

I. ХАЛҚАРО ҲАМКОРЛИК ТРЕНДЛАРИ
International Cooperation Trends
Тренды международного сотрудничества

REMARKS BY H.E. PARK JIN
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KOREA-UZBEKISTAN ROUNDTABLE DISCUSSION
ON THE KOREAN PENINSULA
June 3rd, 2023

Good morning.

It is a great pleasure to be here with you.

It's so good to be back in Uzbekistan, "the Heart of Central Asia."

I would first like to thank the University of World Economy and Diplomacy (UWED) for inviting me to this renowned place, where diplomatic talents who will be leading the future of Uzbekistan are nurtured.

I feel a special connection with Uzbekistan.

I visited Uzbekistan for the first time in 1994, almost 30 years ago.

At that time, I was accompanying then President Kim Young-sam, who was the first Korean president to visit Uzbekistan, as his assistant secretary.

Then in 2008, I traveled to Tashkent as Chairman of the Foreign Affairs and Unification Committee of the National Assembly to conduct inspection of our overseas missions. In 2019, I visited again as a representative of the Asia Future Institute. Having visited Uzbekistan three times in the last three decades, it was an extreme pleasure to see the country grow and flourish. This fourth visit is particularly meaningful to me because this is my first visit to Uzbekistan as Foreign Minister. Over the past two days, I received a very warm welcome from the President and Foreign Minister of Uzbekistan. And I am honored to be awarded the honorary doctorate degree by UWED today. I am also very grateful to Rector Safoev and the professors of UWED for your warm hospitality. Through this visit to Uzbekistan, which is the first to be made by a Korean Foreign

¹ This is the English translation version of Foreign Minister Park Jin's speech delivered in Korean at the University of World Economy and Diplomacy of Uzbekistan on June 3rd, 2023.

Minister in five years, I look forward to further strengthening the special strategic partnership between Korea and Uzbekistan.

The Yoon Suk Yeol administration is committed to the vision of becoming a “Global Pivotal State”, or GPS, that contributes to freedom, peace and prosperity. Uzbekistan, a key country in Central Asia, is pursuing the ‘New Uzbekistan Development Strategy.’

I believe there are mutually reinforcing aspects between this strategy and Korea’s Global Pivotal State initiative, and I would like to strengthen our collaboration in the following three areas.

First, cooperation for freedom, human rights, and the rule of law.

In his inaugural speech in May last year, President Yoon Suk Yeol emphasized solidarity with the international community for freedom, human rights, and the rule of law. At his 2016 inauguration, President Mirziyoyev emphasized that “the people should not serve the government, but the government should serve the people.” Korea supports Uzbekistan’s will and efforts for reform in order to strengthen democracy and the rule of law.

I look forward to enhancing cooperation between our two countries towards universal values and norms. Unfortunately, in the northern part of the Korean Peninsula, human rights are abused and totalitarianism is practiced instead of democracy and the rule of law. The North Korean regime continues its illegal nuclear and missile development while suppressing the freedom of its people.

In addition to the political prison camps, North Koreans are subjected to harsh human rights abuses, just for watching South Korean TV dramas, or for practicing their religion. The Yoon administration is working to bring the reality of the North Korean human rights situation to the attention of the international community and to improve it. Recently, the Korean government published its first public North Korean Human Rights Report. We request that Uzbekistan, a member of the United Nations Human Rights Council, continues to take to heart the issue of human rights in North Korea.

Second, cooperation to build peace on the Korean Peninsula and in Eurasia.

Since taking office, President Mirziyoyev has led a policy of reconciliation with neighboring countries. In doing so, he has actively contributed to building stability and laying a foundation of cooperation in the Central Asian region.

President Yoon also made a bold decision to improve the relationship with

our close neighbor Japan, restoring shuttle diplomacy in 12 years and normalizing bilateral relations. With China, Korea is actively working to promote peace in the region by pursuing a mature and healthy relationship based on mutual respect and reciprocity. Based on the joint will and efforts of our leaders, we must strengthen cooperation between our two countries for peace and development of the entire Eurasian region.

However, despite our peace building efforts and aspirations, North Korea continues its nuclear and missile provocations, threatening peace and stability in the region. In the past year alone, North Korea has launched over 100 missiles, including 11 intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs). In response to North Korea's provocations, Korea, along with its ally the United States, recently announced the Washington Declaration, which outlines measures to strengthen the extended deterrence. Last month, at the G7 meeting in Hiroshima, Japan, leaders of major countries reiterated the goal of complete denuclearization of North Korea, and urged North Korea to refrain from provocative actions. The leaders of Korea, the US, and Japan also reaffirmed the need to strengthen trilateral security cooperation to deter North Korea's provocations.

In spite of such international condemnation, North Korea continues to launch missiles, which is estimated to have cost hundreds of millions of dollars. North Korea is wasting its limited resources on nuclear and missile development, rather than using it for the well-being of its people. As a result, North Korea has experienced negative growth for the past few years. In 2021, North Korea's per capita income was only one-twenty-eighth (1/28) the size of that of the Republic of Korea. North Korea's diplomatic isolation is also aggravating.

Since North Korea's fourth nuclear test in 2016, the North Korean embassy in Uzbekistan has been shut down. Diplomatic relations with Malaysia was severed in 2021 and Ukraine in 2022.

North Korea's so-called "satellite" launch this week also prompted several countries and international organizations, including the United Nations, to point out violations of Security Council resolutions. The Uzbekistan government has also taken a clear stance about the recent North Korean launch. The launch, whether successful or not, constitutes a grave violation of UN Security Council resolutions as well as a serious threat to the peace on the Korean Peninsula and beyond. However, it is deeply unfortunate that the Security Council remains

paralyzed in the face of North Korea's continued provocations.

Yesterday's open meeting of the Security Council was no different.

As North Korea's provocations which threaten peace in the international community continue, international cooperation to deter its provocations will have to be further strengthened. President Yoon Suk Yeol's "Audacious Initiative" is a future breakthrough which could dramatically improve North Korea's economic situation. If North Korea returns to denuclearization talks with sincerity, we are ready to help them boldly. We are preparing the "Korean Peninsula Resource-Food Exchange Program (R-FEP)" which allows North Korea to utilize its mineral resources such as natural sand to purchase humanitarian goods.

Furthermore, if North Korea ceases its nuclear program and embarks on the path of substantive denuclearization, we will provide bold political, economic, and military corresponding measures. We have a number of large-scale support measures such as providing assistance for its power transmission and distribution; ports and airports modernization; and international investment and financing program. However, to our disappointment, North Korea has not yet responded to our proposal. Rather, it continues evading sanctions by earning foreign currency through overseas workers to fund its nuclear program. It is also engaging in illegal cyber activities, such as hacking, against the international community to steal cryptocurrency.

We will deter North Korea's nuclear threat (deterrence), dissuade it from developing nuclear weapons with sanctions and pressure (dissuasion), and lead its denuclearization through diplomacy and dialogue (dialogue). We will create a strategic environment in which North Korea has no choice but to return to denuclearization talks. We look forward to North Korea's 'audacious decision' in response to our 'Audacious Initiative.' Uzbekistan led the Central Asian Nuclear Weapon Free Zone in the 1990s, when the Cold War was coming to an end. And it is a country that has seen firsthand how denuclearization can lead to peace and prosperity in the region. We ask for Uzbekistan's active role and contribution in achieving denuclearization in North Korea.

Third, forward-looking practical cooperation for the common prosperity of both of our countries. Uzbekistan is a key country of Central Asia, bordering five countries in the region. It is also the most populous country in Central Asia. It is a gateway to all countries in Central Asia and has great potential to play a central

role in the region. Korea is eager to cooperate with Uzbekistan to help it realize its full potential. We put particular focus on Uzbekistan's "youths" and "abundant resources" as valuable assets. Uzbekistan's population percentage of youths under the age of 30 (55.6%) is nearly twice that of Korea (28%). President Mirziyoyev declared this year as 'the Year of Human Care and Quality Education.'

Korea wants to be an important partner of Uzbekistan's youth education.

Over 2,000 students graduated from Korean universities in Uzbekistan last year, and there are four KOICA vocational training centers in operation in Uzbekistan. I would like to ask for cooperation from the university president and professors who are here with us today to further enhance educational cooperation between our two countries. We are in an era where securing a reliable supply chain has become essential for economic growth.

In that regard, Uzbekistan, with its abundant resources, and Korea, with its advanced technology, are mutually complementary and optimal partners. During this visit, our two countries decided to pursue new projects worth 20 million dollars in areas such as plant quarantine, climate change response, and digital administration. I hope practical cooperation between our two countries, which is directly related to the prosperity of our future generations, will be further revitalized in the future.

I hope that our cooperation will contribute to the prosperity of the international community beyond our two countries. The Yoon Suk Yeol administration is carrying out the Indo-Pacific Strategy based on the aforementioned Global Pivotal State initiative to contribute to freedom, peace, and prosperity of the international community.

As we move forward with the Indo-Pacific Strategy, we will continue to strengthen our cooperation with Uzbekistan, a key country in Central Asia. Korea and Uzbekistan are located in Northeast Asia and Central Asia, respectively, and are more than 4,800 kilometers apart. However, active people-to-people exchanges and digital cooperation between the two countries can contribute to promoting economic connectivity in the region.

I would like to congratulate Uzbekistan for pursuing nationwide reforms and industrial diversification under the 'New Uzbekistan Development Strategy.' I look forward to working together to create synergy between the Global Pivotal State and the 'New Uzbekistan Development Strategy.' I hope that our bilateral

cooperation strengthens the connectivity between the Indo-Pacific region and Central Asia and contributes to the prosperity of the international community.

Today, all countries around the world are working together to respond to the polycrisis faced by the international community, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, the climate change crisis, and the global energy and food crisis triggered by the war in Ukraine. However, no single country can overcome these complex crises alone. It requires cooperation and solidarity with other countries that share common values and interests.

In that regard, the special strategic cooperation between Korea and Uzbekistan has never been more important. There are 180,000 ethnic Koreans living in Uzbekistan, and they are acting as a bridge between our two countries. Building on our longstanding ties and friendship, I look forward to working hand in hand to overcome the common challenges that our two countries face. To do this, I ask for the attention and support of scholars and experts, including Rector Safoev, who leads this internationally renowned University of World Economy and Diplomacy.

Thank you, once again, for your warm hospitality today.

Rahmat, thank you.