

UPF's Seoul Peace Summit draws comments from North Korea and Dick Cheney

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In this undated photo taken during the period of Dec. 28 to Dec. 31, 2019, provided by the North Korean government, North Korean leader Kim Jong-un attends a Workers' Party meeting in Pyongyang, North Korea. Independent journalists were not given access to cover the event depicted in this image distributed by the North Korean government. The content of this image is as provided and cannot be independently verified. Korean language watermark on image as provided by source reads: "KCNA" which is the abbreviation for Korean Central News Agency. (Korean Central News Agency/Korea News Service via AP)

[SEOUL](#) -- Past, present and future leaders from around the globe gathered in [the South Korean capital](#) this week to call for world peace and reunification of the Korean Peninsula.

North Korean leader Kim Jong-un even sent a message to the event's organizers expressing his hope that the effort will "achieve national peace, prosperity and unification."

The World Summit 2020 is featuring a lineup of high-profile speakers, including former House Speaker Newt Gingrich and former U.N. Secretary-General [Ban Ki-moon](#), offering hope for diplomacy as well as warnings about the gravity of the ongoing nuclear standoff with [Pyongyang](#).

In a video message that aired at the summit Thursday, former Vice President Dick Cheney underscored the need for denuclearization and voiced frustration over what he characterized as North Korean gamesmanship since President Trump's first historic summit with Mr. Kim in Singapore in June 2018.

"Unhappily, there has been no visible improvement since then, and it's not for lack of trying on our side," Mr. Cheney said in the video message. "Our negotiators have simply run up against the reality that the regime in the North has its own agenda, part of which is to buy time and extract concessions, while giving nothing meaningful in return."

Mr. Cheney said diplomatic engagement with [North Korea](#) "is certainly better than having no contact at all," but he implored U.S. leaders to stay "absolutely fixed on our security objectives, with every incentive that can help, but no backing down on denuclearization."

Mr. [Ban](#) cast a broader message in remarks to some 3,000 political, religious and civic figures from 170 countries who were at the summit Tuesday. He told them that "lasting peace and security is humanity's purest wish."

Several heads of state are attending the event hosted by [Hak Ja Han Moon](#), the leader of the Unification Church, in celebration of the 100th anniversary of the birth of her late husband, Rev. Sun Myung Moon, who devoted his life to the promotion of world peace and the reunification of the Korean Peninsula.

Organizers said the message from [North Korea](#), dated Jan. 30, was addressed to Mrs. Moon with text indicating that Mr. Kim "sends his congratulations commemorating the 100th birthday of Rev. Sun Myung Moon and the 77th birthday of Dr. Hak Ja Han."

"We sincerely hope that Dr. Hak Ja Han will continue the work of Rev. Sun Myung Moon and achieve national peace, prosperity, and unification," said the message, signed by Kim Young-cheol, a high-ranking North Korean official whose name is often printed in English as Kim Yong-chol. The message listed Kim Young-cheol as chairman of the North's Asia-Pacific Peace Committee, as well as vice chairman of the Central Committee of the ruling Workers' Party of Korea for South Korean affairs and the head of the United Front Department.

Rev. [Moon](#) was born in what is now [North Korea](#) and met with Kim Il-sung, the founder of [North Korea](#) and Kim Jong-un's grandfather, in a 1981 summit.

'Important springboard'

Mr. [Ban](#) told the summit that to end the conflict that has divided North and South Korea for seven decades, "long-standing national division, conflict and antiquated Cold War confrontation must fundamentally be dismantled and give way to new essential values underpinned by peace, coexistence, cooperation, prosperity and reconciliation."

"I firmly believe that this summit will serve as an important springboard for gathering the most substantial support of the international community in achieving this vision for the sake of a unified Korea and for the sake of the international community more widely," the former U.N. secretary-general said.

Direct engagement has been a key focal point of the Trump administration's [North Korea](#) policy over the past three years. Mr. Trump, who has met three times with [North Korea](#)'s leader since coming to office in early 2017, continues to pursue negotiation with [Pyongyang](#) despite an apparent stall in talks over recent months.

The renewal of talks has been blocked by concern that [North Korea](#) may be preparing to carry out an intercontinental ballistic missile or nuclear detonation test. The Kim regime has refrained from such provocations for nearly two years. Unlike in the past, Mr. Trump did not mention [North Korea](#) or the nuclear negotiations in his State of the Union address Tuesday night.

The pursuit of a reunified Korean Peninsula has been an undergirding principle behind the Unification movement that grew from the Unification Church that Rev. Moon founded in 1954.

Mrs. Moon has led the movement since a few years before the 2012 death of Rev. Moon, whose ministry grew from a tiny, embattled church in South Korea to a global spiritual movement and an affiliated commercial empire comprising real estate, manufacturing and agricultural operations, as well as media properties including The Washington Times.

"Peace cannot be realized by a single individual or a single nation," Mrs. Moon told the gathering Tuesday. "When we look at the situation in today's world, there are over 200 nations and they all have a common hope, which is the realization of lasting peace."

Mrs. Moon was flanked on stage by representatives from several religions. Hindu, Buddhist, African Traditional, Christian and Muslim leaders opened the event with interfaith invocations featuring a special "water ceremony," in which each poured their own chalices of water into a collective bowl.

Also on stage were dozens of current and former political leaders, including Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Sen, former Nigerian President Goodluck Jonathan, Guatemalan President Jimmy Morales, Nigerian Prime Minister Brigi Rafini and former Indian Prime Minister H.D. Deve Gowda.

"It's really appropriate that we are here on the 100th anniversary of Rev. Moon's birth, because out of the devastation of World War II and the Korean War, he and his bride found the courage to dream that they could achieve something, and it is amazing what they have created together," said Mr. Gingrich, the Georgia Republican who was speaker of the House from 1995 to 1999.

"I think each of us should take some courage from their courage," he said. "Each of us should share the vision that everywhere across the planet on every continent people can be brought together and that only by finding a way to work together will we avoid the disasters that would otherwise afflict the entire human race."

Push for peace

Philippine Vice President Maria Leonor Robredo, a political rival of Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte, recounted how her nation was the first to deploy combat troops to support South Korea at the start of the Korean War and called for a renewed global push for world peace, human rights and democratic ideals in the decades to come.

"Seventy years ago, thousands of lives were offered in this sacred ground in the name of freedom and democracy," the Philippine vice president said. "Today, we recommit and consecrate our lives in protecting those precious ideals."

"We need a better, kinder world, one where the values of equality, liberty are spread throughout the world and where freedom and democracy thrive," she added. "For the longest time, many of those who have been excluded in our quest for economic growth and prosperity continue to struggle in the peripheries. Let us not forget them."

Others expressed appreciation for the thousands who made the journey to attend the gathering at a moment of heightened concern in Asia over the spread of the coronavirus that began in China late last year.

"The fact that, despite the coronavirus spreading around the world, so many leaders are here means that we are all committed to peace, harmony and prosperity and reconciliation among the people," Mr. [Ban](#) said. "Thank you for coming from afar."

Organizers said the summit includes breakout programs involving multiple organizations tied to the Unification movement, including the International Association of Parliamentarians for Peace.

Former Indiana Republican Rep. Dan Burton, an IAPP co-chairman, said the association is focused on addressing "the danger a divided Korea poses for the rest of the world, now that nuclear weapons are part of the equation."

"This year will mark 67 years since the Korean War ceased without ever being declared to be over, and if anything, the situation has grown worse," Mr. Burton said.

He added that the IAPP calls on "all nations to emphasize that the path for peace on the Korean Peninsula requires cooperative engagement between China, Russia, the U.S., Japan, [North Korea](#) and [South Korea]."

"We really have no choice," he said. "A war that gets started always runs the risk of turning nuclear, and we know what could happen then."

The summit in [Seoul](#) is being sponsored by the Universal Peace Federation, a core organization of the Unification movement.

In announcing Tuesday that [North Korea](#) had sent a message ahead of the summit, UPF International Chairman Thomas G. Walsh told participants: "I think Dr. [Hak Ja Han Moon](#) is thinking we will, before long, we will have a summit in [Pyongyang](#)."

"What do you think about that?" Mr. Walsh said to rousing applause. "I think so. We are going to bring peace to this world. We're going to do it."