

ILC2021 Asia Pacific, August 19: Session III – Northeast Asian Economic Union

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Asia Pacific -- The third session of the August 19-20 International Leadership Conference 2021 (ILC2021) for UPF's Asia Pacific region was convened on August 19, on the theme, "Toward Peaceful Reunification of the Korean Peninsula: A Northeast Asian Economic Union - Game Changer in the Search for Peace?"

In total, 1,176 people registered for the event. More than 300 participants watched it live on Zoom while thousands did so on YouTube and Facebook Live.

Prof. Bo Zhiyue, *founder and president of the Bo Zhiyue China Institute, New Zealand*, praised the organizers of the conference for identifying the need to hold an event on the theme of the session and stressed that the time has come for the peaceful reunification of the Korean Peninsula and that a Northeast Asian Economic Union will be the most enabling vehicle for that. Further, he cited examples of regional bodies and emphasized the need to learn from experiences of the European Union (EU). He suggested a strategy to break the spell of history, led by thinking big and coming up with a feasible plan with tangible benefits and a vision of a future of peace and prosperity.

Dr. Songchit Pullarp, *a professor emeritus and chairman of Juche Idea Studies, Thailand*, spoke about the larger socio-economic benefits that would come from a Northeast Asian Economic Union and said that through his visits to North Korea he could witness the much awaited desire in the hearts of the North Korean people to see reunification.

Prof. Narender Kumar, *a professor at Jawaharlal Nehru University, India*, remarked that the North-South divide among nations reveals to us that the divide between the two Koreas remains pertinent. He said that there is a possibility a conflict could be triggered if the reconciliation process is not handled with care and caution. India and Pakistan, which were divided in 1947 and whose relations are tense, can learn lessons from the reunification of the two Koreas. The reunification of North and South Korea can produce alternative modes of thinking that can bring peace at the regional and world levels. He added that there is a need to bridge the gaps between these nations due to the proliferation of nuclear weapons of mass destruction (WMD).

Dr. Arnel Rodelas, *national president of Passage-2-ASEAN (P2A), Philippines*, explained that a strong foundation for peace can be built through the pillars of truth, justice, love and freedom supported by the right education. He also spoke about the strategic significance of a Northeast Asian Economic Union and believes it will be a true game changer.

Hon. Ross Robertson, *QSO, four-time assistant speaker of the House of Representatives and member of the Parliament of New Zealand (1987-2014)*, gave a highly informative presentation and compellingly made the case for how the Economic Union will prove to be a game changer. He outlined clear-cut points suggesting that the peaceful reunification of the Korean Peninsula will have highly positive ramifications for the world.

Amb. KV Rajan, *former secretary of the Ministry of External Affairs of India and chair of the International Association of Economic Development (IAED)*, served as the moderator.