

**REMARKS BY U.S. CONGRESSMAN MICHAEL HONDA (D-CA)**

**“PEACE AND PROSPERITY IN NORTHEAST ASIA”**

**THE ASAN INSTITUTE**

**SEOUL, KOREA**

**Friday, December 19, 2014**

**[Check Against Delivery]**

Thank you for the kind introduction. It’s an honor to be with you today.

I want to recognize and thank Chairman MJ Chung for his kind hospitality, and for providing me such a prestigious forum to share my thoughts and observations on “Peace and Prosperity in Northeast Asia.” I had an opportunity to learn more about the great work of the Asan Institute, and its global reach in public policy, during my visit with Chairman Chung.

I’ve had the privilege of visiting Korea several times throughout my time in Congress. This visit however, has been particularly meaningful and relevant for me and the constituents I serve in California’s 17<sup>th</sup> congressional district. In just a few short days, we’ve been able to accomplish a great deal. I look forward to sharing the exciting results with my constituents to further consolidate the ties between Korea and Silicon Valley.

I must say that the weather here in Seoul has been unseasonably cold with temperatures below freezing. But let me further state for the record that by contrast, San Jose is warm and sunny with temperatures in the mid-60s. So everyone here has a standing invitation to visit my district anytime this winter! I also recently learned that Korea finished its period of making “Kim-Jang Kimchi.” I really respect the preparation of the Korean people and if anyone has extra Kimchi for me to take home, please let me know!

Chairman Chung, Dr. Hahm, Members and Staff of the Asan Institute, Distinguished Guests and Ladies and Gentlemen: I wish to speak to you today on the topic of “Peace and Prosperity in Northeast Asia” – a subject that is near and dear to my heart. I’ll discuss this in four sections.

First, I’ll share my views of the U.S.-Korea alliance. Second, I’ll turn to Asia-Pacific relations and the need for restoration and reconciliation through the prism of having to account for history. Third, I’ll talk about South/North reunification and the need to find concrete initiatives aimed at reducing tensions on the Korean Peninsula while also focusing on humanitarian issues. Last, I’ll switch gears a bit and offer my thoughts on how synergistic cooperation between our two advanced economies – from manufacturing to high-tech and energy – can contribute to peace and prosperity in the region.

## **The U.S.-Korea Alliance**

Regarding the U.S.-Korea alliance, allow me to make my first point emphatically clear. The US-Korea alliance serves as the lynchpin of U.S. foreign and national security policy in Asia. The success of our relationship is grounded in common values such as democracy, a free market economy, and respect for human rights.

For the past sixty years, this alliance has provided security for the Korean Peninsula and stability in the region and beyond. At the same time, U.S. economic assistance and investment helped spur Korea's rise from dependence and poverty in the aftermath of war to a world-class economic power and indispensable member of the international community.

The signing of the Armistice in 1953 and the adoption of the Mutual Defense Treaty between the United States and the Republic of Korea marked the beginning of the modern U.S.-Korea alliance, which thrives to this day.

At the time, Korea was an impoverished nation with barely an agrarian economy. In 1960, Korea's GDP was \$2 billion and the per capita income was just \$79. Korea had been ravaged by three years of war preceded by 35 years of occupation by Japan. But America was determined to stand by its friend and in return, Korea emerged to become one of the greatest U.S. foreign policy success stories in the post-WWII era.

Korea is now a \$1 trillion economy – the world's 15<sup>th</sup> largest – with a per capita income exceeding \$20,000. It transformed from a donor recipient nation to a donor nation.

Speaking as a returned Peace Corps volunteer who served in El Salvador in the 1960s, I am also extremely proud of the work of Peace Corps volunteers in Korea. Between 1966 and 1981, more than 2,000 Americans served in Peace Corps Korea, living alongside and serving Koreans. Today, as a former recipient of aid, Korea can be proud of her own aid agency – the Korea International Cooperation Agency – KOICA.

Korea is member of the OECD and a member and former host of the G20 and the 2012 Nuclear Security summits. In 2018, it will host the Winter Olympics in Pyeongchang. In sum, Korea is an undisputed world power that also has "Gangnam Style."

But what is truly emblematic of the special nature of our alliance is in the fact that Korea has stood shoulder-to-shoulder with the U.S. in every major American military engagement since World War II. And since 1993, Korea has also been active in peacekeeping and humanitarian aid missions in Lebanon, Haiti, East Timor, and other hotspots around the globe.

It's in this context that as President Obama has sought a "Rebalance to Asia," the U.S.-Korea alliance serves as a cornerstone to that policy. It's imperative that we continue to invest in our alliance and to find ways to strengthen our global partnership. By doing so, we gain both the direct and residual benefits of greater peace and stability in the Northeast Asia region.

To this end, in the new 114<sup>th</sup> Congress in 2015, I look forward to continuing my support for greater temporary professional visas for Korean Nationals. Korea is the 3<sup>rd</sup> largest source of foreign students in the U.S. And conversely, the U.S. is the 6<sup>th</sup> largest source of foreign students in Korea. Creating a quota of 15,000 temporary professional visas for Korean Nationals, not only makes sense; it makes dollars and cents. As a former educator, and the Representative of Silicon Valley, I know firsthand the importance of STEM education, and attracting and retaining highly-skilled workers to the United States to contribute to our economy. It's time we in Congress finally get immigration reform done. I look forward to working with my colleagues in Congress to find a pathway to realize this important economic initiative.

In addition, 2015 will mark the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the end of World War II, and the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the normalization of relations between Korea and Japan. I support efforts in Congress to commemorate these historic milestones, with the aim of promoting reconciliation and forging a new paradigm of cooperation between America's allies in this region.

As we look to the future of our alliance, we must also not forget the sacrifice in blood and sacred lives that paid the price for the freedom our two nations enjoy today. This past March, the Korean Ambassador to the United States Ahn Ho-Young paid a visit to my district. His trip included a heartfelt and emotional ceremony with Korean War veterans at the Santa Clara Veterans Memorial. There, Ambassador Ahn presented our veterans with honorary medals that were crafted from the melted barbed wire from the DMZ.

In his remarks, the Ambassador talked about how the Korean War is no longer referred to as the "Forgotten War," but rather as the "Forgotten Victory." The veterans in my district still talk about that ceremony, and how their service and sacrifice in the Korean War was "worth it." They wept with gratitude for the remembrance of their service.

When I look at what Korea has achieved in the past sixty years, it's nothing short of a miracle.

When I look back at two previous U.S. Ambassadors to Korea, I am reminded of and inspired by how far Korea and the U.S.-Korea alliance have come. Ambassador Kathleen Stephens was one of the 2,000 Peace Corps volunteers in Korea. She learned Korean and devoted her two years to serving her community. She returned decades later to be the U.S. Ambassador to Korea. Her successor was Ambassador Sung Kim, who was born right here in Seoul. He became the first Korean-American Ambassador to Korea. The arc of their parallel lives – they are proof of the enduring friendship and partnership between our nations.

Our alliance has not evolved into a truly global partnership – one that can contribute to a peaceful and prosperous Northeast Asia.

### **Asia-Pacific Relations**

Now, let me turn to my second point regarding Asia-Pacific relations. My message is very simple. Peace and prosperity in the Asia-Pacific region cannot be realized until the Government of Japan fully accounts for its history, and justice for the sex slaves of World War II is achieved.

As I've stated before, education is my passion. I believe it's the most powerful tool and investment we can provide our children. Education also means being able to teach others so they can learn from our mistakes, and flourish as a society. George Santayana said that those who cannot remember the past are certainly condemned to repeat it. If society cannot look back and learn from its mistakes, trust and progress between nations is stunted.

To this end, I have spent the last 20 years educating people about an historical issue that has grown very close to my heart: that of the WWII 200,000 sex slaves known as "comfort women." These young victims, many of whom were Korean, were forced into dehumanizing sexual slavery, forced to serve up to 30-40 soldiers a day in some cases. They suffered serious physical, emotional, and psychological damages as a result.

The comfort women have one extremely modest hope: that the government of Japan will formally acknowledge, apologize for, and accept full historical responsibility for this crime. To date, they have still not received such a formal apology. That is why I introduced House Resolution 121 in 2007, which calls on Japan to do so.

As someone who was put into an internment camp as an infant, I know firsthand that we must not be ignorant of the past, and that reconciliation through government actions to admit error are the only ones likely to be long lasting. In 1942, during WWII, my country, my government put aside the constitutional rights of Japanese-Americans and systematically incarcerated. We were U.S. citizens, but we also looked like the enemy. Decades later, we, the Japanese American community, fought for our apology from our government.

In 1988, Congress passed, and President Ronald Reagan signed into law, H.R. 442, the Civil Liberties Act of 1988, which was a formal apology to United States citizens of Japanese ancestry who were unjustly put into internment camps during World War II.

Our government made a mistake, but they apologized for it, and healed many wounds as a result. Japan must now do the same. They must show the maturity of a democratic country, apologize for their mistake, and thereby gain the trust of her sister Asian nations.

Today, across the Asia-Pacific, less than 100 survivors are alive and each year, this number dwindles. They want, and deserve, an official apology.

I cannot put into words how grateful I was when H. Res. 121 received overwhelming support in the 110<sup>th</sup> Congress. By doing so, the House of Representatives sent a profound message to the government of Japan that the United States takes the issue of the systematic atrocity, sexual slavery, and human trafficking very seriously.

My patience for securing justice for the dignity of the surviving grandmothers – the halmonis - is running out.

The survivors are dying by the day. They deserve the justice that has been due to them for the past 70 years. We need to get this right. It's in this context that I hope and pray that Japan's

leaders do the responsible thing to act first in finding a pathway to resolving this issue once and for all.

This issue is was not only a historical issue; it is about violence against women – especially during times of conflict. As we saw in Bosnia-Herzegovina, Rwanda, gender-based violence continues to destroy lives and innocence. A few months, ago, the United Nations reported hundreds of captured Yezidi women and girls, who were raped by and sold into slavery by the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant. As long as there is violence against women, the issue of “comfort women” remains relevant.

Last month, on November 5, 2014, my dear friend and former Congressman Lane Evans passed away. Many of you may know that he was the catalyst for bringing the plight of the “comfort women” to the forefront in Congress. Through his courageous spirit, he gave the “comfort women issue” visibility in the Congress. I am honored to carry the torch and his legacy.

### **South/North Korea Reunification**

The third point I wish to touch upon, with respect to peace and prosperity in Northeast Asia, centers on South/North Korea Reunification.

Without question, we need to collectively find a path aimed at the denuclearization of North Korea while also seeking avenues for co-development of North Korea’s basic infrastructure and emphasizing human rights as well as instituting regular family reunions.

I read with great interest President Park’s landmark speech at Dresden earlier this year, where she boldly outlined several concrete steps to achieve these goals. I was particularly struck by the aim to target humanitarian assistance to pregnant mothers and infants. Furthermore, I appreciated the call to the international community to “look at jointly developing educational programs to teach future generations and cultivate talent, for it is in them that the long-term engines to propel a unified Korean Peninsula forward will be found.”

But in order for reunification to become a reality, we must look to the possible to achieve what we believe is the inevitable. This will require both patience and an adherence to a trust-building process.

That process must begin with people to people exchange. And there is no more urgent or prescient issue at hand than in instituting family reunions on a regular basis. I’ve had the privilege of meeting several divided family members in the United States who have shared with me their heartbreaking stories about their dying wish to see their families and loved ones. As a matter of fundamental human rights, we must do what we can to ease the pain and suffering of the divided families on the Korean Peninsula and take steps to heal the deep wounds of war.

I look forward to working in the new Congress to find ways to elevate the issue of reunification among my colleagues. I believe that efforts to ease tensions on the peninsula through various measures to build trust and confidence through educational and cultural exchange, including the creation of a DMZ Peace Park as President Park announced, will all further peace and stability.

The international community has a great stake in Korea's future. I have immense hope that a united Korea will lead to greater prosperity for the peninsula, our alliance, and across the global community.

### **Advancing Bilateral Economies**

For my last point, allow me to shift gears for a moment and focus on advancing our bilateral economies. Since the first Korean immigrants arrived in Hawaii in 1903, generations of Korean Americans, now numbering two million, have played a critical role in the development of the US economy. From transportation, technology, medicine, arts, and culture—Korean Americans have impacted every sector and sub sector of our economy, and social fabric.

As the Representative of Silicon Valley, I have seen firsthand the contribution Korean American students have made after graduating from our elite institutions of higher learning – supporting the development of new technologies, launching start-ups, and becoming angel and venture investors. I have also seen them open small, family-owned businesses. Many are first generation immigrants, whose English may not be perfect. Their commitment to their entrepreneurial dream and supporting their family, however, is perfect.

This history is only part of the inextricable link between Korea and the United States.

Our economies are tightly intertwined. With Korea's rapid economic growth since the 1960's, the emergence of business centers in new markets, and the rise of their middle class, Korea's demand for American goods will continue to break historic records.

President Obama has made it a top priority of his administration to grow American jobs through increasing exports. About every \$1 billion in exports creates about 5,000 jobs at home. If we double our exports, that would be 2 million new American jobs.

Since the President made boosting exports a top priority in his 2010 State of the Union speech our exports are up about 33 percent across all sectors. Manufactured goods are up 33 percent, agriculture is up 34 percent, and services are up almost 20 percent in just about every country in which we trade. 95 percent of U.S. exporters are small businesses.

There is no market that is more important for the United States than the Korean market. Increasing export opportunities to Korea is a top priority of the United States, and central to the goal of increasing exports to Korea is achieving a more balanced and fair economic relationship with Korea.

United States exports to South Korea supported more than 119,000 jobs across the United States in 2012, that's an increase of 28% over a decade. South Korea is our seventh largest bilateral trading partner, and the US is South Korea's third largest. 29 US States have more than doubled exports over a last decade. In fact, I am extremely proud that my congressional district leads the country in exports to Korea, with almost \$900 million, as of 2012

It's in both the United States and Korea's interests that we forge a strong economic relationship that ensures sustained and balanced growth for both countries through greater bilateral investment. To this end, I appreciate and support Korea's "Creative Economy" initiative that emphasizes science and information and communications technology.

I believe Silicon Valley and Korea can both agree that technology is the ultimate game changer. It has the power to improve the human condition. Technology brings about changes we can't even begin to imagine today.

In Silicon Valley, we've been at the cutting edge of innovation in nanotechnology, semiconductors, clean energy, telecommunications, cloud computing, digital media, and many other exciting frontiers. As Korea looks for more investment opportunities, and as we capitalize on synergies among institutions in the Bay Area and Korea, our economic relationship will get stronger and stronger.

For this to be as effective as possible, we must change our broken immigration system to make it easier for Korean graduates of our schools to stay in the US and contribute to our economy. Immigration reform must also address visa quotas and make it easier for entrepreneurs from other countries to establish their businesses in the United States.

Korea and the United States are both pursuing the goal of a cleaner energy future to combat climate change. Where there are opportunities to cooperate on clean technology advancement we should be discussing those possibilities.

The United States, and Silicon Valley in particular, are in a key position to help both economies meet their challenges together.

Silicon Valley sees better than most the great wealth of opportunities for both countries with the right leadership. In the midst of a changing landscape, we must look to build new bridges and reinforce the connectors that have already contributed so much to our mutual benefit.

Let's not turn away from progress, and the challenges that face us today. I believe in a brighter tomorrow for Korea and the United States. And I believe the people in this room will move us towards that future.

Let's take those positive steps forward.

### **Closing**

In closing, I am reminded of the words of President Park when she addressed the Joint Session of Congress in 2013. She said: "Looking forward, our precious alliance is setting its sights on a better world -- a brighter future. Bound by trust, guided by shared values, we are cooperating across and beyond our own boundaries."

Chairman Chung, Dr. Hahm, Members and Staff of the Asan Institute, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen: thank you again for the honor of being able to address you here today in

such an auspicious setting. You have my commitment to do all I can in Congress to foster strong support for the U.S.-Korea alliance, to help realize the goals of South-North reunification and broader peace and security in the Asia-Pacific, to urge the Government of Japan to do what is right for the justice of the Comfort Women, and to advance and consolidate a dynamic, comprehensive economic partnership between Korea and Silicon Valley.

As someone once shared, “we are two countries, but one alliance. We are two cultures but with shared values. And we are two histories but with a common future.”

Let’s go together: “GACHI GAHB-SHIDA.”

Thank you: “GAHM-SAH-HAM-NEE-DA.”