korean cooperation and national unification are issues that the South and the North should play principal roles in resolving through dialogue and negotiations. The international community has lent support to this principle, which was also reaffirmed by the South-North Basic Agreement of 1992. By reaffirming this principle in their Joint Declaration, the leaders of South and North Korea made a commitment to the world that the Korean people would strive to carve out the future of their nations by themselves.

*There is firm agreement on the prevention of war and settlement of peace on the Korean Peninsula.*

President Kim emphasized that the eruption of war on the Korean Peninsula would result in the destruction of the nation and that nothing would be achieved by means of war. In accordance with this spirit, the South and North will implement measures such as the opening of direct military hotlines, the suspension of mutual denunciation and acts of destruction and insurrection. As the South and North are set to build a structure of peace based on mutual trust as well as the reduction of threats against each other, they will be able to achieve the goal of ending the Cold War on the Korean Peninsula.

*This is a valuable opportunity to put inter-Korean relations on the right track and hold sincere dialogue on the issue of national unification, based on today's reality.*

Through the summit talks the leaders of the South and North have reaffirmed the principles and means which are set out in the South-North Joint Communique of 1972 and the South-North Basic Agreement of 1992, and both sides are required to put them into practice. The two leaders shared the view that the progress in inter-Korean relations should be achieved in stages, by implementing

feasible tasks first. Based on this spirit, the leaders put more emphasis on implementing pacts rather than on drawing up more accords.

President Kim frankly acknowledged that although national unification underlines our firm principle, it is impossible to achieve this goal immediately due to the reality facing the nation at the present time. For this reason, he proposed instituting a confederal system for South and North Korea. While recognizing the hurdles which lie between the South and the North, the leaders agreed that their respective unification formulae have a common ground and that they will pursue the unification of the divided Peninsula through talks between relevant authorities. While South and North Korea both pursue unification, they agreed to first lay a foundation for unification through peaceful coexistence, reconciliation and cooperation, and work out the common ground of their unification formulae through talks between relevant authorities.

*Inter-Korean cooperation is needed to realize the reunion of separated families.*

The two leaders shared the view that reuniting separated family members should be a humanitarian issue that must be resolved with utmost urgency. They also agreed that the issue should be addressed and worked out gradually in a process that takes into consideration the positions of both sides. The process should not be a one-time deal, but rather it must be institutionalized so that ultimately, all separated family members can be reunited. The step-by-step process will include confirmation of whether family members are still alive, meetings between separated families, and the freedom to travel and meet relatives based on freely-made decisions of the parties concerned. As the first step, the two sides agreed, from a humanitarian perspective, to allow separated family members to meet one another and to resolve the issue of Communists still serving or have served long prison terms in the South on the occasion of the 55th anniversary of the August 15 National Liberation.

*Promotion of South-North cooperation is beneficial to both Koreas.*

The two leaders agreed that the promotion of South-North cooperation in all areas is compatible with promoting the development and interests of the entire Korean nation. In an effort to promote economic exchanges and cooperation in the private sector, the two sides will hold meetings between authorities, discuss cooperative projects and prepare a system of exchanges and cooperation. Initial cooperative projects will include constructing arteries of the national economy, including the Kyonguison (the Seoul-Shinuiju Railway Line) and the anti-flood project on the Imjin-gang river. In connection with economic cooperation, the two sides will discuss preparation of systems such as financial settlement, guarantee of investment, avoidance of double taxation and arbitration of disputes. Also, in an effort to recover the national identity of the nation and to construct a relationship of mutual trust, the two sides will expand exchanges and cooperation in civic, cultural, sports, public health, environmental and all other fields.

*There is an agreement on the return visit to Seoul by National Defense Commission Chairman Kim Jong-il.*

The exchange of visits by the two leaders of the South and North will contribute greatly to bilateral relations and the building up of mutual trust as well as serving to guarantee implementation of various South-North agreements. The agreement on Chairman Kim's visit to Seoul reflects confirmation of the North's determination to improve bilateral relations. When the exchanges of visits and meetings between the leaders of the two sides are held on a regular basis, complete normalization of the inter-Korean ties can be expected. The date for Chairman Kim's visit to Seoul will be determined in the upcoming governmental meetings between the South and North.

*The Declaration contributes to the stability of Northeast Asia and world peace.*

The two leaders confirmed that they had no intention of invad-

ing the other side and that they would refrain from any acts threatening the other side, contributing to the elimination of international apprehensions about instability on the Korean Peninsula. Inter-Korean cooperation will help solidify mutual trust, expand areas of common interests, and promote peace on the Peninsula substantially.

President Kim urged Chairman Kim to settle pending international disputes with the parties concerned, including the North's missiles issue, at an early date so that Pyongyang's relations with neighboring countries will be improved. The Joint Declaration is expected to improve the bilateral relationship substantially and contribute to removing a factor of instability in Northeast Asia, while enabling the North to take part in the international community and cooperate with it. ■■

Source: Ministry of Unification, "Korean Unification Bulletin," No. 20, June, 2000