

UPF Asia Pacific's Think Tank 2022 Forum Asia Pacific, Feb. 2: IAED Session

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Asia Pacific -- The International Association for Peace and Economic Development (IAED) hosted the fifth session of the virtual *Think Tank 2022* Forum for UPF's Asia Pacific region on February 2, 2022. The program featured business leaders who explored the peacebuilding potential of economic cooperation between North and South Korea, in line with the session theme "Perspectives from Business Leaders."

A total of 2,620 people registered for the event. One hundred and fifty-seven (157) participants watched it live on Zoom, while it was viewed thousands of times on YouTube, Facebook and other social media platforms.

Mr. Thomas McDevitt, *chairman of the HJ Magnolia Global Foundation and the Washington Times*, welcomed the speakers and attendees. In his opening remarks, he introduced the IAED as part of UPF's vision, set by founders Rev. Sun Myung Moon and Dr. Hak Ja Han Moon, to be a network of business leaders who want to grow their wealth for a greater purpose. Since its launch in February 2020, the IAED has held dozens of webinars bringing together thousands of leaders to address the critical issue of the Korean Peninsula. Mr. McDevitt shared, "We realized, through history, through our experiences, through common sense, that there's no way to solve the intractable problem on the Korean Peninsula without the role of a civil society that is fully invested and fully playing their involvement in a way that is principled and transcendent."



The distinguished speakers were:

Dr. Chris Sotiropoulos, CEO and co-founder of *Global Opportunities Commercialisation PTY in Australia*, said it is crucial to identify opportunities for cooperation between North and South Korea through "unmet needs" and "strategic priorities." A strategic priority could be working with North Korea through technology, competence and human resource partnerships with South Korean firms. The South Korean firms could leverage technologies, products and services from all over the world. He enumerated the two roles international sourcing would serve: first, it would contribute to the delivery of end products, and second, it would enable buy-in or awareness from the international marketplace that they are part of the reunification goal, thus enlivening the prospect of reunification as a target within their business time horizon. The global business community, which continually seeks cheaper and faster markets with better solutions, would then ask: "What exists in North and South Korea that may assist our needs?" At that stage, the normalization of relations would come about and the perceived risk in dealing with North and South Korea as a single entity would decrease. Dr. Sotiropoulos concluded by speaking about the importance of commitment, particularly as these initiatives undergo a phase of uncertainty before transitioning to a sustainable path when reunification is the new normal.



The next speaker was **Mr. Udesh Chaskar**, regional director of the *World Startup Festival (WSF) in Malaysia*. He shared his thoughts on business and peace development based on his 15 years of experience. "Business can be the greatest platform for change," he pointed out. He added that being hopeful for the peaceful reunification of North and South Korea isn't enough when everyone needs to do more. When businesses are starting out, for instance, they can plan to operate in ways that promote sustainable livelihoods for farmers and other employees worldwide. Mr. Chaskar also stressed the need to educate and empower youth. He believes that we are corporate citizens who need to discover more cooperative models and growth to assist and help our future generations. Lastly, he explained that business networking between conflicting countries can promote indirect communication between the conflicting governments.

The last speaker was **Mr. Ajith Naragala**, chairman of the *Development Lotteries Board in Sri Lanka*. Mr. Naragala expressed his full support for Korean reunification and noted that "the unity among nations is significant because every nation is reliant on one another." This reliance, however, can be positive or negative, as indicated in the escalating tension on the Korean Peninsula which presents a security threat regionally and globally. He said that unity in the region is paramount to attaining regional goals. As so, it is important for influential nations in the region such as Russia, Japan and China to set the stage for a Korean peace accord. Mr. Naragala emphasized how important the reunification of the peninsula is to the region, as well as to the world. Advantages of it include broader opportunities in the job market, positive flow of remittances in the region, improvements in health and education and cultural exchange. He concluded by encouraging the involvement of youth in the economy.

The program concluded with a Q and A session, which covered such topics as promoting mutual economic development and reducing threats between North and South Korea. This was followed by a commemorative photo and final remarks by the speakers.

Mr. Yutaka Yamada, director of *UPF-Oceania*, moderated the session. **Mr. John Adamedes**, chairman of *UPF-Australia*, facilitated the Q and A session.