

UPF Moscow, Russia's roundtable: Russia and Countries in the Asia-Pacific

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Moscow, Russia -- The roundtable "Russia and Countries in the Asia-Pacific Region: Toward Peace, Security and Sustainable Development" was held at the National Hotel.

Russian experts on Korea and the countries in the Asia-Pacific region gathered on April 13, 2019, to analyze the present situation of peace, security and development in the region. Representatives of the NGOs of Russian Koreans also participated in the conference.

Alexander Zhebin, Ph.D., the head of the Center for Korean Studies at the Institute for Far Eastern Studies of the Russian Academy of Sciences, opened the conference.

He presented a deep analysis of the present situation on the Korean Peninsula. He stated that, in fact, each of the parties to the conflict has different priorities. If the United States' main priority is denuclearization of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK), then that of the DPRK is peace or security, for which the country feels it needs nuclear weapons.

The events of 2018 showed also that the Republic of Korea's priority was peace on the peninsula, and not the denuclearization of the DPRK by itself. In any case, it was clear that Seoul's priority was not denuclearization at any cost. These circumstances suggest that the tendencies toward detente in Korea that were outlined in 2018, and the search for a diplomatic solution to the Korean problems, are not easy. Considerable political will and patience of all contracting parties, primarily the United States and the DPRK, will be required in order to reach mutually acceptable agreements.

What opportunities for this are provided by the already signed inter-Korean documents, in particular the Panmunjom Declaration on Peace, Prosperity and Unification of the Korean Peninsula of April 27, 2018? The central point of the declaration, in my opinion, is the commitment of the leaders of the two Korean states, pronounced by them "solemnly in front of 80 million Koreans of the North and South and the whole world, that there will be no more war on the Korean Peninsula." This is the most important provision of the declaration, which, like the entire document, although not legally binding, however, in situations that directly threaten the world can play a key role in conflict prevention.

The second aspect of the inter-Korean thaw is the problem of reviving inter-Korean economic cooperation, which successfully grew between the first and second inter-Korean summits of 2000 and 2007. This is one of the most difficult tasks to be solved, since the DPRK is subject to unprecedented tough international sanctions imposed by resolutions of the UN Security Council. These sanctions complicate not only trade and economic investment cooperation but also cultural, humanitarian, sports exchanges, various international actions promoting Korean unification, such as marches across the entire Korean Peninsula, friendship trains, etc. To drastically improve the situation, it is necessary to make changes in the resolutions of the UN Security Council.

A significant obstacle to any cooperation and exchange, in addition to the resolutions of the UN Security

Council, remains the unilateral sanctions of a number of states and, finally, South Korea itself. The South Korean authorities could well show goodwill and lift sanctions against the DPRK, which were unilaterally imposed by previous administrations, and which, from the point of view of international law, are considered illegitimate. In general, if we consider the economic block of inter-Korean cooperation, the corresponding points of the Panmunjom and Pyongyang Declarations are not new. Thus, the railways of the two Koreas were connected in 2005, and in December 2007 test runs of trains took place. The zone of peace and cooperation in the West Sea [Yellow Sea] was also agreed during the second inter-Korean summit of 2007, which was prepared by the current president of the Republic of Korea, Moon Jae-in, who then held the position of chief of staff of the then-head of state, Roh Moo-hyun. Thus, in the economy we are talking about restoration of the lost.



However, there are new moments. In my opinion, the second of the three 2018 inter-Korean summits [in May] demonstrated an unprecedented readiness and ability of the top leaders of the South and the North to quickly respond to any dramatic changes in the international situation affecting the interests of Koreans. The reason for the summit was the decision of US President Donald Trump to cancel the meeting with the North Korean leader, in the organization of which Moon Jae-in and Kim Jong-un himself put a lot of effort. The coordinated efforts of the leaders of the South and the North, who held the summit in May, brought a positive result -- the first summit in history between the current president of the United States and the head of the DPRK was held on June 12 in Singapore. The September summit of the heads of the South and the North, held on September 18-20, 2018, in Pyongyang, demonstrated the determination of the leaders of the DPRK and the Republic of Korea to secure the leading role in determining the fate of the peninsula. Despite the serious difficulties faced by the US-North Korean dialogue after the summit in Singapore, Moon Jae-in and Kim Jong-un not only managed to make progress in concretizing the political agreements set forth in the Panmunjom Declaration but also made a crucial step in the field of military detente and promoting confidence-building measures. In their presence, the heads of the military departments of the South and the North signed an agreement on the implementation of the historic Panmunjom Declaration in the military field, which already has begun to be implemented.

Of course, in order for the decisions recorded in the inter-Korean declarations to be achieved, the North and the South need to do a great deal of work in politics, law, education and culture. However, the inter-Korean summits of 2018 showed that the national interests of Koreans will play an ever-increasing role in determining the fate of the Korean Peninsula.

The decisions to hold the summit were dictated by the realization that at this stage, the possibilities to resolve inter-Korean disputes by relying on external forces have been largely exhausted. Moreover, such attempts, as shown in 2017, are fraught with the appearance of a serious threat to the very existence of the Korean nation. Under these conditions, the Koreans will be steadily finding their own way to solve their problems, based on common Korean interests. As a result, the three inter-Korean summits held in 2018 became significant landmarks in the history of the two Korean states. This is a new attempt to establish peaceful relations in cooperation between North and South Korea, which have not been achieved in the last 70 years of the existence of the two Korean states.

A few words about denuclearization and the DPRK-US relationship:

Most experts, including those in the United States, agree that progress in this area can be achieved only step by step through mutual concessions. The recent withdrawal from the sanctions regime of several charitable organizations wishing to help the DPRK, made by the UN Security Council Sanctions Committee on North Korea, as well as statements by the US special representative for North Korea, Stephen Biegun, at the beginning of the year at Stanford University, indicate that this approach was adopted by the parties in preparation for the [2019 US-DPRK] summit in Hanoi. At the same time, more and more specialists believe that the DPRK in no way will completely eliminate its nuclear missile potential. The fact is that in Pyongyang they cannot help but wonder what will happen to possible agreements with the United States after Trump. The DPRK already has had disappointing experiences in this regard.



After significant progress under Bill Clinton, the relations were rotated 180 degrees by George W. Bush, who included North Korea in the so-called "axis of evil" and invented the abbreviation of "ABC" ("Anything But Clinton") -- a policy that completely denied everything that was done under Clinton. The course of the current host of the White House is best conveyed by a similar formula, "Anything but what Obama did." And canceled all that was done under Obama. It is almost possible to say with 100 percent certainty that if a candidate from the Democrats wins the presidential election in the United States in 2020, his motto will be "Anything but what Trump did." There is no doubt that North Korea understands this well. In addition, there is no unity in the Trump administration on how to deal with the DPRK. Statements on this topic by such figures as Vice President Mike Pence and National Security Adviser John R. Bolton indicate that they are supporters of a much more rigid course toward Pyongyang. So, taking into account the above mentioned and, by the way, a far from complete list of problems, really major breakthroughs at the Hanoi summit concerning denuclearization of the DPRK would have been unlikely. At the same time, the absence of a joint document or any agreed statements at the end of this summit suggests that the relations between the United States and the DPRK are deadlocked, and no progress can be expected either in denuclearizing the Korean Peninsula or improving relations.

It is important to bear in mind that the factors that led Donald Trump and Kim Jong-un to Hanoi, despite the lack of agreements, continue to operate. The United States still wants to achieve denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula, and the North Koreans want to lift the sanctions and normalize relations with the United States. These incentives retain their strength.

Secondly, in spite of the well-known reputational losses suffered in Hanoi, both leaders for the time being are refraining from personal attacks and threatening rhetoric, which 2017 was so rich in. We can assume that at this stage, even though the door for negotiations is closed, they prefer to leave it unlocked.

These two circumstances allow us to hope that the United States and the DPRK will continue the negotiation process with a view to resolving the issues that led their leaders to both Singapore and Hanoi. The statements of the DPRK leader at the recent session of the Supreme People's Assembly confirm that the DPRK leaves open room for negotiations with the United States.

In any case, the transition to dialogue on Korean issues is much more preferable to the explosive situation that developed on the peninsula in 2017. It seems that Russian diplomacy should make every effort so

that the parties remain at the negotiating table as long as possible. Russia has been conducting this position since the beginning of this century, and one might say the millennium. I want to remind that, back in 2002, President Putin sent a welcoming address to the participants of the peace and friendship train that connected Korea, with wishes of success in the struggle for reunification of Korea and the Korean nation.

Next, Alexander Vorontsov, Ph.D., the head of the Department of Korea and Mongolia, Institute of Oriental Studies, Russian Academy of Sciences, continued:



The topic of our roundtable is very relevant. We listened to a deep and solid report about the situation on the Korean Peninsula, which highlighted the main problems. Proceeding from the name of our event, I would like to approach this problem, based on a broader, regional context. In the title we have "the Asia-Pacific region." The countries of the region are increasingly seeking to strengthen security in the region. It is generally recognized that East Asia, where the Korean Peninsula is located, is the most dynamic and powerful economic region where the leading economies of the world are concentrated. The Republic of Korea is at the forefront of the highly economically developed countries of this region. Of course, the lack of peace and security is extremely disturbing to all participants in this process. But we see that approaches to security are different. Russia, China, the countries of the SCO [Shanghai Cooperation Organization], BRICS [Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa], put forward the concept of equal and indivisible security for all. Only in such conditions will the countries of the region be able to experience real security. Equal and indivisible.

The SCO and BRICS nations frankly take into account the positive experience of interregional cooperation within the framework of Southeast Asia, ASEAN [Association of Southeast Asian Nations], where, as you know, decisions are made on a consensus basis and with full equality. This is given the top priority, so that the equality of all participants is guaranteed. Approximately on the same foundation, Russia, with its concepts, and China are trying and offering to build regional cooperation; they have chosen a different approach. The United States sees security primarily as its own and its allies' security. In the title of our roundtable, we see the "Asia-Pacific region," and there, for the past one-and-a-half years, the term "Indo-Pacific" has been used.

It is not at all accidental that only the Indo-Pacific region is mentioned in all official documents. The explanation concerns India, on the one hand, and the United States, on the other, who limit this region. The main players, according to this concept, are the countries "quad," that is, the "quadrilateral" within the framework of this Indo-Pacific region: the USA-Japan-Australia-India, which are democratic countries, a pillar of democracy. They are the main active players, the leading forces, and it is the cooperation between them that should determine the whole life in this region. They call for the development of cooperation, including military, between these countries.

What about other countries? They remain outside this privileged group. That is, in fact, there is a prospect of building new dividing lines. Who is outside this design? Mainland China, Russia and other countries that do not quite agree with US policy. These two concepts counteract, interact, and all countries in this

region, including the Korean Peninsula, are in the coordinates of this new regional vision.

We see how the emphasis on alliances, within the framework of this broad construction, is trying to strengthen the interaction of the regional quadrilateral, relying on the existing military alliances of the United States: USA-Japan, USA-Republic of Korea, USA-Australia. But now relations between Japan and the Republic of Korea have become significantly more complicated for a number of reasons: Now there is no opportunity to concentrate on them; therefore such a subregional structure is not very developed.



During the reign of the previous administration in South Korea, when Mrs. Park Geun-hye was president and led by the party she represented, they recklessly tried to be in the mainstream of military cooperation with the United States, and they decided to easily accommodate in South Korea a new missile system, THAAD [Terminal High Altitude Area Defense], which became an extremely painful point for the region, since as officially declared, it was directed against North Korea, but for its technical characteristics, THAAD was viewed very far by China radar. This caused a sharp reaction from China and Russia. China actually imposed sanctions against South Korea; they, of course, were not called sanctions. This complicated the regional situation.

However, the position of the current South Korean administration is quite different from that of the previous administration.

Concerning THAAD, it was agreed not to expand it in South Korea. As a result, the situation is improving. And then there was a situation in which in our region almost all countries were under sanctions: Russia and China under US sanctions; against China unilateral sanctions imposed by the United States on those organizations that cooperate with North Korea; South Korea under Chinese sanctions – an unhealthy situation. Now the situation has largely improved, and here, of course, the current president of the Republic of Korea, Moon Jae-in, is playing an important role. It should be recognized.

In relations with China, he also to a large extent settled acute conflict situations, and now the relations are normalizing. The previous speaker has already spoken about inter-Korean relations. The current situation is fundamentally new for us who have committed our lives to studying the situation in Korea and want peace and stability for the Korean people, whom we love. The year 2017 was extremely alarming: War was actually knocking on the door of the Korean Peninsula, and this is not a pathetic or journalistic line. What happened last year -- this cardinal turn to peace, to a diplomatic decision -- should not be underestimated in any way. Moreover, the process is complicated, bumpy. Now we are again seeing a pause, a slowdown of this process, but there are still prospects for its continuation.

Once again I would like to confirm that the role of President Moon Jae-in here is very important. He showed a certain courage. And of course Kim Jong-un. As one Korean proverb says, "You can't clap with one hand." They resolutely went to meet each other, starting with the Olympic Pause in Pyeongchang. It was felt that both sides were quite ready, the necessary concepts and programs of action were developed,

because inter-Korean cooperation and rapprochement proceeded so swiftly, successfully, and effectively. Indeed, three summits in less than one year, in six months. And before that, for the entire 70-year history of the two Koreas, there were only two summits, which, of course, were also good, but this here was a qualitative leap, a breakthrough. Then – a qualitatively new phenomenon. Earlier, the military sphere was touched upon in the inter-Korean agreements, but they were never implemented. And then they began to be rapidly implemented. And now most of the agreements in the military sphere, which were an integral part of the Pyongyang Declaration of September 2018, already have been implemented.

We see very serious positive changes on the Korean Peninsula and in the region, and we very much hope for their positive continuation this year.



Katsumi Otsuka, Ph.D., the regional chair of the Universal Peace Federation for Europe, Eurasia and the Middle East, spoke about the first visit to Moscow, Soviet Union, of the UPF founders Dr. Sun Myung Moon and Dr. Han Hak Ja Moon in 1990. At that time, 40 former heads of state attended the 11th World Media Conference, which was organized together with the Novosti news agency of the Soviet Union.

Dr. Otsuka described an important meeting that Dr. and Mrs. Moon had with President Mikhail Gorbachev at the Kremlin. The main federal newspaper put the report about the meeting on its front page. Dr. and Mrs. Moon visited Russia to give love to Russia and the Russian people. The goal was also to lead to the end of the Cold War, which is the turning point of history. They presented a new vision of the nation and the world after 70 years had passed since the 1917 Revolution. It was the fruits of The Washington Times and fact-finding tours. After this meeting, a student exchange program began between Russia and the United States, as well as Russia and Japan.

During their 1990 visit, Dr. and Mrs. Moon visited the Kremlin and Red Square, experienced Russia's rich cultural heritage, and found a great possibility of development in Russian young people. They also emphasized true family values based on ethics (moral).

Dr. and Mrs. Moon expressed that without Russia it would be impossible to attain world peace, so Russia needs to live for the sake of world peace.

Also at that time they introduced the idea of a bridge and tunnel crossing the Bering Strait, which requires political will of the Russian and US governments. Dr. Hak Ja Han Moon currently emphasizes the Peace Road project, which includes the construction of the Bering Strait bridge and tunnel.

Now, 29 years after the first visit to Moscow by Dr. and Mrs. Moon, their ideas of "living for the sake of others" and peace ideology have been attracting many leaders in the world. Again, Dr. Hak Ja Han Moon views Russia as the key nation for world peace, developing the Peace Road project. She also continues to emphasize the importance of stopping family breakdown and immorality. One of the priorities of UPF is interethnic and interreligious tolerance and international dialogue for a better world and future. Of course, reunification is still one of the important issues in many parts of the world, especially in the Korean Peninsula.

Dr. Otsuka spoke about the present environment for the reunification of the Korean Peninsula and the role that UPF is playing in it. He emphasized the importance of the Korean people's desire for reunification, According to recent statistics, young Koreans have a much weaker desire for reunification than their elders do. Also rich and poor people are less positive about reunification, and the identity as a Korean is getting weaker on the Korean Peninsula. Also, the cost of reunification will be three times the size of the national budget of South Korea, according to the World Bank and The Wall Street Journal. Dr. Otsuka related the results of a public opinion poll that asked Koreans to say who was responsible for the division of Korea. The poll, taken by the Segye Ilbo newspaper in September 2005, found that 53 percent thought the United States was responsible, 15.8 percent named Japan, 13.7 percent said Russia, and 8.8 percent answered China. Of course, the cause of the division is the Cold War, Dr. Otsuka said.



Then he spoke about the desire of Russia, China, the United States, and Japan, the biggest players in the region, to abolish nuclear weapons and missiles in the Korean Peninsula. He also mentioned the issue of cultural differences, which would require equalization.

Dr. Otsuka spoke about the visit of Dr. and Mrs. Moon to North Korea, where they had a top-level conference with Kim Il-sung on December 6, 1991. The result of the meeting was extraordinary: implementation of family visits, peaceful use of nuclear energy, welcoming of investment by overseas Koreans, call for the realization of summit talk between North and South, development of the Mount Kumgang area for tourism.

Then Dr. Otsuka reported about the recent accomplishments of Dr. Hak Ja Han Moon: a series of summit conferences in the world, the inauguration of the Interreligious Association for Peace and Development (IAPD) and the International Association of Parliamentarians for Peace (IAPP); the importance of organizing the Peace Road project with the crossing of the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) in 2019; and Youth Service for Peace projects.

Evgeny Kim, Ph.D., a leading researcher at the Center for Korean Studies, Institute for Far Eastern Studies, Russian Academy of Sciences, spoke about the attitude of Rev. Moon to the USSR and North Korea.

In the 20th century, there was a famous German writer, Thomas Mann, who said that "the greatest folly of the 20th century is anti-communism." Rev. Moon had to overcome a long-term struggle against communism and his extremely negative attitude toward communism in order to finally understand that there is something in the ideas of communism that can be used to establish peace on earth. Overcoming such one-sidedness and hostility to a different frame of reference was extremely important.

If we are talking about universal peace, we must forget about our ideological differences. It is necessary to consider the future of humankind, and in this sense it is worth noting that the situation that has now developed on the Korean Peninsula requires the same approach that Reverend Sun Myung Moon showed in his time.

The position now expressed by some circles in the United States of America with regard to North Korea is related to the fact that they would like to eliminate this regime. The approach demonstrated by US National Security Adviser John R. Bolton, "all or nothing," means that since North Korea does not agree with this, it will have to be suppressed. There are two ways: The first is the military way; the second is

economic sanctions to suppress the country and reset the regime.

In both cases, there will be millions of victims. In a war, this is somehow understandable, but as a result of economic sanctions that undermine the living conditions of the North Korean population, this will lead to the loss of health and the massive death of North Koreans. Such an approach is unacceptable, so the solution to this problem, which arose as a result of so many years of distrust and hostility, is possible only in stages, step by step.

When they say, "We are now offering a big deal at once, and let's do it," it will not work. Remember the experience of the German reunification. Before Germany united, there were very strong contacts between the two states, including humanitarian ones. This tactic of small steps, it seems to me, is very important. It is also necessary to recognize the correctness of what Rev. Moon said in 1990-1991 regarding the use of atomic energy by North Korea: You should not try to forbid North Korea from conducting research in the field of atomic energy.

I would like to point out the following circumstance. The extremely conservative circles of the United States of America, at one time known as the neoconservatives, to which John Bolton belongs, for some reason think that North Korea has now contacted the United States of America and is ready even to reduce the level of tension, being frightened by the sanctions. They do not understand the nature of the regime and the North Korean people's unity. North Korea took these steps – closing the nuclear center, dismantling the nuclear engine test facility, and was even ready to eliminate the nuclear center in Yongbyon – not because it was afraid of the US sanctions. Yes, sanctions affect the economy of North Korea, but a country that has been under unprecedented sanctions for the past 70 years will not be scared. It is necessary to finally and clearly recognize that the neighbors of North Korea, it seems to me, should act in a different way; they could support attempts to find approaches to cooperation between the United States of America and North Korea, and between North Korea and South Korea, instead of trying to prevent this.

From this point of view, it is clear that the improvement of relations between the United States of America and North Korea is supported by China and Russia. Japan does not support this; moreover, it takes a very provocative position, all the time talking about increasing sanctions, demanding the introduction of new sanctions, putting forward unacceptable conditions for normalization of relations. It seems to me that in order to achieve peace, it is necessary to ensure that Japan realizes the fallacy of its actions before the Second World War, during the occupation of Korea. However, Japan does not want to admit its mistakes. Therefore, for example, in Japanese textbooks it is written that Japan was right during the Second World War. In this way, Japan will not find understanding from other states. In addition, as Dr. Otsuka said, when Korea unites, it can become a major economic power, as the country has abundant natural resources. In other words, Korea will become a very serious economic competitor to Japan. Therefore, Japan does not want a rapprochement between the two Koreas and does not want to help to establish cooperation with the future giant of the economic world.

We presume that North Korea will not give up. And it seems to me that China, Russia, and South Korea will not allow anyone to try to destroy North Korea as a state.

Ernest Kim, chair of the Council of the Regional National-Cultural Autonomy of Koreans of the Moscow Region and a participant, organizer and sponsor of the Russia-Korea rally in 2014, dedicated his speech to the rally in 2014 which crossed the DMZ.

At that time we were celebrating the 150th anniversary of the voluntary resettlement of Koreans to Russia. This became the topic of the 2014 Russia-Korea rally. We received permission for our team to pass the 38th parallel. As a result, 32 people inscribed their names in history because for the first time the team of such a composition crossed the demarcation line between the two states. In total there were 32 people in seven cars, and there was also a bus.

All the participants had been waiting for this moment for a long time, but the most unexpected was the fact that the first person we met on the border between North Korea and South Korea was an American military man in the uniform of the United Nations. We knew that the UN troops were there; still we perceived it as a surprise. Our desire was to unite the two countries by means of grass-roots diplomacy. In both North Korea and South Korea, this is one nation, but now the two states are divided by some gap. This gap will become a huge abyss if we, through the efforts of the people's diplomacy or professional policy, fail to change this state of affairs and would not be able to find some forms of association and to unite the two countries. After all, having driven 4 kilometers, we found ourselves in a completely different civilization. And this is all the same – our people. All participants of the roundtable, Koreans, are quite worried about it.

We could not reach the highest authorities, although in the Republic of Korea we were received at the level of the prime minister, and in North Korea we were met by a third-level person. So, in general the whole rally was held at a high enough level. However, of course, we could not influence the resolution of

the situation. And this has been a constant pain in our hearts.

The principal difference [of the 2019 rally] in comparison to 2014 will be a team of North Koreans and that of the Republic of Korea among the participants of this motor rally. There will be about 10 cars and 40 participants. The most important thing is to receive a document that will enable participants of the Republic of Korea to enter the territory of the DPRK, and participants of the DPRK to drive through the territory of the Republic of Korea.



We once again decided to make a statement that ordinary Koreans want unification, so this year we plan another motor rally with crossing the 38th parallel. For eight months now we have been negotiating at the embassies of both countries in order to get permission to cross the 38th parallel. I strongly believe that our project will be realized.

We will start on July 9 behind St. Basil's Cathedral in Moscow, and finish on September 15 at the VDNH (Exhibition of Achievements of the National Economy) in Moscow, where a big Korean holiday will take place.

Our doors are open. We will be happy if your organization joins this event. Now we are partners on this project with the Assembly of the Peoples of Eurasia and the Assembly of the Peoples of Russia. We are ready to cooperate.

Dr. Otsuka mentioned Mount Kumgang, a Korean Peninsula treasure, in his presentation. In 2014, we visited the territory of this park, where we enjoyed the view of the amazingly beautiful virgin nature of those places. Here is an example: It is forbidden to wash one's hands in the waters of a river – in this way they are trying to protect nature. Frankly, the places are somewhat abandoned. We asked why this is so? They explained to us that this territory was formerly a cultural park, a tourist area of South Korea. And now the citizens of South Korea are not allowed there due to the current political situation. They asked us: "If you will communicate with the authorities, tell them: It would be good if this tourist zone became available to the citizens of the Republic of Korea again." And this time we signed an agreement with the Government of Moscow, the Department of Tourism, and the Ministry of Tourism of the Republic of Korea that within the framework of the rally we would like to advance the issue of this tourist area.

If your organization has the opportunity to take care of this issue, at least in terms of tourism, we will be grateful to you. Citizens of Russia will also be able to see these beautiful places, and communication will begin between the people of the North and the South. This is the minimum of what we would like to do as part of our motor rally. In addition, we will organize a stationary exhibition in Moscow, in Seoul and in Pyongyang. We also have agreed on this in the framework of this rally.

The route passes through seven states: countries of the post-Soviet space, Mongolia, China, North Korea and South Korea. Everyone is welcome to join.

After that Vladimir Petrovsky, Ph.D., chief researcher of the Institute for Far Eastern Studies of the Russian Academy of Sciences, continued the roundtable.

Russia and China have consolidated coordinated positions concerning the situation on the Korean Peninsula. In 2017, the ministers of foreign affairs of Russia and China signed a special statement that Russia and China will act together to help resolve the situation on the Korean Peninsula.

I would like to look at this situation from a slightly different angle. Of course, we are discussing the problems of peace and security, but let's return to the exact formulation of the topic of our roundtable: "Russia and the Countries of the Asia-Pacific Region: Peace, Security and Sustainable Development." I would like to speculate about sustainable development. It is precisely in addressing the problems of sustainable development that the key to resolving many crisis and conflict situations in the Asia-Pacific region, including the situation on the Korean Peninsula, is found. This is also important, because for the Universal Peace Federation and the fraternal organizations that it supports, the problem of sustainable

development is the number one priority, one of the main directions. Therefore, when we say that Russia and China are against cornering North Korea, the simple message is that, yes, Russia and China are against North Korea's nuclear missile program, but the sanctions that were imposed by the UN Security Council must not infringe upon the right of North Korean citizens to peaceful development. That is, the citizens of the DPRK have the right to social and economic development in accordance with the economic model they have chosen. It is impossible to undermine the right to development under the pretext of politics and ideology. It is important.

Therefore, when Russia and China put the question this way, they say that it is necessary to avoid suffering of the civilian population, which may occur as a result of sanctions. And the sanctions must be gradually lifted, starting with those that hinder development of a peaceful economy, of peaceful sectors of the economy. Then it is necessary to lift those sanctions that hinder development of the inter-Korean dialogue. And, by the way, the Republic of Korea also shares this approach, which is extremely important.

Problems of sustainable development are an absolute priority for the entire international community. The goals of sustainable development until 2027 were approved by the United Nations. This is the main strategic goal for the United Nations, and the Universal Peace Federation contributes to this goal. In general, this is already a long story: the right to sustainable development, struggle for sustainable development. Previously there were the Millennium Development Goals. There was about the same set of priorities; now there are more of them and the Sustainable Development Goals have been adopted.

One of the main points is fighting poverty, reducing the number of people living in absolute and relative poverty. This is one of the top priorities. Since we are now discussing the situation in the Asia-Pacific region, this is a region that nowadays is becoming a driver of world economic growth. On the one hand, it is a concentration of problems in the field of sustainable development, and on the other, this Asia-Pacific region is also a means of solving problems of sustainable development. I will give you just one fact. Now China is celebrating 40 years since the beginning of the reforms, which are called reforms for openness. During this time, the number of people living in absolute poverty in China has decreased by 700 million. That is, China has brought 700 million people above the poverty line. And this makes up 70 percent of the total number of people all over the world who were able to be taken above the poverty line. This is the contribution of China -- only one Asian country -- to the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals. Such examples can be listed further on.

Important: The goals of sustainable development are the key to solving many problems of humankind. And I am very glad that last year, with the assistance of the Universal Peace Federation, the Interreligious Association for Peace and Development was created. It is very important that the attention is focused on development issues. In our region we should not miss this, and in Northeast Asia and Southeast Asia this is the key to solving many problems.

Dr. Otsuka was very informative when he spoke about how Japanese-Korean relations are developing today. I can also say how complicated Sino-Japanese relations are. There is such a thing as historical memory, which is stored for a long time, but memory is selective. And often in human memory, in the memory of the people, there is a tendency to preserve precisely negative moments. And this is very difficult to overcome. Therefore, it is very important that the Universal Peace Federation is using methods of public diplomacy, and by methods of interreligious dialogue it leads to overcoming the problems left over from the past.

We all know that the federation has done a lot in establishing human ties between the peoples of Japan and Korea. It was one of the priorities of Dr. Moon, and we all know that he worked a lot on this. Such work should be continued in relations between the peoples of China, Japan, North Korea, and South Korea. Here, a lot depends on establishing of humanitarian exchanges, human exchanges, which our federation promotes in every possible way. If this can be resolved, then development goals also will become closer.

Here's another example, with numbers, if you will. Negotiations are under way to establish a trilateral free trade zone between China, Japan and the Republic of Korea. For many years they have been going on, and they were already close to success, but there was always some kind of event, an aggravation, which interfered. We know that territorial, border conflicts still exist in Northeast Asia. When another incident occurs, negotiations again are postponed. But economists estimate that if such a free trade zone is created, then the share of only these three countries in the region will account for 55 percent of the total world trade. Such a prospect, economic strength awaits us, if we manage to overcome misunderstandings, conflicts, distrust that have remained from the past.

In conclusion, I want to say that there is in Europe an Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, and within the OSCE there are three "baskets": military security, economic cooperation, and humanitarian exchange, including human rights and human exchange. I believe that in our Asia-Pacific region -- and Russia, of course, is an Asia-Pacific country -- everything that I am talking about doubtless

concerns Russia. In our region, we need to think more about this third "basket." If we succeed in making progress here, including the inter-Korean dialogue, it will help to resolve issues that concern the first and second "baskets." Once again, the goals of sustainable development are the key to everything.

Vladimir A. Nogai, Ph.D., chair of the Moscow Association for the Promotion of Korean Unification and a professor at the Department of Finance and Credit, Moscow Psycho-Social University.

An appeal has been issued from the Korean Peninsula to unite two states inhabited by one nation, one culture and one language. It has been happening for more than 70 years. The resolution of this problem is the aspiration of the entire Korean people. Today, on the basis of 70 years of experience in the negotiations on unification, I want to highlight some of the problems that hinder the development of this process for the moment.

First, presidents come and go. Dr. Zhebin also said this, saying that after President Trump, someone else might come and the whole policy would change. In the unification of Korea, there was already a similar situation when the Liberal Party came to rule in the Republic of Korea with future President Lee Myung-bak. Then almost all official negotiations of state authorities of one side with the other were banned. And also in the Republic of Korea, a government agency that dealt with issues of unification was abolished. This is due to the fact that in the Republic of Korea, under the current constitution, the term of the presidency is limited to one term. Another president comes, and he makes very different decisions.

Second, there is a US military base in South Korea, and in general, in this zone the United States of America is trying to maintain its dominance. They are officially conducting their policies from a position of strength. This is a huge obstacle.

The third condition restraining the unification on the Korean Peninsula is as follows. When the presidents of countries meet, epochal documents are adopted, aimed at uniting Korea, which inspire hope in the hearts of all Koreans of the world that this, at last, can happen. But when it comes to fulfilling the conditions of the concluded contracts, always this or that country interprets these agreements in its favor. This situation does not help in the unification of Korea.

The fourth condition that Dr. Otsuka spoke of: The proportion of young people wishing to unite Korea who live in the Republic of Korea is constantly falling. They do not feel their identity with the population of North Korea. This is a big problem, because in the future young people will come to power; they will have to solve this problem.

Well, of course, the nuclear problem, which cannot be solved at this moment. My colleagues already have said a lot about this; I will not repeat it.

It seems to me that the unification of Korea is not a question of the near future. Therefore, it seems to me, today it is necessary to focus the attention of the two states on the establishment of good neighborliness, peaceful cooperation and to find points of contact, which in the future may become the basis for the merging of the two economies.

I would like to note the following circumstance: In the South, it is a market economy; in the North, a centralized economy. Painless merging of these is impossible. There will definitely be some shocks. When I was at a conference in Berlin, where a German specialist spoke, she asked me: "Why do you say that? After all, we are united!" To which I replied that if there had not been a progressive President Mikhail Gorbachev, the Germans never would have united. In relation to our problem, in the North, in the South, such a leader is not expected for the moment. Therefore, to consider how much the potential absorption of North Korea by South Korea will cost is a waste of effort. Absorption will not be; it is simply impossible. If we find in the peaceful development of the two Koreas points of contact, then these points of contact can become the basis of the coalescence of economies. In fact, today we hear some positive information that economic reforms are under way in North Korea; at least there are certain signs of a transition to a market economy based on Chinese modernization.

At the end of the roundtable, Andrei Shin, the secretary of the Bomminren interregional public organization for the peaceful unification of Korea, welcomed all participants on behalf of the president of the organization, Dr. Felix Kim.

The last speaker was Sergey Dvoryanov, Ph.D., the founder and president of the Amicability international diplomatic club, who described the important steps that the Universal Peace Federation is making for the reunification of North and South Korea and for world peace.