**Keynote Speech**

**“The Future of History:**

**A New Korea, a New Asia, a New World”**

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**Minister of Foreign Affairs**

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**Dean James Steinberg,**

**Ambassador Chun Young-woo (천영우),**

**Mr. Robert Einhorn,**

**Professor Yan Xuetong (옌 쉬에통),**

**Distinguished guests and**

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

**As you all know, the people of Korea are in a state of profound grief and mourning following the tragic ferry incident. My thoughts and prayers are with the departed, and my condolences are with the bereaved.**

**As always, I am confident that the Korean people will overcome this ordeal through their strength and resilience, aided by the overflowing sympathy from the international community.**

**Tragedy and calamity can strike anyone. The important thing is that we should come away with the right lessons from them, so that we do not repeat the same mistakes ever again. Through it all, we must open a better future and write a new history.**

**The British historian Arnold J. Toynbee argued in his magnum opus, *A Study of History* that history is a continuous process of challenges and responses. Indeed, in the course of overcoming countless challenges, humanity has acquired lessons and developed civilizations – big or small.**

**In contrast, states and civilizations which failed to learn the right lessons from history or respond appropriately tended to decline.**

**This is in line with the argument made by E. H. Carr, in his study on the origins of World War II, *The Twenty Year’s Crisis*. He warns that if leaders fall into the trap of misguided judgment, it may lead to a war and such misjudgment could result in immeasurable suffering of the people and derail the progress of humanity.**

**When E. H. Carr said that history is “an unending dialogue between the present and the past” and “a continuous process of interaction,” he meant that history is not merely a record of the past, but a living guide for the present and the future.**

**This year marks the centennial of outbreak of the World War I and the 25th anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall. Next year will mark the 70th anniversary of end of the World War II and the division of the Korean Peninsula, as well as the 50th anniversary of the normalization of diplomatic relations between Korea and Japan. Some countries may have learned the right lessons from their historical mistakes, while others may not.**

**Against such a historical backdrop, this conference on the theme of “The Future of History” is indeed very timely both intellectually and in terms of foreign policy.**

**So it is with my great pleasure to take part in this forum, where the world’s foremost thinkers in foreign and security policy have gathered to discuss a wide array of regional and global issues through the prism of history.**

**I would like to take this opportunity to thank President Hahm Chaibong (함재봉) and the Asan Institute for organizing this meaningful event. I would also like to welcome Dean Steinberg of the Maxwell School and all other guests who are present with us today.**

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

**It was only two decades ago that Professor Francis Fukuyama declared the “End of History” asserting the triumph of liberal democracy and market economy over communism in the wake of the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991. And many at the time anticipated a new Era of Hope as the cold war came to an end.**

**However, twenty years since then, people are starting to talk about the “Return of History” in the face of historical regressions and anachronisms especially in Europe and in Northeast Asia.**

**Whether this is the End of History or the Return of History, one cannot deny the fact that the international community is now undergoing a period of historical transition full of uncertainty. I would characterize the present era of uncertainty in the following terms.**

**First is the challenge of geopolitics. The recent series of events following Russia’s annexation of the Crimean Peninsula have far-reaching implications that go beyond Europe. The evolution of events there will intensify the already controversial debate on the dawning of a new cold war or the return of history.**

**The worsening historical and territorial conflicts in Northeast Asia, coupled with the rise of China, and Japan’s drive to break with the post-war order point to the ongoing tectonic shifts in the region.**

**Northeast Asia is a region of dynamic economic growth, where Korea, China and Japan make up 21% of the global GDP. But Northeast Asia is now suffering from the “Asia Paradox,” where deepening economic interdependency is overshadowed by heightening political and security discord.**

**Faced with a rising China, a resurgent Japan, an assertive Russia, and North Korea with its reveries of a Strong and Prosperous Nation, the United States is pivoting and rebalancing to Asia, while Korea is striving to change the abnormal state of division into a state of integration and unification.**

**Will Northeast Asia revert to old historical rivalries, or proceed to a future of greater prosperity? The answer to this multi-factor equation will depend on whether we can figure out the solution to the Asia Paradox without the clash of the forces.**

**Second is the challenge of geoeconomics. The tremors of the global economic crisis that began with the 2008 financial crisis in the US seem to be subsiding. But the IMF’s recent concerns about the uncertainties of the world economy are reminders that the fundamentals of the global economy still remain weak.**

**Furthermore, despite some recent progress, still the dormant DDA multilateral free trade negotiations has led to the proliferation of bilateral Free Trade Agreements and the push for regional economic integration as new mechanisms for cooperation.**

**As large pan-regional trade talks, such as the Trans-Pacific Partnership (TTP) and the Trans-Atlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) make strides, countries that have relied on bilateral and smaller regional FTAs will face wide-ranging economic challenges.**

**Third is the challenge of global governance. The proliferation of WMDs; terrorism and radicalism; climate change, the environment and energy problems; poverty reduction and sustainable development; these are transnational, global challenges that require global cooperation without which, they will become great threats to the future of humanity.**

**Fourth is the epochal challenge on human security. The events of the Arab Spring and conflicts in Africa show us that misgovernment, the oppression of human rights, sectarian conflicts and hunger are no longer domestic problems but matters of concern to neighboring countries and the international community as a whole, and can turn into international conflicts.**

**As we mark the 20th year of the Rwandan genocide this year, we need to remind ourselves of the admissions of the former UN Secretary General Kofi Anan that not being able to prevent the genocide in Rwanda – an emblematic case of the crime against humanity – was his greatest regret.**

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

**To many Koreans, this year is of historical significance. It marks the 120th anniversary of Korea's first experiment at Western-style reform which took place during the height of imperialism of the late-19th century.**

**Sadly, Korea at the time did not possess the knowledge about the outside world nor the strength to protect itself. As a result, reform failed and led to the loss of its sovereignty. Furthermore, the loss of statehood led to the division of the peninsula and the tragic civil war that created the world's most heavily fortified region today.**

**Today, even as Korea has become one of the world’s leading nations, the legacy of history is far from disappearing. North Korea’s nuclear ambition continues to threaten the peace and stability of Northeast Asia and our relationship with Japan remains contentious over historical issues, including the issue of "comfort women".**

**As far as the Korean Peninsula is concerned, neither the Cold War nor the history has come to an end.**

**What does this all mean?**

**More than anything, it reminds us of the importance of learning the right lessons from history. One of the most important lessons is that, if you are unprepared for historical tides that came to your shore, it is not just you, but your future generations who will bear the cost of your wrong choice.**

**Another lesson is the importance of diplomacy – making friends and neutralizing enemies. Throughout history, Korea was invaded by outside powers so many times. Throughout the 19th and 20th centuries, Korea learned the hard truth about the nature of power politics.**

**At almost every turn of our history, such as the end of the Chosun dynasty and the subsequent loss of sovereignty, the division, the war, and the post-war reconstruction; our fate was very much affected by the choices of major stakeholders in Korea at the time. In retrospect, we know many historical mistakes made or wrong-doings done by these stakeholders whose consequences still linger.**

**In this regard, we are reminded of the insightful warnings of a Canadian journalist named McKenzie who in 1920 wrote about the horrible way in which the Japanese responded to the independence movement that took place in Korea. He wrote, “when you ask me if I would risk a war over Korea, I answer this: Firm action today might provoke conflict, but the risk is very small. Act weakly now, however, and you make a great war in the Far East almost certain within a generation.” We know that McKenzie's prognosis proved correct because one generation later, the Pacific War erupted.**

**Throughout its modern history, Korea has been the ground-zero for some of the fiercest conflicts between various powers and interests in the form of both hot and cold war. But, as the saying goes, every cloud has a silver lining.**

**Some hopeful opportunities were also seen with the detente of the East and West in the 70s, and the end of the Cold War in the early 90s, though these turned out to be brief. And two decades later, we are once again witnessing a new historical challenge in this part of the world.**

**Now, Korea and Northeast Asia are faced with its greatest transformative moment since the end of the Cold War. History seems to be returning and its effects are most palpable in Korea and Northeast Asia. For the first time since the end of the Cold War, Korea’s diplomacy is facing its greatest challenges, which will impact the future of Korea’s history.**

**The biggest challenge is of course North Korea and its seemingly unyielding nuclear ambitions. The uncertainties in inter-Koran relations have also risen considerably in recent times.**

**However, the dangers that we face today are far more complex than in the early 1990s following the death of Kim Il-sung and the start of the Kim Jong-il. As we saw last year when Kim Jong-eun executed Jang Sung-taek, the volatility of the regime has sharply increased.**

**What is worse is that North Korea is now blatantly making known its unwavering commitments to developing nuclear weapons. North Korea even stipulated this in their constitution and says so publically. If North Korea goes ahead with another nuclear test as it has publically warned, it will be a game changer.**

**Second biggest challenge is the ever-growing tension in Northeast Asia, perhaps at its highest level since the end of the Cold War. Historical and territorial conflicts, and an arms race tend to overshadow other positive interdependence.**

**Misguided nationalism is rearing its ugly head in some instances. The political dynamics of the region is shaking the geopolitical plate from under the surface. Dr. Kissinger once said, “history knows no resting places and plateaus.” To me, history knows no end, here in Northeast Asia, it is returning with a vengeance.**

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

**As I have mentioned, history may be returning. But Korea is not shying away from its challenges. Because Korea today is no longer Korea of the past. Koreans have learned enough lessons from their own history of the past century.**

**In the similar vein, I believe that we learned a lot from the world history as well. Seen from the global perspective, history offers us with at least the following three important lessons in responding to challenges.**

**First, history rewards those who are well prepared to seize the opportunity. The first and foremost example is of course the way Korea has achieved the Miracle on the Han river and is now preparing for the second miracle.**

**In the wake of US-China détente, China also opted for reform and opening, and seized the opportunity for economic modernization. Known as “the sick man of Asia” in the 19th century, China is standing tall today as one of the G-2. Today, it is dreaming of the “Chinese Dream.”**

**Not much later, Vietnam joined the race and now even Myanmar is moving toward more opening. In sharp contrast, North Korea remains on its path of regression, fighting desperately for its own survival, making a series of wrong choices.**

**Second, history is on the side of those who progress toward freedom and justice, despite the ups and downs. Oppression and injustice will ultimately fail. We have seen this time and again in the former Soviet bloc, Eastern Europe, the Middle East, and in Southeast Asia. Northern half of the Korean Peninsula will be no exception to this trend. The most recent report by COI and the response shown by the international community is yet another indication to what to come.**

**Third, history will betray and punish ultranationalism and chauvinism. Past history showed us that when things were tough, ultranationalism were on the rise. It was almost always surest invitation to self-defeat or common destruction, including war. As Professor Fukuyama warned us, “the idle complacency and unchanging self-identity“ will not lead to progress.**

**In its contemporary manifestation of ultra- nationalism, the denial of history and attempts to revise history are steps that could lead to self-isolation and repeat of historical wrong-doings.**

**And when coupled with blind power, we know too well that it becomes a threat not just to your neighbors, but also to the humanity itself. This is why the words of former Chancellor Brandt “those who forget past, cannot see the future” reverberates throughout history as the sound of humanity’s conscience.**

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

**It is with these lessons in mind that the Park Geun-hye Government has set out an audacious step to respond to the challenges of history. Korea succeeded in achieving both full-fledged democracy and advanced market economy, through the Miracle on the Han river. Now, the Park Geun-hye Government’s key goal would be to create a "New Kind of Korea" and bring about the end of history on the Korean Peninsula.**

**Like the Germans who brought down the Berlin Wall, we will gradually bring down many walls that exist between the two Koreas – the wall of military confrontation; the wall of mistrust; the wall of socio-cultural disparity; and the wall of self-imposed isolation.**

**The priority value in a "New Kind of Korea" is putting the people of South and North at the center. It is to realize a reunification where all people on the Korean Peninsula are happy.**

**Of course, it takes two to tango. North Korea should turn back from the path of wrong decisions before too late. The first step should be to abandon its decades-old nuclear ambition. The international community will not tolerate a nuclear North Korea, and Pyongyang is playing an unwinnable game against the entire international community. Should North Korea insist on the current path, history will show what the end will bring.**

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

**As German reunification came within the larger context of European integration and peace, so will the Korean reunification come in the context of Northeast Asian peace and cooperation. This is why President Park in her Dresden speech stressed the key principles of reunification - unification that promotes harmony with Korea’s neighbors; that wins the blessings from the community of nations; and that serves the cause of the humanity.**

**As such, the "end of history" on the Korean Peninsula will also serve to bring an "end of history" in Northeast Asia. The vision for a "New Kind of Korea" and its implications on this region and the world are well described in the President's Dresden speech.**

**First, the reunified Korea will be free from nuclear weapons, respect human rights and democracy, and pursue good neighborliness. The reunified Korea will facilitate regional peace and cooperation, as well as contribute to creating a more responsible and cooperative Northeast Asia.**

**Second, Korean reunification will also create economic benefits, or peace-dividends. The global investment firm Goldman Sachs predicted that Korea will become the second largest economic power with a per capita GDP of $81,000 by 2050. The emergence of an 80 million strong economy will naturally make the Korean Peninsula a hub of the Pacific and Eurasia, thus providing a new blue ocean for its neighbors and partners.**

**Third, the reunified Korea will spread universal values and contribute to international peace and security. Furthermore, it will strengthen its role in resolving global issues in a world that is more interdependent than ever.**

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

**Korea has already set its foot out on the journey towards the new future of history. The Park Geun-hye government’s *Trustpolitik* is the vehicle on this journey. It is a vision as well as a strategy to realize a new kind of Korea, a new kind of Asia, and a new kind of the world.**

**Learning from the previous history, we have been able to make the right choices. Now, we will put in efforts to secure as many good partners as possible for this journey. We already have a strong network of partnerships. First and foremost, the rock-solid Korea-US alliance, ever deepening strategic partnership with China and Russia, upgraded relationship with ASEAN, EU, and India, and a special cooperation from Germany for reunification.**

**In this regard, the planned visits by President Obama and President Xi Jinping to Korea will mark another milestone in our efforts to bring peace and stability in the Korean Peninsula and in Northeast Asia. This series of bilateral diplomacy is now backed up by regional diplomacy as well as global diplomacy.**

**As you are well aware, the Northeast Asia Peace and Cooperation Initiative is aimed at transforming the region’s distrust and confrontation into trust and cooperation, while the Eurasia Initiative is aimed to go beyond Northeast Asia to transform Eurasia into a continent of peace and prosperity. These policies will have a synergistic effect as the reunification process follow in the near future.**

**One new element in my networking diplomacy is our creation of a group of advanced middle powers. I participated in the second meeting of MIKTA Foreign Ministers in Mexico last week that was attended by foreign ministers of Mexico, Indonesia, Korea, Turkey, and Australia, to discuss ways to further the cooperation of middle powers on major international issues.**

**As the Korean Government was born with the support of the United Nations, it is also placing high importance on building a world-wide network for peace and reunification on the peninsula. As a part of such efforts, Korea is currently serving in all three councils of the United Nations, namely the Security Council, ECOSOC and Human Rights Council, and is also further expanding its activities and scope in the international community.**

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

**Dean Acheson is well-known to many of us because during the time of the Korean War, he was the US Secretary of State who helped design the Marshall Plan, the Truman Doctrine, and NATO. He is known to Koreans more as the policy-maker who excluded the Korean Peninsula from the US defense perimeter, so-called the Acheson Line.**

**But for me, he is a different reminder every day. Since I became a senior-level diplomat and especially after I became the Foreign Minister, the title of his memoire, "Present at the Creation," is my motto as well. Making many important decisions every day, every week, I have been serving with the sense of responsibility that my judgment will form a chapter in our history and turn its rudder at the crossroads.**

**His words "present at the creation" is clearly a maxim for those many policy makers to heed in the Korean Peninsula, the Northeast Asia and the world who have to make the right choices at the fork of history – both at the end of history and at its return.**

**History is not pre-ordained. It is us who are making and creating it. Korea is no longer a shrimp surrounded by whales. And the pace of history on this peninsula in the 21st century will be much quicker than in the last century.**

**On that note, I would very much hope that today's forum will serve to form the global opinion on the future of history, benefiting from your rich experience and wisdom.**

**Thank you for your attention.**