

UPF UK: Recent Developments on the Korean Peninsula by Keith Bennett

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Ambassador for Peace meeting on the last Tuesday of the Month, 28th February 2023 Recent Developments on the Korean Peninsula: A Talk by Keith Bennett Universal Peace Federation UK 43 Lancaster Gate, London, W2 3NA and Online

A special event with Korean peninsula expert, Keith Bennett, who spoke on recent developments on the peninsula at a Universal Peace Federation (UPF) UK meeting last night. There was a fascinating and informative discussion on the current state of affairs on the Korean peninsula after his talk.

Keith Bennett has had a long-standing and close relationship with the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) since his first visit in 1983. He was the Secretary General of the International Kim Il Sung Foundation (IKF) at its inauguration in Pyongyang and now serves as Deputy Chairman of its successor organisation, the Kim Il Sung Kim Jong Il Foundation (KKF). In recognition of his dedication to the DPRK, Mr. Bennett was twice awarded the Friendship Order of the DPRK by President Kim Il Sung. Additionally, he served for a decade as the Secretary of the All-Party Parliamentary Group for DPRK in the UK Parliament.

A series of questions were answered and discussed during the evening after Mr. Keith Bennett's talk.

Views were exchanged about the culture of North Korea and its response to Covid 19. Questions were asked about the diplomatic relations between the United States and the DPRK following the failure of the Hanoi summit. Questions included what is China's policy on Korean reunification and what is the effect of the Russo-Ukrainian war on the diplomacy surrounding the Korean peninsula?

There was interest in the possibilities of Track 1.5 diplomacy. The approach of Think Tank 2022 under the co-chairmanship of former UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and Cambodian Prime Minister, Hun Sen, was also discussed. The Seoul Resolution that emerged from the UPF World Summit in 2022 with the approach to encourage types of engagement that do not violate the UN Sanctions on the DPRK was also a topic of discussion.

Former US President Jimmy Carter's role in visiting Pyongyang with a CNN crew was appreciated because of the significant effect it had had on averting possible conflict during then President Clinton's administration. Particularly in view of his current ailing health, former President Carter's investment in election monitoring and peace efforts after his presidency, were praised.

One question, 'When President Kim Il Sung met with Rev. Moon (in 1991) he is said to have approved holding a mass wedding in North Korea? Is this something that might actually take place in the near future?' led to a discussion of Mother Moon's open invitation to the DPRK from President Kim Jong Un. The investment of Father and Mother Moon into the DPRK in the early 1990's was explained during the discussion, namely the car assembly plant, the Potongang Hotel and the Peace Centre in Pyongyang.

One person in the audience wrote, 'Thank you Mr. Bennett for a very informative presentation that helps dispel some of the ill-informed and negative views the US has toward the DPRK.'