

Launch of Think Tank 2022: Many Will Benefit from a Unified Korea

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It is a distinct honor for me to have the opportunity to participate in today's Rally of Hope and the launch of Think Tank 2022. I want to share a few words with you about an extremely important, and exciting topic.

First, let me say a word of appreciation to the Universal Peace Federation for all its good work around the world, and to its co-founder, Dr. Hak Ja Han Moon, whom I respect greatly. I also want to congratulate you on the launch of Think Tank 2022, an international alliance for a unified Korea dedicated to promoting peaceful reunification and opening up the Korean Peninsula.

Although I was born in the United States, I have lived for many years in Asia. I have watched the development of Asia over many decades, and I am certainly not referring only to China, but to Japan, Southeast Asia and Korea, especially Korea. As the expression goes, "Asia is where the action is, where the future is." The opportunity for development is immense; that is why I am here. In many respects, I believe we are only at the beginning of a long period of sustained development for Asia. There are those who speak, like Dr. Moon and many others, of an Asia-Pacific Era.

Furthermore, in my estimation, Korea is at the very heart of this global transition. Now, of course, as we all know, unfortunately, we have some serious problems on the Korean Peninsula. The division between South Korea and North Korea has been there, unbelievably frozen in place, for more than seventy years. There are bitter, hard feelings on both sides.

I hope we can open it up. There is also room for tremendous hope. Can you imagine what would be possible if what is now the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) were opened for railway and highway traffic? The opportunities for commercial development and cultural development would be unlimited. This also applies to the potential for an undersea tunnel between Japan and Korea, providing a railway and highway link between these two economic powerhouses. We could drive from Tokyo to London.

Once the barriers start to come down, there will be an explosion of growth, once we open the 38th parallel, it will benefit not only North Korea and South Korea, but China, Russia, Japan, Asia, Southeast Asia -- the whole world. Think of the savings alone that would come from demilitarization. If we do not have to spend money on tanks and guns, millions of people would live positive lives, build factories, build schools and improve the lives of everybody around.

Once again, I want to congratulate the launch of Think Tank 2022, which will support the international alliance for a unified Korea dedicated to peaceful reunification and opening up of the Korean Peninsula.

I know it is a great initiative, I fully support it. I am very pleased to know that expert working groups will be established in various sectors such as business, academia, media, diplomacy, government, arts and culture. I look forward to the various meetings, conferences, and activities you plan to carry out later this year.

In closing, let me say that I have a great hope that in the very near future we will see a springtime thaw in the chilly relations between North Korea and South Korea.

Let us work together to bring about a new era in the relations between North and South Korea. I want to tell you that *Hanbando*, the Korean Peninsula, will be the single most exciting place in the world once you open that 38th parallel. It will be the powerhouse of Asia. So, let us please, let us open up the 38th parallel. Let us have a big party. Let us sing and dance, and I will buy the soda.