

Opening speech by

*His Excellency **ROH TAE WOO**, former President of the Republic of Korea,*

To be delivered by

*Professor **WON-SHIK CHUNG**, former Prime Minister of the Republic of Korea*

On this occasion of the fourteenth annual conference of the Northeast Asia Economic Forum, I have the great honor of delivering the speech of former President Roh Tae Woo, who because of an extenuating situation is not able to participate in this important occasion in person. As some of the longtime participants of the NEAEF may remember, I had the special pleasure of making an opening speech for the fourth annual conference of the NEAEF in Yongpyeong, Korea, and I am very happy to be here again today.

In 1992, the People's Republic of China and the Republic of Korea established diplomatic relations, after roughly a century of not having any relationship based on national sovereignty. In another way of putting it, the two nations were enclloistered in their two separate worlds, in spite of the fact that both nations and the people of the two sides have shared the same culture based on the use of Chinese characters, Confucian values, and a common history over many centuries.

During the second half of the twentieth century, the two nations were separated by ideological barriers and suffered painful tensions, conflicts, and even a fighting war. When I took office as President of the Republic of Korea in 1988, I strongly sensed the global trend toward the opening and relaxation of ideological boundaries between the sovereign states, energized by economic interests for

promoting economic development as well as the people's economic and social welfare.

The People's Republic of China, under the great leadership of Deng Xiaoping, opened China's door to the outside world and launched bold economic reforms, ushering in China's new industrial revolution and the dramatic pace of modernization. Starting from the basic foundation and vision created by Senior Leader Deng Xiaoping, Chairman Jiang Zemin provided effective leadership in transforming China into a dynamic global economic power, and modernizing the Chinese nation and society.

From the perspective of the Korean peninsula in the 1980s, I had a vision of liberating ourselves from the ideological boundaries of anti-communist nations and venturing to the other side of the ideological barrier. Just as Chairman Jiang Zemin stated in his memoirs in chapter 13, where he referred to "bold explorations and accelerating reforms," I envisioned a "Northward Policy" with an emphasis on diplomatic links with both the People's Republic of China and the Soviet Union, along with the communist nations of Eastern Europe.

Our region's vast and enormous stock of natural resources, especially in energy, is crucial for future dynamic economic cooperation in Northeast Asia. As a big component of this strategy, I initiated a dialogue with the northern half of the Korean peninsula, namely the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, and aimed at initiating economic cooperation, based on the complementary factor endowments of capital and industrial technology of the South, on the one hand, and the skills and quality of labor in the North, and the synergetic combinations of the strategic geographic location of the Korean peninsula, on the other hand. Accordingly, a number of interactions, exchanges and dialogues, between officials

and representatives of the two governments, mapped out the substance of an agreed framework.

Dr. Chung, the former Prime Minister, on one occasion led the delegation to Pyongyang and had a direct and personal conversation with the North Korean leader, Kim Il Sung. Working with competent Prime Minister Chung and his team, we were able to sign the basic agreement, outlining the framework of cooperation, titled “An Agreement on Reconciliation, Non-aggression, Exchange and Cooperation between the South and the North (13 December 1991),” which includes functional cooperation such as the linking of railway transportation between North and South Korea. Except for a minor addition to the framework, the basic agreement that we signed with the North is virtually the same in substance and content as the one signed by my successor, President Kim Dae Jung, a few years later.

With our “Northward Policy” on the one hand, and the intra-peninsula dialogue on the other, my vision for a Northeast Asian economic community, based on regional economic cooperation, coincides with that of the Northeast Asia Economic Forum, which was established in 1991 by Dr. Lee-Jay Cho, to promote understanding, better relations, and regional development through functional economic cooperation across the national boundaries in Northeast Asia.

Each aspect of progress toward this Northeast Asian economic community is an absolutely essential building-block for strengthening the relationship between China and the Republic of Korea. For example, I believe that economic cooperation within the Yellow Sea and Bohia Sea Rim has been one of the major keys to prosperous economic exchange, not to mention the creative cultural interactions that we have enjoyed over many centuries. This is one of the main

reasons that I have explored the means to open our door to China, as noted in the memoirs of Chairman Jiang Zemin. And as President in 1990, I personally asked Dr. Lee-Jay Cho to initiate a channel of high-level communication between the two countries, for developing political and economic relationships. Here, I want to acknowledge the historical roles played by Dr. Song Jian, former Vice-Premier of China, and by Dr. Lee-Jay Cho, the founding chairman of the NEAEF, in the history of the formal relationship between the two countries.

I have always believed and supported the mission and goal of the NEAEF, and I know that all of you who are participating in this conference will exert an even greater effort toward our goal of economic cooperation and prosperity. I would like to extend my whole-hearted appreciation to Dr. Song Jian for his leadership in promoting and supporting this historically important conference, aimed at peace and prosperity in Northeast Asia, to our host, the Shenyang Municipal Government, and to the sponsoring institutions in Beijing for all the effort, generous support, and resources provided for this important event. I would especially like to extend my particular thanks to Dr. Cho for inviting me to present this speech, and to Professor Won-shik Chung for personally delivering this speech on my behalf. And lastly, I wish everyone involved a very successful conference.