

Asan Plenum 2024

“Future of Asia: Prosperity and Security”

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Honorary Chairman Chung Mong Joon and Chairman Yoon Young-kwan of the Asan Institute for Policy Studies, Former Foreign Minister Han Sung-joo, Former Unification Minister Hong Yong Pyo, Former Director of National Security Kim Sung-han, Ambassador Ahn Ho-Young,

President John Hamre, Ambassador Paul Wolfowitz, Dean James Steinberg, Dr. Edwin Feulner, Former Defense Minister of Japan Satoshi Morimoto,

Distinguished Speakers and Guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to express my appreciation to Honorary Chairman Chung Mong Joon and the Asan Institute for Policy Studies for organizing this important forum every year.
It is a great honor for me to deliver my congratulatory remarks here.

The theme of this year's conference, "Future of Asia: Prosperity and Security," resonates even more deeply with us as we face tectonic shifts in geopolitics.

Geopolitical tensions, fueled by the war in Ukraine, have spread to the Middle East and other regions.

Asia's security and prosperity are also heavily impacted by these growing tensions.

The case in point is North Korea.

North Korea has become more provocative in both actions and rhetoric, advancing its nuclear and missile capabilities.

Its aggressive stance has been further emboldened recently by increasingly close military cooperation with Russia.

What kind of future should we envision for Asia, and how can we secure peace and prosperity in this era of crisis?

Let me briefly outline Korea's strategies for securing peace and prosperity in Asia.

First, at the forefront of Korea's strategy is to protect and uphold the rules-based international order.

The economic and political success of Korea and many other Asian countries has been made possible thanks to this rules-based international order.

— one anchored in free markets and universal values of freedom, human rights and the rule of law.

However, this international order is under attack from all fronts, as global security challenges spread across regions.

To confront this, we are forging partnerships with other regions that share our values.

In addition to the enhanced trilateral cooperation among Korea, the U.S. and Japan, our growing collaborations with NATO and the EU demonstrate these efforts.

As emphasized by my Foreign Minister at the recent NATO Foreign Ministers Meeting, the security dynamics in Asia and Europe are deeply interconnected and we will increase our collaboration to address global security challenges.

Furthermore, Korea is enhancing its engagement with the Global South.

Next month, Korea will host the inaugural Korea-Africa Summit, a significant step forward in strengthening our ties with Africa. We are also intensifying our strategic relationships with ASEAN.

To defend this order, Korea also plans to lead discussions on important global issues like cybersecurity, climate change, peacekeeping and peacebuilding as a non-permanent Security Council member of the UN.

Second, Korea is committed to strengthening cooperation within the Indo-Pacific region.

This region is vital. It encompasses crucial sea lanes like the South China Sea and the Taiwan Strait, and it represents almost two-thirds of the world's population and global GDP.

Peace, stability, and safety in the Indo-Pacific region are also essential for the security of the world.

Recognizing this, the Korean government launched its first comprehensive regional strategy, the “Strategy for a Free, Peaceful, and Prosperous Indo-Pacific Region,” in 2022.

And to advance its vision and strategy, Korea is committed to strengthening partnerships with countries that uphold the values of freedom, human rights, and the rule of law.

Enhancing cooperation with China is also important in these endeavors.

We will continue to pursue a mature and sound relationship with China based on mutual respect and reciprocity.

In this regard, we anticipate hosting the Korea-Japan-China trilateral summit in Seoul soon for the first time in four years.

Lastly, securing peace and stability on the Korean Peninsula is crucial for a peaceful and prosperous Asia.

Despite its economic hardships and dire human rights situation, North Korea continues its nuclear and missile development.

Korea will continue to pursue deterrence, dissuasion, and diplomacy, to achieve the denuclearization of North Korea.

Korea and the U.S. are working closely to further strengthen extended deterrence, as laid out in the Washington Declaration.

Moreover, building on the historic Camp David Summit, the trilateral security cooperation between Seoul, Washington, and Tokyo is deepening day by day.

Although the UN Panel of Experts on North Korea was disbanded last month due to Russia's veto, we are redoubling our efforts with like-minded partners to ensure the faithful implementation of UN Security Council resolutions and to block North Korea's illicit cyber activities.

Korea will also intensify its efforts to improve the egregious human rights situation in North Korea and enhance our support for North Korean defectors.

Accordingly, Korea will host the International Forum on North Korean Human Rights at the end of this month, commemorating the 10th anniversary of the release of the UN COI report. This forum aims to enhance international awareness of North Korean human rights issues and promote efforts for their advancement.

As President Yoon emphasized, our unification policy aims to ensure the freedom of all North Koreans, and a free and unified Korea will contribute to peace and prosperity in Asia and the world.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Asia's security and prosperity are not just regional issues. They are global imperatives.

To create a more peaceful and prosperous future for Asia, Korea will continue to work closely with its partners.

I believe the Asan Plenum will be a valuable platform for sharing insights and knowledge to help us reach this goal. I look forward to a fruitful discussion ahead.

Thank you very much for your attention.