

UPF-Japan Hosts Forum on the Korean Peninsula Featuring Russian Expert

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Tokyo, Japan -- UPF-Japan in partnership with the Institute for Peace Policies (IPP) hosted an "ILC Online Special Forum" on February 24, 2021 with scholars and experts from various fields. The forum was moderated by Mr. Jun Isomura, a senior fellow at the Hudson Institute, a think tank based in Washington, D.C. Featured as the main speaker was Prof. Igor Tolstokulakov, head of the Center for Korean Studies at the Far Eastern Branch of the Russian Academy of Sciences, who spoke on the theme, "The Current Situation of the Korean Peninsula and Future Prospects – A Russian Perspective." A total of 106 people participated in the event.

Prof. Tolstokulakov pointed out that there has been no fundamental change in Russia's geographic policy toward the Pacific region, and that Russia continues to "build relations with the DPRK and the Republic of Korea, and takes seriously the problems [facing the Korean peninsula]." Further, he highlighted the importance of economic cooperation to South Korea, and that North Korea aims to become "a powerful and prosperous nation" by continuing its nuclear and missile development and is "supported by its people."

Prof. Tolstokulakov also said that "before [the year] 2000, Russian [leaders] started to cooperate with Seoul, virtually ignoring the DPRK." After the transition took place, Russia believed that North Korea would collapse in the same manner as the Soviet Union. However, the regime survived, and in that same year, the Treaty of Friendship, Good-neighborliness and Cooperation was signed between the Russian Federation and the DPRK, replacing the Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation and Mutual Assistance between the two countries. He emphasized Russia now pursues a policy of equal distance toward the two Korean states.

Continuing his remarks, he said that it is not in Russia's interest to see a reunited Korea maintaining a close alliance with the U.S.



Japanese participants raised questions about and counterarguments to the denuclearization negotiations. Amb. Kazuhiko Togo, visiting professor at Kyoto Sangyo University, and former Japanese Ambassador to the Netherlands, pointed out: "The basis of realism is deterrence and dialogue. Wouldn't dialogue alone be difficult?" Hon. Yoshiaki Harada, a member of the House of Representatives of Japan, said, "You believe that negotiations for denuclearization can be conducted peacefully through equal participation in the international community, but it is North Korea that refuses to actively participate in dialogue in the international community." Although the webinar addressed a critical issue of regional and global concern, the atmosphere of it was friendly and peaceful.

