

Remarks at an Official Dinner for Prime Minister Ferenc Gyurcsany of the Republic of Hungary

Your Excellency Prime Minister Ferenc Gyurcsany, Mrs. Gyurcsany, and distinguished guests,

I am very pleased to host an official dinner for Your Excellency as the first very important guest for this year, and I wholeheartedly welcome you.

I am aware that Hungarian citizens place high hopes on Your Excellency who has had a distinguished economic and business career. Although belated, I congratulate you on assuming the office of the Prime Minister.

I expect that the political philosophy of Your Excellency calling for social justice and progress will greatly contribute to enhancing the welfare and quality of life of all Hungarians.

We know well about the potential of Hungary. By opening your border in 1989 to East German refugees, Hungary helped pave the way for German unification and the ending of the Cold War. After the transformation of the political system, Hungary successfully accepted democracy and a market economy and joined the European Union last year, thus establishing a springboard for a new take-off.

I am confident that Hungary will make dynamic progress as a pivotal country in Central Europe.

Your Excellency Mr. Prime Minister,

Hungary is the first among the old socialist countries to establish diplomatic relations with us. It helped pave the way for Korea to take a more active part in the world overcoming barriers stemming from the Cold War. In this light, the friendship of the Korean people toward Hungary is special.

Our two nations have many similarities. The Korean and Hungarian languages have common features, and both peoples are fond of spicy foods. In the vortex of historic rivalries among the big powers, the two countries can boast that they preserved their national self-respect and identity.

We have become important economic partners. Hungary is our biggest trading partner among the Central European nations and represents the third largest market for our investment. Already, no fewer than twenty Korean corporations are operating there, contributing to the prosperity of our two countries.

I expect that our mutual cooperation as strategic partners in the EU and Northeast Asian markets will be further expanded. The economic cooperation agreement signed today and the social security agreement the two sides agreed to sign at an early date will provide good momentum.

Your Excellency and distinguished guests,

Please join me in a toast to the good health of His Excellency Prime Minister Gyurcsany, Mrs. Gyurcsany and the ever-lasting progress of Hungary as well as the eternal friendship of our two countries.

Geonbae! (To your health!)

Thank you.