

Asan Plenum 2013

“New World Disorder”

Chung Mong Joon

Founder and Honorary Chairman, The Asan Institute for Policy Studies

네 여러분, 반갑습니다. 멀리서 오신 참석자 여러분들, 참석해주신 우리 박관용 의장님, 이흥구 총리님, 우리 동료 의원 분들, 또 정부와 학계 계시는 분들 고맙습니다. 양해해주시면 영어로 말씀 드리겠습니다.

Good morning and welcome to the 2013 *Asan Plenum*. Chaibong put me in kind words partly because we are Johns Hopkins mafia. He graduated from the John Hopkins Baltimore home campus while I graduated from Washington SAIS, so he is the real Ph.D. and I don't know what I am. It is good to see so many friends. We are gathered here to deal with some of the most urgent and serious issues of our world. During this Plenum of two days, I hope we can solve most of these difficult problems.

This morning, please allow me to tell you why democracy looks vulnerable to economic and security crises. Unable or unwilling to undertake the necessary but painful reforms, leading economies of the world are adopting beggar-thy-neighbor policies. Stringent austerity measures imposed on less-developed countries in the name of market discipline do not seem to apply to the advanced countries. However, I believe that the inability of the global economy to lift itself out of the current crisis and the inability of democracy to undertake fundamental reforms are only temporary glitches in the system. They are not signs of fundamental flaws in the market economy and liberal democracy.

These days some of us also worry that in times of national security crisis, limitations of liberal democracy become even more apparent. So, Sir Halford Mackinder, the founding father of geopolitics, said, “Democracy refuses to think strategically unless and until compelled to do so.” He also lamented that instead of reckoning with reality, the democrat too often thinks in principles, ideas, and morality. However, once democracy decides to act, it does so with a sense of purpose.

South Korea has been slow to respond to the threat posed by North Korea's nuclear weapons. North Korea may mistake our inaction for weakness. However, our democracy has the strength to rouse itself to action, to show our will and resolve, and to defeat the existential threat to our cherished values of liberal democracy. We cannot simply wait and hope that others will solve the North Korean nuclear issue. In order to prevent the unthinkable situation developed on the Korean Peninsula, we need to think the unthinkable. I hope that the deliberations of the *Asan Plenum* will help us discover ways to overcome the disorder and the crises. Thank you very much.

고맙습니다.