

Summary of Keynote Speech in Jeju Forum 2015*

Towards a New Asia of Trust and Harmony

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I am very pleased to return to Jeju to be part of this important Jeju Forum. I especially appreciate reading the themes that permeate throughout the conference: peace, prosperity, diversity, and sustainability. I used all these slogans during my Presidential campaign. Now, I continue to promote these same themes in my new capacity as President of the Global Green Growth Institute, an initiative of the Korean Government which has become an international champion of green growth.

I must admit that when I left the Presidential office last year, I too was very concerned to see the unravelling of stable relations among the major powers, after two decades of relatively cooperative relationships.

There is possibility that this geopolitical down-turn will complicate the already tricky flash points in our region. Hence, it is very important for us to maintain strategic stability: if permanent resolution to the disputes still cannot be found, then we need to press on with self-restraint and de-escalation, and try to manage the conflict by preventing the situation from getting worse.

This is true in the case of the growing tension between the North and the South in the Korean Peninsula. This is also true for the disputes in the South China Sea.

All of us in this room are keen to build a strong future for Asia. But Asia's amazing future will be harmed so long as there is a mismatch between its geo-politics and geo-economics.

In our region, geopolitics and regional security are issues that often divide us. As such, we still do not have a comprehensive region-wide security architecture binding all the countries in this region.

Geo-economics, on the other hand, tend to bring countries together, through interdependence and connectedness. Geo-economics bring more trade, investment, infrastructure, tourism, exchanges and others.

We need to make sure that the economic cooperation can help soften the rough geopolitical edges. There are some good examples where the economic imperative has helped to reduce the appetite for confrontation. We can see this in the case with US - China relations, or with Japan - China relations.

The key theme of this year's Jeju Forum is peace and prosperity. As President of the Global Green Growth Institute, I must also say that the future of Asia also entails "green growth" and "sustainable development". Indeed, I would say that without green growth and sustainable development, Asia has no future.

2015 promises to be an incredibly important year for the global community. The GGGI will offer our utmost support for the coming world conferences to shape global consensus in Addis Ababa, New York, and in Paris in December this year.

In this Forum, we are back to asking the same question that prevailed during the Cold War and after: how do we overcome the trust deficit, and how do we build or rebuild confidence?

Certainly not an easy question. I do not pretend to have the answer for Northeast Asia, but I would like to share some of my personal experiences in Indonesia, reflecting on the example of Southeast Asia.

I must say that there is no magic wand. Trust and confidence evolve differently in different circumstances. They are things that have to be earned, and once achieved, they have to be preserved.

There are too many cases, including in my own country, where communities that had lived peacefully for generations suddenly turned into sworn enemies. When that happens, it would take a long time -sometimes generations- for the wounds to heal.

How do you promote trust in a society where there is none? I would begin with a forward-looking approach. I know that this is not always easy, especially if the trauma from the past is unbearable.

This is what Indonesia and Timor Leste faced after the painful separation in 1999. Both sides had little interest in one another.

But after sometime, the leaderships in Jakarta and Dili decided that we had no other choice but to move on with a forward-looking attitude. We renewed our relationship, promoted reconciliation, and

pushed hard for bilateral cooperation. Today, Indonesia and Timor Leste are as close and harmonious as any neighbors can be.

Another way to build trust is through a win-win approach. I know that sometimes it can be difficult to do away with a zero-sum game. Long-standing mistrust and stereotypes have the tendency to barriers that contain progressive thinking.

But it is quite remarkable what can be achieved by changing the approach to peace. This is what we did with the conflict in the Indonesian province of Aceh, which had been beset by separatist armed rebellion by GAM for 30 years - and peace was nowhere in sight.

In 2005, a few months into my Presidency in the first term, and not long after the tsunami tragedy, I decided to pursue a new approach: an attempt at win-win peaceful negotiations. After much difficulty, we began negotiations with the GAM leadership, and we engaged them in a tough but serious give and take compromise. In the end, we secured permanent political settlement through special autonomy.

The GAM rebels were disarmed, separatism ended, the conflict stopped, and Indonesia remains united. Moreover, the guns are silent and former combatants have become peaceful brothers and sisters in a democratic environment. In short, it was a case of a good win-win approach where everybody wins and no one loses.

Which leads to this important point: no trust can develop without leadership. Reaching out in difficult relationships is often a politically risky business. It requires courage. It is an essentially political decision, one that necessitates political will.

I am glad that my good friend John Howard is sitting here on this panel. Together, we changed our countries' relationship which benefitted our peoples, and made the region more stable.

When I assumed the Presidency in 2004, the bilateral relationship between Indonesia and Australia was not in an ideal place, due to a number of reasons,. I knew this was not healthy for both sides so I immediately established diplomatic relations with Canberra as a foreign policy priority. I was fortunate to find a strong partner in PM John Howard. Before long, we established a historic Comprehensive Partnership and signed a bold security cooperation known as the Lombok Treaty.

Indeed, Indonesia and Australia later worked together on many regional issues: regional architecture, terrorism, G20, and many more. Once you have that trust, more opportunities would come knocking and the relationship that you invest in would take you a long way.

So, these are my quick three on how we in Indonesia promoted trust internally and externally:

forward-looking mindset, creative win-win approach, and leadership. Many of the problems around us would benefit from any or a combination of these three elements.

Yet, where trust and harmony are not readily forthcoming, I believe it is important to encourage the present and next generation to keep an open mind. I say this because there is always a risk that the young generation could become closed-minded and resistant to change.

We must therefore continue to inculcate the culture of peace among the youth of today, because it will be in their minds that the ingredients of mistrust will gradually chip away.

** Jeju Forum 2015 was held in Jeju Special Self-Governing province, Republic of Korea, on 20-22 May.*

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