

## ILC 2021 Session 5 - Examines Environmental Challenges in Northeast Asia

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**North America** -- The fifth session of the June 2021 International Leadership Conference for UPF's North America region was titled "Northeast Asia Environmental Tipping Points after a Century of Conflict and Hard Choices: Deforestation, DMZ and the Gobi Desert."

The June 25 session was one of nine ILC webinars that were held from June 24 to June 29 under the theme "Toward Peaceful Reunification of the Korean Peninsula: Peace and Security."

### Speakers

- **Vicki Tiaht** (moderator), President, Congressional Club (2005–2006); wife of Hon. William Todd Tiaht, U.S. representative, Kansas, 1995–2011
- **Seung-ho Lee**, President, DMZ Forum, Inc.
- **Matthew A. Shapiro**, Associate Professor, Illinois Institute of Technology
- **Zagery Oliver**, Executive Vice President, Universal Peace Federation USA
- **Lisa M. Brady**, Professor of History, Boise State University

### Session Report

**Dr. Seung-Ho Lee** explained that the mission of the DMZ Forum is to support conservation of the unique biological resources of Korea's Demilitarized Zone, transforming it from a symbol of war and separation to a place of peace and ecological research between North and South Korea.

Dr. Lee stressed the serious issue of deforestation prevailing in North Korea, stemming from the country's lack of energy resources available for cooking and winter heating. Deforestation has had a serious negative impact on the North Korean environment as a whole.

**Dr. Matthew A. Shapiro** addressed the environmental challenges that the whole of North Asia is facing due to the dust storms originating in China. These dust storms combine with the chemical pollution produced by Chinese industrial companies and travel across China and through the region of the Korean Peninsula.

**Rev. Zagery Oliver** proposed joint efforts on local environmental restoration projects as opportunities for near-term North–South Korean cooperation, working through NGOs with the objective of the peaceful unification of North and South Korea.

**Dr. Lisa M. Brady** spoke on the environmental effects on the land, air, and water of prolonged military conflict. She offered that the environment issues in Northeast Asia must be de-politicized in order for there to be solutions.