

The Main Theme of the 16th Jeju Forum: Sustainable Peace, Inclusive Prosperity

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Thirty years have passed since the end of the Cold War. However, we still live under constant threats. The US–China conflict continues to worsen, whereas traditional security threats such as territorial disputes and nuclear proliferation persist. Moreover, new threats such as cyberattacks and climate change are increasing rapidly. Climate change in particular has caused a pandemic crisis, threatening our lives and economic prosperity. In responding to these multiple threats and crises, the foundations of multilateralism and democracy—the pillars of the post-war international order and peace—are faltering due to increased “my country first” attitudes. Therefore, at the 16th Jeju Forum, we seek ways to overcome the multiple crises facing our world under the main theme of “Sustainable Peace, Inclusive Prosperity.” The 16th Jeju Forum is scheduled to be held in Jeju from June 24 to 26, 2021.

The main theme of the 16th Jeju Forum is “Sustainable Peace, Inclusive Prosperity.” This year’s Jeju Forum will be a platform to discuss various challenges and threats we face while also seeking joint responses for peace and prosperity for current and future generations.

This year’s Jeju Forum will be a venue for discourse covering various topics such as each country’s response to COVID-19; the global economic recovery; the beginning of the Biden Administration era; conflicts between major powers; climate change; the Fourth Industrial Revolution and the emergence of new technologies; and ways to eventually achieve world peace and prosperity.

This year marks the 30th anniversary of the end of the Cold War. During the Cold War, we believed that the era of peace would come if we reduced military and diplomatic conflicts between countries. However, we are now surrounded by more complex and diverse crises than ever before. The COVID-19 pandemic continues to threaten our survival, causing damage to our health and economy. Additionally, while governments try to prevent the spread of the disease by implementing anti-democratic policies, there are growing concerns that such measures will lead to the retreat of democracy in various countries. Moreover, crises that existed before the pandemic, such as climate change, resource depletion, environmental degradation, major power competition, local military clashes, and cyberattacks, still exist and are working in combination to threaten individuals’ lives on the Korean Peninsula, Northeast Asia, and around the world.

Because we live in such an era, we need to actively seek ways to overcome these challenges before it’s too late. In this context, the Jeju Forum presents two concepts necessary to address the multiple crises: Sustainable Peace and Inclusive Prosperity.

First, achieving sustainable peace means solving the crises we face and maintaining a state of peace while continuing that peace for tomorrow. These crises threaten humanity’s survival from multiple dimensions, making them difficult to overcome through short-term and superficial approaches. Thus, to solve the multiple crises more fundamentally, it is necessary to find their root causes in an effort to eradicate them. The process of coordinating the interests between countries and developing discussions in the political, military, economic, societal, and environmental fields will require great patience and effort. We should not avoid difficult tasks or choose the easy way. To build sustainable peace, it is essential to prevent and eradicate conflict, recover wounds, rebuild society, and ultimately achieve harmony and coexistence among groups. The sustainable peace created through such a process will strengthen the resilience of individuals, societies, and countries, thereby establishing a solid foundation for overcoming the current crisis and preparing for future challenges. After all, in a society where the continuation of peace is the shared goal, priority will be given to maintaining all members’ mental and material well-being, not individuals’ interests.

Achieving sustainable peace also includes creating an environment in which we can maintain peace continuously. To preserve and sustain peace, it is essential to maintain friendly relations between individuals, societies, and countries. However, we must first establish conditions that allow humans to enjoy a stable life on this planet. For example, if climate change is allowed to go unchecked, human life will be devastated by the mental and material damage. Such results will also lead to local and international conflicts, eventually making world peace untenable. Therefore, to achieve sustainable peace, we must find countermeasures to climate change, resource depletion, and environmental degradation in an effort to protect the planet.

Second, inclusive prosperity means that the benefits of economic growth must be shared with marginalized members of society. To this end, we must correct the inequality and unfair practices that prevent individuals from enjoying equal opportunities. In addition, we must emphasize values that cannot be measured materially, such as quality of life, environment, education level, and health, to not only increase wealth but also achieve true prosperity.

People from low socioeconomic backgrounds and developing countries are the ones who have suffered the most significant physical and psychological damage from the pandemic over the past year. Therefore, we must embrace those who have been marginalized from the benefits of economic growth if we want to achieve a material and mental recovery in the post-COVID-19 era. The recovery should also focus on individuals, societies, and countries hit hard by the pandemic.

Vulnerable populations and low-income countries are also the ones most affected by climate change. However, their voices are not reflected in international agreements that seek to combat climate change. Therefore, responding to the climate crisis should be done in a way that considers the needs of the vulnerable instead of sacrificing or alienating them. Recovery and prosperity that alienates the weak will only lead to situations in which income inequality and social instability increase, causing yet more crises. After all, growth and recovery without inclusion will hinder stability and order around the world, impeding us from realizing sustainable peace.

In this era of multiple crises, individuals, societies, nongovernmental organizations, local governments, national governments, and international organizations must all work together to overcome our current challenges. These crises are not only a problem for actors exposed to threats but also threaten everyone, regardless of borders. Crises faced by one actor will soon affect others as well. We cannot overcome these challenges through competition, conflict, and “my country first” attitudes; turning a blind eye to others’ problems is not a solution.

Instead, we must emphasize the importance of multilateral cooperation more than ever. The form of multilateral cooperation we must pursue should embody sustainable peace and inclusive prosperity. If we pursue prosperity that embraces the weak and vulnerable and builds sustainable peace by listening to their voices, we will be able to create an environment that embraces more people in the future. In other words, by achieving sustainable peace that embodies inclusion, we can create a virtuous cycle that endlessly reproduces inclusive prosperity.

To do this, we must act now. If we seek short-term interests out of complacency, the path may be even more difficult in the future, or we may even lose the opportunity to take action altogether.

The 16th Jeju Forum aims to set a stage where the world can focus on sustainable peace and inclusive prosperity as a countermeasure to the current crises. The Jeju Forum serves as a venue for discussions about ways to achieve peace and prosperity in Jeju, the Korean Peninsula, East Asia, and around the world. Renowned world leaders, Nobel Peace Prize winners, experts, and activists participate in the Forum every year. This year’s Jeju Forum is expected to serve as an opportunity for intellectuals to share their knowledge and experience regarding the definitions, examples of, and practices to ensure sustainable peace and inclusive prosperity. The 16th Jeju Forum is scheduled to be held in Jeju from June 24 to June 26, 2021.