

“Welcome to Korea-Australia Peace Forum”

New perspectives of Australia and South Korea on the status quo with North Korea

It is my great honor, in my capacity as the Deputy Chairperson of the Peaceful Unification Advisory Council representing 25 nations in the Asia Pacific region including Australia, to welcome all of you to this critical forum.

I am of a strong view that it is a timely approach to examine the perspectives of Australia and South Korea on the unification policies and the resumption of dialogues with the North Korean regime, as the joint strategical and academic analysis has not been facilitated since the launch of the new governments in both countries.

Also, I would like to take this opportunity to thank the PUAC Secretariat in the homeland for their support for this forum.

The inaugural peace forum in this region was held in 2015 at the Federal Parliament House in Canberra in the presence of the then Australia’s Foreign Affairs Minister, Honorable Julie Bishop, along with the three frontbenchers such as Hon. Dr Andrew Leigh, Michael Danby, and Craig Laundy, and the renowned academics both from Australia and Korea.

In her keynote speech, Honorable Julie Bishop notably emphasised the importance of the global orchestration of sanctions on North Korea and persistent reinforcement of them to resolve the impasse over North Korea’s nuclear threat.

She was very confident that the relentless reinforcement of sanctions on North Korea would bring about a permanent solution and even adamant that it should be the only way for the international community to pursue for the global security and the peace in Korea.

The other frontbenchers unanimously argued in their respective presentations that the international community should ramp up its efforts on North Korean human rights issues.

They expressed their serious concerns over the horrendous human rights abuse in North Korea and addressed that the international community, including Australia, should seek practical and technical ways to let North Korean people know of what human right is and its significance as a universal value.

In 2018 and 2021, the peace forum took place in Auckland, New Zealand, respectively, in the presence of a New Zealand Government official and politicians, and Korean experts from New Zealand, Australia, and the homeland to analyse the New

Zealanders' perspective on the Korean peninsula situations and compare with those of Australia and the homeland.

It may be worth recapitulating that New Zealand Government has been consistently denouncing North Korea's nuclear programmes over the past decades, as a global threat, in a very strong tone.

In the forums, the New Zealand Government representative stressed that her Government firmly stood by the CVID approach: Complete, verifiable, irreversible denuclearisation of North Korea.

More recently, Prime Minister of New Zealand Jacinda Ardern has reaffirmed the hardline stance against North Korea in an interview with various media outlets.

As all of us are fully aware, the situation over the catastrophic nuclear crisis has never been practically alleviated, and turned into the global concern due to North Korea's repeated audacious and obstinate threats.

Then what are the implications of the prima facie fallouts from the recent developments?

According to Australian academics who have taken part in a series of online seminars hosted by the Asia Pacific Assembly of the PUAC during the pandemic, the two aspects should be brought to our attention for the Korean peninsula peace.

The first aspect derives from the significance of multilateral diplomacy. As many of Korean experts around the world have also addressed, it is critical for middle powers such as Australia to develop a transcending strategy to be able to overcome the bloc diplomacy embodying the US-China rivalry.

The second element is in relation to the South Korean Government policy.

Australia's former Foreign Affairs minister and the immediate past Chancellor of the Australian National University Professor Gareth Evans stressed that the South Korean Government's foreign policy should seek the possibility of elevating its partnership with the middle powers, in particular, with Australia, to the level of Korea's key diplomatic partners namely the US and Japan.

Let me conclude my message by reminding you that the 670 members of the PUAC's Asia Pacific Assembly have been exemplifying the public diplomacy activities to ramp up relentless efforts on helping the South Korean Government's diplomatic initiatives in the global arena, and putting forward the constructive and practical ideas to the President Yoon Seok-youl who is the Chairman of our organisation.

Again, many thanks to the committee members of the PUAC Australia and the Secretariat of the PUAC for the preparation.

Thank you.