

Moon Hyun-Jin's Global Peace Foundation gathers civic groups for unification

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Chairman of the Global Peace Foundation (GPF) Moon Hyun-jin, seventh from left in front row, waves alongside religious and academic leaders and politicians during an Action for Korea United Leaders Assembly 2015 gathering at the 63 building in Yeouido, Seoul, Oct. 8. From left are Kseung Construction Energy Co. Chairman Ryu Hyun-jin, New Politics Alliance for Democracy floor leader Rep. Lee Jong-kul; leader of Chondogyo Park Nam-soo; Rev. Youngdam, co-chairman of the organizing committee for the event; and Kim Moon-kee, honorary chairman of the organizing committee and the founder of Sangji University.

About 1,200 civic activists, religious leaders and politicians gathered in Seoul, Thursday, to discuss how to achieve unification of the two Koreas.

During the conference, hosted by the Action for Korea United (AKU), the participants reaffirmed their support for unification and vowed to take the lead in the unification movement.

It was the biggest unification-related gathering of civic groups.

"Unification will come for those who are prepared. It has a significant meaning that we all took part in today's rally to announce our initiative in the unification movement," Lee Man-ui, co-chairman of the organizing committee and former environment minister, said during the opening ceremony.

The event drew high-profile guests from all levels of society here as well as political, religious, and academic leaders from overseas.

The participants included leaders of seven religious orders, along with former Heritage Foundation President Edwin Feulner, ruling Saenuri Party Chairman Rep. Kim Moo-sung, the main opposition New Politics Alliance for Democracy Chairman Rep. Moon Jae-in and former Guatemala President Marco Vinicio Cerezo.

"Unification of the Korean Peninsula equals true liberation from the Japanese colonial rule, normalization of distorted history, and the realization of Koreans' potential," Rep. Kim said in a congratulatory speech.

"I hope civic society helps to facilitate inter-Korean exchanges, thereby moving a step forward to unification."

Rep. Lee also highlighted the importance of the civic-led movement.

"When civic society moves, peaceful unification becomes a possible goal. The National Assembly will follow your initiative by devising policies after your voices are heard," he said.



Chairman of the Global Peace Foundation (GPF) Moon Hyun-jin, center, poses with Ban Jae-chul, left, advisor of the organizing committee for the Unification Song Campaign and Lee Gap-san, right, president of the Korea NGO Association, after receiving an appreciation plaque from the organizing committee for the Action for Korea United Leaders Assembly 2015 at the 63 building in Yeouido, Seoul, Oct. 8.

The rally came after civic groups formed a consensus for the unification movement while working on a unification song campaign launched earlier this year.

The campaign, titled "Unification Song for the New Era," was organized by the AKU to raise awareness of unification among the public. It brought together 1,100 civic groups from liberal to conservative camps, drawing much attention.

Civic groups set up the organizing committee in April and distributed a campaign song, titled "One Dream, One Korea" in September.

Moon Hyun-jin, chairman of the Global Peace Foundation (GPF) and the founder of the AKU, received an appreciation plaque at the event for his leading role in encouraging this collective civic movement.

Moon stressed the need to realize unification, urging civic activists to take the lead.

"The vision for a unified Korea has always been with us. It is our identity," he said during a keynote speech. "It is not only the hope of South and North Korea, but also the hope of Asian countries and the world. You are the owners of the Korean dream."

Earlier that day, Moon outlined his ideas on how to prepare economically for unification.

Citing the outdated economic structure that will cause challenges for the unification process, he argued, "economic reform of the South Korean economy is a prerequisite."

The government needs to create a level playing field by easing regulations and breaking the monopoly hold of the chaebol, Moon said.

At a forum held to discuss the economic implications of unification and its process, economic experts presented a positive outlook on the economic status of a unified Korea and called for systemic preparation.

"With a combination of leading manufacturing industries in South Korea and abundant human resources in North Korea, a unified Korea has the potential to become one of the 10 global industrial powers," said Kim Joo-hyun, director of economic division from Presidential Committee for Unification Preparation.

He stressed the need to boost economic integration before coordinating a unified governance system, saying, this is the key to a successful transformation of the Korean Peninsula.

Jo Dong-ho, a professor of Unification Studies at Ehwa Womans University, urged the public to renew

their perception of inter-Korean economic cooperation.



Kim Joo-hyun, left, director of the economic division from the unification preparatory committee, speaks during the Global Peace Economic Forum at the Grand Intercontinental Hotel in Seoul, Oct. 8. Next to Kim, from left are: Jo Dong-ho, professor of unification studies at Ehwa Womans University; Shin Sang-hoon, former president of Shinhan Bank; Choi Joon-wook, senior researcher at the Korea Institute of Public Finance; and Choi Jung-il, former ambassador to Germany.

"It's not to help North Korea but to help our economy, whose potential growth rate is expected to drop in near future," he said. "Inter-Korean economic cooperation will not only be a growth engine for the sagging Korean economy, but also preparation for minimizing unification cost."

Shin Sang-hoon, former president of Shinhan Bank, voiced a similar view with Jo and suggested a new scheme for economic cooperation with the North.

"Now it is a limited cooperation system where South Korean capital and North Korean laborers are simply combined," he noted, expressing concern that it can be a burden for a unified Korea because the North Korean economy will remain weak at countering external factors from the global market.

Injecting commercial finance direct to the North Korean economy can be a solution, he said.