Jeju Peace Institute 제주평화연구원

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Excerpt of Keynote Speech at the Opening Ceremony in Jeju Forum 2014

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As an important country in Asia, ROK has amazed the world by its speedy growth and development success. From the Han Gang Miracle to the sweeping Korean Wave, ROK has always stayed ahead in Asia in economic and cultural development.

The theme of this forum is "Designing New Asia". I am afraid, many friends present here are asking themselves: what is the state of affairs in Asia? And what should the New Asia look like?

Much as we have observed and felt, amidst drastic changes in international situation, Asia's status and role in the global political and economic landscape have been continuously growing. Asia's economy makes up one-third of the world's total economy. With one-third of the world total GDP and a population of over four billion, Asia has become one of the most dynamic regions in the world with immense potentials.

"No benefit is bigger than stability, and no harm is greater than chaos." The marked progress that Asia has achieved would not be possible without peace and stability in the region in the post-Cold War era. The achievements, as a result of joint efforts made by different countries, should be much cherished. Today, regional cooperation in Asia is burgeoning. New strides have been made in Free Trade Zones, connectivity and other important areas, while the process of economic integration has been accelerated.

Countries in this region, with closer ties and greater interdependence, have formed a community of destiny sharing weal and woe, bound together by common interests.

Peace and development are the mainstream of Asia today, and also represent the trend in the region in the years to come.

Nevertheless, it should be noted that due to its unique geopolitical significance, Asia is faced with many challenges. With the residues of the Cold War, problems left over from history are intertwined with frictions and conflicts of today. Different appeals for interests and policy proposals clash with one another. Different forces have come under dazzling changes. Such non-traditional security issues as natural disasters, cyber security, energy and food security, crop up from time to time, propping up tensions among parties in question. Worse, leaders in certain countries, in total disregard with history and facts, have openly defied the post-War international order, causing sustained tensions between nations in the region.

Asia is our shared home. To build a New Asia of peace, development and cooperation is an aspiration shared by all of us. The Chinese Dream of building a strong and prosperous country and rejuvenating the Chinese nation is compatible and connected with the vision of a second Han Gang Miracle that culminates in the happiness of the Korean people, and the wonderful dream of people from other Asian countries. These dreams can be reasonably woven into a more colorful, splendid and commonly desired Asian Dream. What we should do is to join hands to chase the dream, rather than sleeping in the same bed with dreams going separate ways.

Premier Li Keqiang proposed at the Boao Forum for Asia that we should build an Asian community of shared interests, common destiny, and shared responsibilities. I believe that this is what all Asian people have expected. For that to happen, we should follow the trend of the times, look beyond what divides us, and work hard to push forward regional cooperation in order to seek development, address challenges and expand common interests.

I would hereby put forward three suggestions as follows:

First, we should intensify dialogue and consultations and deepen mutual trust, with a view to jointly safeguarding Asia's security and stability. Countries in Asia differ from one another in social system, size and strength. There still exist many destabilizing factors such as territorial disputes and historical issues among some countries. This is further compounded by grudges over the WWII and residuals of the Cold War, resulting in severe deficit of trust among themselves. Without mutual trust, how do we expect security? Without security, how can we achieve development? Therefore, we must strengthen dialogue and consultations, boost mutual trust and close cooperation, respect and accommodate each other's concerns, seek common ground while reserving differences, and manage and resolve conflicts and disagreements by peaceful means. If we succeed in doing so, we would lay the cornerstone of trust for a New Asia.

Secondly, we should push forward regional cooperation and deepen economic and trade ties, with a view to jointly promoting regional development and prosperity. Regional economic integration serves the interests of all countries in Asia. In this regard, Asia boasts relatively sound framework arrangements. Such cooperation mechanisms as ASEAN and Dialogue Partner (10+1), ASEAN and China, Japan and ROK (10+3) are flourishing. Progress is being made in negotiations over Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP), and the China Japan-ROK Free Trade Agreement. The strategic vision of building the "Silk Road Economic Belt" and the "21st-Century Marine Silk Road" is unfolding. Concrete steps have been taken in finance and connectivity. We should continue to deepen regional cooperation, tighten our bonds of interest, and work tirelessly for the common development and prosperity in Asia. This is the material foundation that we should lay for a New Asia.

Third, we should expand cultural and people-to-people exchanges, and improve friendly sentiments among our people, with a view to deepening friendships and exchanges. The friendship of the two peoples determines the relations between the two countries. Without sincere exchanges between the two peoples, no cooperation between nations can sustain. We should bring into full play advantage of cultural affinity and emotional connection among Asian countries, foster multi-layered and multi-field cultural exchanges, and introduce innovative mechanisms and platforms to engage local governments, enterprises and general public in Asian cooperation. In other words, the people, especially young people, should be able to see tangible benefits brought by Asian cooperation. This represents popular support for a New Asia.

In recent years, China's development has become an important factor that affects regional dynamics and the focus of attention of all parties. At sessions of the National People's Congress and the Chinese Political Consultative Conference that were held several months ago, we put forward concrete measures for further deepening all-round reforms to give new impetus to China's development. You may ask, what role will China play in Asia?

This is what I would like to tell my friends here. China will continue to pursue a foreign policy of good-neighborliness and partnership, and put to action the new concept of "closeness, sincerity, sharing in prosperity, and inclusiveness" with its neighbors. We stand firm in our resolve to uphold China's territorial sovereignty. At the same time, we follow a clear-cut policy of seeking peaceful solutions to disputes. On the issue of Diaoyu Islands, China's activities in the area are entirely legitimate exercise of its sovereignty and jurisdiction on these islands and should not be seen as an attempt to change the status quo. It is our hope that relevant countries do not over-interpret and overreact to our legitimate actions. China stands ready to work with other countries in Asia to build a peaceful, prosperous and open Asia, and uphold peace, stability and tranquility in Asia by continuously enhancing political mutual trust.

Meanwhile, as a responsible country, we will continue to work for the solution of hotspot issues in Asia. We stand firm in pushing forward the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula. We sincerely hope that the relevant parties will move in the same direction and endeavor to resume the Six Party Talks to bring the issue back to the track of negotiations.

We are living in an era that is undergoing great changes and development. Asia has become the focus of global attention. A New Asia, featuring peace, stability and sustainable development, is what we all aspire to. Meanwhile, we should also be keenly aware that dreams can only be fulfilled with actions. Asia is home to all Asians. Therefore, Asian countries should take the lead in handling Asian affairs. Of course, Asia is open. We welcome constructive roles in the region played by non-Asian countries. Moreover, Asia is independent. We reject any attempts to military blocs or rig up military alliances in Asia.

I remember when I visited Jeju in 2007, deeply impressed by the miscanthus grown here, I wrote down an ode to the plant. "These lovely living things", "when being verdant, they add radiance to the sea and the sky", "when growing pale, they embrace fire in smile", (in order to provide people with fuel), and then "shoot again in the next spring, being as persevering and proud as ever". As we work to build a new Asia, we will undoubtedly encounter numerous difficulties. However, as long as we are dedicated and indomitable like the miscanthus that emerges with the breeze of spring, the beautiful vision of a New Asia will come true.

Jeju Island is famously termed as the "Island of Three Abundance", implying that the Island abounds in women, rocks and wind. I hope our Jeju Forum can also be a Forum of Three Abundance, in experience-sharing, in cooperation and in win-win achievements. I believe at this meeting, all of you will share your wisdom and efforts for the development of a New Asia.

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* Jeju Forum 2014 was held in Jeju Special Self-Governing province, Republic of Korea, on 28-30 May.

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