

Keynote Speech
by
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“Asia Towards Resilient Peace: For Cooperation and Integration”
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Good afternoon to all of you.

I'm very pleased to be back in Jeju. I would like take this opportunity to thank Governor Won Heeyoong of Jeju Island, Jeju Province for the warm welcome and hospitality.

As we gather here today, the global economy continues to remain unsettled. Uncertainties arising from increasing trade tensions, Brexit, and tight global financial conditions persist. To be sure, these will have serious implications in our region because of the increased interdependence of our economies. If not managed well, an unsettled global economy can lead to economic instability and even political conflict and social unrest, thus undermining economic prosperity and peace in the process.

As we all know, peace and prosperity are highly intertwined. Peace is a necessary condition to sustain trade, economic growth, and prosperity.

Without peace there can be no economic development, no freedom to explore economic activities, and no hope to pursue aspirations.

This reminds me of the work that Jeju Forum has been trying to achieve for decades now. By promoting a dialogue for peace in the region, the Forum has created the pathway for economic and political stability in East Asia through open discussion, effective engagement, and collective action and cooperation for people, peace and region. The fact that we are here today signifies such unwavering commitment to pursue peace and prosperity in the region.

I think the same sense of cooperation and desire to maintain regional peace and stability underpins our work in ASEAN and East Asia. More than 20 years ago, our region stood at the edge of the abyss. The Asian financial crisis saw the collapse of economic activities and provoked political upheaval and social conflicts in some countries. But the crisis also saw countries coming together to face common challenges with common solutions. In the face of crisis, East Asian cooperation has evolved and helped plant the seeds of economic and political stability in East Asia.

The Manila Declaration on the 20th Anniversary of ASEAN Plus Three Cooperation reaffirmed the important role of the APT for peace, security and prosperity in the East Asian region.

Today, we are happy to enjoy the fruits of that unprecedented degree of cooperation.

For example, the East Asian Vision Group II laid out a comprehensive step- by-step recommendation on how to make the region more peaceful and stronger by allowing ASEAN to work with China, Japan and Korea – all within the centrality of ASEAN. More recently, ASEAN served as a honest broker, by hosting the 1st and 2nd US and North Korea Summits. Both Summits speak volume of the geopolitical importance of ASEAN to Korea and vice versa. The choice of the locations in the capitals of ASEAN Member States demonstrates the importance attached to ASEAN by the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea, too.

East Asia has also been successful in addressing non-traditional issues such as trafficking in persons, cybercrimes, and illicit drug trafficking, as well as in playing an important role in other institutional mechanisms such as the ASEAN Regional Forum and East Asia Summit.

In the economic front, the Chiang Mai Initiative Multilateralization (CMIM) was established as a very first regional financial support mechanism in Asia, and serves as a reminder to the world on how far East Asia has gone in preserving our economic and financial stability since the Asian financial crisis. Trade and investment linkages have been intensified, facilitated by regional production networks in East Asia as well as the various bilateral and regional free trade agreements with China, Japan and Korea. East Asia is pushing for a mega FTA this year under the Regional Comprehensive Economic Cooperation (RCEP) Agreement.

Cooperation in addressing social issues has also been successful particularly in agriculture, food security, energy, health, science and technology, and disaster management.

To be sure, the stability and peace that we are currently enjoying in East Asia is no mere accident. It is no sheer luck either. In my view, it is a product of bold and deliberate decisions taken by our leaders and policy makers to cooperate and move together as they venture into a lot of uncertainties. This spirit of cooperation has made East Asia more dynamic and resilient over the years. I believe that if countries come together to work on common goals, peace, stability and growth will prevail.

Reflecting on these developments, I think East Asia will be a different region today had it not for countries willingness to cooperate and work together. That's why I'm happy to see new initiatives such as the Korea's New Southern Policy that sustain the momentum for greater cooperation in the region.

The New Southern Policy is not only an opportunity for ASEAN and Korea to deepen engagement in peace, prosperity and people-to-people connectivity. But more than that, it is a critical building block on a pathway to integration and peace in East Asia in the long run. Thus, I look forward to seeing more concrete projects and activities to be implemented under the New Southern Policy in the coming years.

Without a doubt, Korea's New Southern Policy can have positive impact on ASEAN – and ASEAN stands ready to support it. It also comes at the most opportune time as ASEAN and Korea mark their 30 years of strong partnership at a Commemorative Summit to be held this November.

While cooperation is a key to the region's prosperity and peace, the challenge is how to sustain it in the midst of various uncertainties that confront the world and the region. In the atmosphere of fear and uncertainty, countries may be tempted to go their way. Thus, having countries adhere to cooperative approach is critical.

But how can this be achieved?

In my view, there are three ways by which the spirit of cooperation and prosperity in ASEAN and East Asia can be preserved.

First, is through regional integration. Integration unleashes economic opportunities and brings countries and peoples closer together, thus reducing the possibility of conflict. It also promotes economic security and prosperity for the region. But without peace, such economic development is not possible. This reminds me of our community building efforts in ASEAN. In the process of building an integrated community, our goal is not only to build the markets, but also to make sure that those markets create inclusion and opportunities for all.

Second, we need a strong community of people to plant the seeds of peace and hope in our region. I always believe in the power of humanity to change the world and for every individual to make a positive contribution in society. Ethnic, religious, and civil strife can be avoided if only people are able to understand each other more. That's why I put a lot of hope in people-to-people connectivity as an important mechanism to foster peace in the region, through various initiatives such as educational exchanges, knowledge sharing and human capital

development. It is an integral part of ASEAN Community and I'm glad that it also constitutes an important pillar of the New Southern Policy.

Finally, we need to uphold multilateralism. In today's highly integrated world, global collective interest is critical in ensuring stability and peace across regions and countries. Any breakdown of global order and rules is definitely devastating to all of us. Thus, amid rising trade tensions in the world, countries have to stand firm and commit to multilateral approach. To achieve a stable global and regional trading system, we need to break down barriers, and not build walls.

In closing, let me emphasize again the importance of respect and tolerance in supporting the development in the world today. As shown by ASEAN and East Asia, achieving that is not accidental. It takes commitment and resolve by countries to make it happen.

Against the current uncertainties, now is the time to rise to the challenge again.

Our peace and prosperity in this region depend on it.

Thank you very much.

Ends./.