

In His Summit with S. Korean Pres. Roh: "Germany Will Play a Constructive Role In Inter-Korean Reconciliation" German Chancellor Schroeder

South Korean President Roh Moo-hyun and German President Horst Kohler agreed to promote bilateral relations in economic and security areas. In their summit meeting on April 11, 2005, at the Charlottenburg Palace in Berlin, the two leaders agreed to upgrade bilateral relations into a substantial and cooperative partnership on the basis of common historical experiences of national division and war.

President Kohler pledged that the German government would continue providing all possible assistance to help promote events for the "Year of Korea" in Germany. He also promised to provide various forms of humanitarian assistance to help North Korea open itself up to the world.

On the North Korean nuclear issue, Roh said that the South Korean government would not discontinue inter-Korean cooperation just because the North declared itself a nuclear power, saying, "We see the North's claim as strategic leverage for the Six-Party Talks." He demanded North Korea to abide by the inter-Korean denuclearization accord signed in 1991, denouncing the North for claiming the right to possess nuclear weapons due to its standoff with the United States.

Roh also said that the Nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty (NPT) needs to be respected despite criticism that it is an unequal regime which is favorable to nuclear powers, noting the NPT is at least preventing proliferation of nuclear weapons. Continuing his visit to Germany, President Roh met with German Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder to discuss bilateral ties as well as the nuclear standoff with North Korea and the intensifying diplomatic strains in Northeast Asia. Schroeder told Roh that Germany would support South Korea's engagement policy towards North Korea to resolve the nuclear standoff peacefully.

In their summit on April 13, Roh and Schroeder also agreed to put higher priority on relations in areas like security and economy. Chancellor Schroeder said, "Germany will continue to play a sound role in helping resolve the nuclear impasse and to support for the Seoul government's pursuit of its peace and prosperity policy toward North Korea."

On April 10, President Roh, accompanied by first lady Kwon Yang-sook and aides, flew to Berlin, Germany, on his first leg to visit major European countries, Germany and Turkey, focused on the North Korean nuclear standoff and bilateral business opportunities.

The President was also accompanied by some 30 businesspeople. They included Kang Shin-ho, chairman of the Federation of Korean Industries; Park Yong-sung, chairman of the

Korea Chamber of Commerce and Industry; Kim Jae-chul, chairman of Korea International Trade Association; and Chung Mong-koo, chairman of Hyundai Motor.

Regarding the resistance by neighboring nations over Japan's bid for UNSC membership, Schroeder said, "A nation should find its own way through its history, dark or bright. Given Germany's experience, self-repentance on the sensitive issue is a better way to make friends than lose them. I believe this is the way to resolve the problem."

Germany is regarded as having managed to smoothly clear the past wrongdoings during World War II, healing the wounds of neighboring nations. In contrast, Japan has been beset with growing protests from South Korea and China for having failed to address the past. Roh said that the South Korean government would work to ensure peace and prosperity in Northeast Asia and on the Korean Peninsula. "I hope you understand the current dispute in Northeast Asia as a process of resolving the past among Korea, China and Japan," Roh said.

The two leaders also agreed that North Korea needs to come to the dialogue table first to find a peaceful solution to the continuing standoff over North's nuclear weapons program. They also agreed on Schroeder's visit to Seoul next January.

Regarding the lingering standoff over the North Korean nuclear weapons program, Roh said, "The issue will be peacefully resolved through dialogue without fail. I firmly believe that the expansion of economic cooperation between the two nations will yield a substantial synergistic effect."

The South Korea's economy has begun to pick up steam, boosted by the recovery in domestic consumption. "Above all, Korea's greatest merit is that it has an abundance of high quality human resources," said President Roh.

Roh forecasted, "Korea will emerge as an economic hub in Northeast Asia in the areas of high technology and research and development (R&D). Korea boasts a world-class Internet usage rate and a high-speed communications network. Korean consumers have made Korea a test stage of state-of-the-art products as they relentlessly pursue new gadgets."

Given this background, leading companies such as IBM and Intel, have been rushing to establish R&D centers in Korea. Regarding industrial disputes among foreign investors, Roh said, "The culture of dialogue and compromise is slowly taking root in Korea instead of hitherto dependence on excessive struggle."

President Roh Moo-hyun is not opposed to Germany becoming a permanent member of the U.N. Security Council (UNSC), according to a presidential aide in comments apparently targeted more against Japan than on any specific reform of the world policymaking body. "President Roh deems that Germany is fully qualified to enter the UNSC if it is subjected to a change," the high-ranking official told reporters on condition of anonymity.

Noting that South Korea opposes in principle the expansion of permanent council seats, analysts in Germany saw the remarks by Roh's aide on the president's views regarding

Germany as another signal of growing opposition by Seoul to Japan getting onto the UNSC. Korea supports expanding the nonpermanent seats this year and plans on bidding for one of the seats in 2007. The Security Council now has five permanent members - the United States, United Kingdom, France, Russia and China - and 10 rotating non - permanent seats. Germany and three other nations - Japan, Brazil and India - have been seeking to increase the number of UNSC permanent members.

U.N. member countries will vote in June on their preferred reform of the Security Council. There appears to be growing opposition among many countries to expanding the permanent seats, with powerful U.N. members such as the United States commenting recently that U.N. reform should be selective and conducted carefully.

President Roh has contrasted the post-World War II reconciliation between Germany and France. "Germany had succeeded in healing the wounds of the war and moved on to integrate itself into Europe," said Roh.

Roh blamed Japan, which occupied the Korean Peninsula from 1910-1945, for preventing a similar reconciliation between the Asian neighbors. In his interview with a German daily news-paper Allgemeine Zeitung in Frankfurt on April 10, 2005, President Roh said, "The problem is that the Japanese want to whitewash their war of aggression and defend it. Young Japanese people would be tended to glorify their past. It is true that Japan has repeatedly apologized, but recent events have virtually nullified those apologies."

At the interview, Roh said, "It is a great misfortune not just to Korea but also to the entire world to live with those who regard their past aggression against neighbors as a glory." Reportedly, Roh said what Japan is doing does not conform to universal values pursued by human society.

Such criticisms, now directed toward world audiences, may be galling or even painful to Japan, as they are coming at a time when it is bidding for a permanent seat on the UNSC along with Germany.

For the past two years, President Roh has patiently followed the course laid by his predecessor to maintain the fragile ties with the North, continuing economic cooperation projects including the development of the Gaeseung industrial estate in the border area.

On the inter-Korean relations, President Roh said, "I want to have a summit meeting with Kim Jong-il, but he has yet to honor the pledge made in the June 15, 2000 Joint Declaration between South and North Korea to make a return visit to South Korea. First, Kim Jong-il needs to make a return visit and implement the agreements made at that time one by one before pursuing other things."

In his first official function in Germany, President Roh told a group of Korean residents that his administration has been refraining from raising the issue of denuclearization as the matter was to be resolved through the Six-Party

Talks, which are aimed at finding a solution to the impasse over the North Korean nuclear weapons program.

"As I already clarified, if North Korea is ready to cooperate and resume dialogue, we are open to the summit regardless of subject," said Roh. In the meeting with Korean residents, Roh said, "The Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT) needs to be respected despite criticism that it is an unequal regime that favors nuclear powers." He also denounced the North for claiming the right to possess nuclear weapons due to its standoff with the United States.

President Roh expressed his hopes that North Korea will model itself on China and Vietnam in its efforts to transform into a market economy. He also clarified his opposition to a possible change in the current North Korean government so that it can continue pursuing a market opening in a stable manner, according to presidential spokesman Kim Man-soo.

"North Korea needs to experience a market economy and pursue openness with ongoing projects like the Gaeseung Industrial Complex and various other forms of economic assistance," Roh said during a separate meeting with Wolfgang Tierse, president of the German Parliament, on April 11 in Berlin.

During his stay in Germany, President Roh Moo-hyun remarked, "The unification of the Korean Peninsula will become possible after undergoing national confederation. Under the confederation, the two Koreas will maintain separate systems in the intermediary stage in preparation for reunification while institutionalizing cooperation," he said during a meeting with Korean-German residents.

"North Korea has been opting for the 'low-level federation system' so that the two Koreas can safely maintain their own regimes with close cooperation in various areas, including foreign affairs and defense. The South had no intention of provoking North Korea's collapse." Roh expressed hope that unification will take place only after South and North Korea manage to establish a peace structure through continued preparations. "The reunification is likely to occur after North Korea is equipped with the capacity to cope with possible unification."

Germany has long served as a model for South Korea in two respects: it has turned itself into a prosperous nation from the ashes of war and achieved a historical mission of reunification. What makes Germany all the more appealing is that it sets itself apart from Japan in dealing with its wartime past.

A columnist said, "Unlike Japan, it has humbly admitted to the atrocities it committed and offered a sincere apology to the victims and asked for forgiveness. It neither embellishes its invasions of neighbors nor whitewashes its wrongdoings in those countries, as Japan often does to the chagrin of South Korea, China and other Asian nations.

"Like Germany, South Korea has risen up from the ruins of war during the past 50 years or so, though it has yet to become as affluent. When it comes to reunification, however, South Korea still has much to learn from Germany."

Furthermore, Germany contributed to our prompt overcoming of financial difficulties during the economic crisis of 1997 through dispatching investment delegations, as well as actively supporting our position at the negotiation tables on our external debt.

On the occasion of President Roh's state visit to Germany, Amb. Michael Geier said,

"President Roh does not come with empty hands: the 'Korea Year 2005' is an inestimable gift of the Korean people to the Germans. This year, Korea stands in the center of numerous cultural, scientific and political events. Once the Korea Year 2005 is over, we will gain two precious lasting gifts: a Seoul Garden in Berlin and a Korean Garden in Frankfurt."

In Seoul, we are looking forward to the third edition of the industrial exhibition "German World 2005" to be held in the COEX center from May 12 to 15. Korean visitors will be able to admire an impressive display of German industrial and consumer products.

Accordingly, Germany is the world's third-largest economy and South Korea's sixth-largest trading partner. In the economic field, trade volume between our nations increased by 35%. Korea's imports from Germany amounts to US\$8.5 billion while exports is US\$8.3 billion, a Korean increase of 50% from 2003. Korean products have become increasingly competitive in Europe and Germany. German investments in Korea increased by 31% to almost US\$6 billion. "The fact that the German industry has invested about US\$5 billion in (South) Korea and employs about 500,000 workers shows how deep this trust is. I am very happy to say that we have new and fresh investments coming in," he said.

Amb. Geier, 61, who was assigned to South Korea in August 2003, said he thinks that Roh's visit to Germany is important because there has been some confusion in the German public in identifying Korean and Japanese products. He said, "After his visit, I am sure that people will more likely identify

President Roh and South Korea with the products they are buying at the electric store."