

# **Remarks at the International Conference to Commemorate the 5th Anniversary of the June 15 South-North Joint Declaration**

The Honorable former President and Mrs. Kim Dae-jung, President Gusmao of East Timor, and distinguished guests,

It is very significant to hold the international conference to commemorate the 5th anniversary of the June 15, 2000 South-North Joint Declaration. I wholeheartedly welcome the participants from abroad.

The inter-Korean summit in June 2000 marked an epochal turning point in the history of half a century of national division punctuated by confrontation and friction. It gave us great hope that the people of the Korean nation will finally pursue reconciliation and cooperation among themselves. Furthermore, it also convinced the world that the future of the Korean Peninsula would be far more stable and brighter than before.

In fact, since the June 15 declaration, about 20,000 people have traveled between South and North Korea every year, and the number of South Korean tourists visiting Geumgangsan (Diamond Mountains) in the North has surpassed one million. Government-level inter-Korean talks were held on about 120 occasions. At this moment, South Korean workers are working hard together with North Korean workers at Gaeseong Industrial Complex.

In some sectors, the progress is not up to our expectations, causing some people to become frustrated. Without the June 15 declaration, however, could such accomplishments even be possible? As we ponder over whether we would have been able to maintain the stable situation we enjoy today even after the controversies stemming from the North Korean nuclear program, the historic significance of the joint declaration looms really large.

I deeply salute President Kim Dae-jung who achieved this feat and has dedicated his whole life to inter-Korean reconciliation and cooperation.

Distinguished guests,

We cannot be complacent with the achievements thus far made, however. We should press ahead further.

What is most important is implementing the promises the two sides have made. The North Korean nuclear problem has been weighing on us heavily, but this is not a reason to delay or ignore

completely implementation of the inter-Korean agreements. The surest way to help develop inter-Korean relations is to carry out the agreed items without fail. The development of relations is possible on the basis of mutual trust, and that trust comes from keeping promises.

Of course, nobody denies the fact that without resolving the nuclear issue, inter-Korean relations cannot progress drastically. However, the dialogue must be continued in order to help resolve the nuclear issue, and inter-Korean dialogue should be used to contribute to resolving the nuclear issue as well.

South and North Korea need to be reminded about the significance of the June 15 declaration that made it clear that South and North Korea are the main parties to resolve all issues involving the Korean nation. North Korea seized on every possible occasion to emphasize national cooperation and the de-nuclearization of the Korean Peninsula. The nuclear problem is directly related to the life and death of the Korean nation.

Now, as important parties involved in the effort to resolve the issues stemming from Pyongyang's nuclear program, both South and North Korea have to play active roles. When they do, a better environment will be created for solving the problem through the Six-Party Talks.

Distinguished guests,

I had summit talks with President George W. Bush of the United States over the weekend.

At the meeting, the two of us reconfirmed the basic principle that the two countries would settle the problem diplomatically and in a peaceful manner. In particular, President Bush emphasized that the goal the United States is pursuing on the Korea Peninsula is peace and made it clear once again that Washington has no intention to attack North Korea.

When the Six Party talks resume, I believe that there will be dialogue that is more flexible and forward-looking than before. As the Korean Government has indicated, it plans to make an important proposal aimed at helping the Six-Party Talks progress substantially.

Now is the time for Pyongyang to make a bold decision. It should make a decisive strategic decision to dismantle its nuclear program and instead to bring about a turning point for securing economic development and stability of its system.

The Korean Government, along with the international community, will support actively such endeavors by the North. We are preparing measures that are comprehensive, concrete and positive in nature to help Pyongyang.

Ladies and gentlemen from home and abroad,

Although there have been times when South-North relations were extremely difficult, we have never allowed our hopes to die. Efforts to resume the Six-Party Talks are still being waged dynamically.

From tomorrow, people from the South and North will hold commemorative events together in Pyongyang marking the fifth anniversary of the June 15, 2000 South-North Joint Declaration. Next week, Minister-Level Talks will be held in Seoul.

At this juncture it is significant that this meeting has been called to discuss inter-Korean relations and issues concerning de-nuclearization of the Korean Peninsula. I expect that this conference will present excellent ideas for new progress in the effort to bring about peace on the Korean Peninsula.

Once more, I congratulate you all on the occasion of this meaningful meeting and I wish every one of you success.

Thank you.