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**SPEECH TO KOREAN ASSOCIATION OF NEW ZEALAND**

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**INTRODUCTION**

MR CHAIRMAN, HIS EXCELLENCY THE AMBASSADOR OF THE REPUBLICLIC OF KOREA,

DISTINGUISHED GUESTS, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN.

Thank you for the invitation to address you this afternoon.

In giving an address on the important issues that affect the Korean Peninsula I am well aware that I am talking to an audience of New Zealanders of Korean descent, and the Ambassador and other representatives of the Republic of Korea, who are far more knowledgeable on the history, politics and culture of Korea than I will ever be.

However, my purpose today is to share with you my observations from my fact finding trip to North Korea in November 2010 which was for the key purpose of exploring the possibilities of denuclearisation of the Korean peninsula, and to propose ways that I think New Zealand and New Zealanders can contribute to bringing a lasting peace to the Korean Peninsula and hopefully at the same time assistance in the goal of the Korean people , North and South, to once again have a unified nation that can represent all Koreans on the world stage and provide peace and prosperity to its peoples free from the threat of war.

**NEW ZEALAND AND KOREA**

In general New Zealanders know little of the long and rich history of Korea.

Our school system and our media have not informed New Zealanders that settlement began on the Korean Peninsula, according to historians and archaeologists, anywhere between 400,000 to 700,000 years ago.

The nation became a legal entity in approximately 2333 BC.

In contrast the first human inhabitants of New Zealand were the Maori from the Pacific Islands- and possibly as DNA shows from Taiwan and Korea- who arrived in the 14<sup>th</sup> century AD.

Thus in terms of the contribution to the development of human civilisation Korea has had an enormous headstart on New Zealand. In compensation the many Koreans who have now made New Zealand their homeland are contributing that human capital to our common development.

But New Zealand has one great advantage over Korea and many other nations. That advantage is that it is far from the centres of armed conflict in this troubled world and does not have to contend, as Korea has always had to do, with the geopolitical interests of a number of the large powers.

Thus we have not suffered the many invasions that Korea has had to undergo , the last being the imperialist occupation by Japan from 1910 until 1945 , nor had to concern ourselves with the stratagems of large powers who consider our country to be like a chess piece in a great power game.

This advantage comes of course from the accident of geography, not through any effort by the New Zealand nation.

But I am going to suggest to you that New Zealand as part of the community of nations and as a small nation dependent on the upholding of the rule of law and not the rule of might, should, for both moral and political reasons, assist Korea, both north and south, to achieve a peaceful and long lasting solution to the conflict on the peninsula.

The moral reason is that we have many Koreans who are now New Zealanders and it is an act of elementary human solidarity, friendship and decency to use whatever influence or ability we have to support the prospect of peace for Korea and for our own sense of moral worth as a nation.

The Political advantage for New Zealand is that for all small and or weaker nations (in the military sense) the more the world seeks legal and not military or other forms of coercion as solutions the safer and more humane this world will be.

And the economic advantage is that a Korean Peninsula at peace and able to devote itself to peaceful activities means a strong trading partner for New Zealand which is to the advantage of both nations. As APEC partners we are daily growing closer together through deepening economic ties, which in turn strengthen cultural and educational and sporting links and peace will allow this trend to grow apace.

#### **FACT FINDING TRIP TO NORTH KOREA**

In November 2010 I went as a representative of the New Zealand branch of the Parliamentary Network on Nuclear Disarmament (PNND) to North Korea (DPRK) on a fact finding tour of one week with the emphasis on the issue of nuclear weapons and armament in general.

I was offered the trip as an alumni member of PNND as it was not to Paris, London, New York or some other exciting city and I had to pay my own way. Surprisingly no MPs were available for this junket!!

PNND is an international organisation of Parliamentarians, not governments, who are working to have all governments abide by the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) which obliges all signatories to work in good faith to the total elimination of nuclear weapons as quickly as possible and rid humankind of this awful threat.

Unfortunately the big five nuclear powers ,the US, Russia, China, France and the UK , have done anything but live up to their obligation under international law and have given the green light to others , India ,Pakistan, Israel and yes North Korea to develop nuclear weapon capacities.

PNND members campaign to strengthen the movement by abolition including by advocating the further establishment of nuclear weapon free zones (NWFZ's) including one for north East Asia to involve North and South Korea and Japan. This was a proposal that I discussed in North Korea.

A wonderful by-product of the abolition of nuclear weapons, apart from the obvious blessing of saving the world from destroying all humanity, would be to release the billions of dollars used for our destruction for meeting the needs of every single human being on the planet for food, housing, education and health care.

### **The role of China**

I went to the DPRK via China. I took advantage of this to discuss the conflict on the peninsula with Chinese foreign affairs officials.

While China would support the development of a North East Asia NWFZ it did not see this as possible until North Korea had an unequivocal US guarantee that there would not be any invasion.

China wanted a resumption of the 6 party talks without any conditions as required by the ROK and the US.

It saw the lifting of sanctions on North Korea as essential to progress and normalisation and change for North Korea.

China supports eventual Korean unification based on long-term cooperation and peaceful moves over a very long transitional period for unification.

It supports disarmament of the peninsula with cast iron guarantees for the security and safety for both north and south

It regarded the US as provocative on the Peninsula and considered that the US was helping to foster deeper divisions as part of its overall strategy of containment of China. The Koreas, north and south, in the Chinese view are largely pawns in the greater US strategy to contain China.

It is actually hard to argue that this is part of the US strategy and that to make progress countries like New Zealand need to advise the US that it won't play this game. I don't however see John Key having either the political courage or nous to stand up to the United States. He comes from a political position that even wants to renege on the non-nuclear policy of New Zealand to take us back to the days where New Zealand was an obedient mouthpiece for whatever foreign [policy was run by Washington.

His recent attendance at the nuclear security conference in Seoul was an embarrassment as he used it solely to get an audience ( not successful) with President Obama and did not give New Zealand an independent voice on this important issue.

I found both among officials and non-official Chinese an attitude to North Korea that regarded it as a dinosaur and a general shudder that North Korea is a closed and backward society of the type that China was before it opened up its economy and through off the worst excesses of Maoism. In fact ordinary Chinese I met thought I was mad to even bother going to North Korea which they saw as a hideously backward and repressive country that reminded them of what China had been like.

But it reinforced my belief that China, the ally of North Korea, must be part of the solution. China will simply not allow the north to become part of what it fears as the US containment plan. They look at Poland now as a part of NATO and see the US right on the front door step of that country.

## **IN NORTH KOREA**

It was a shock at the airport at Pyongyang , very much like a provincial airport of New Zealand from the 1970's ,to have to hand over my cell phone ( which I had been warned about by Chinese friends) .

It was a shock to see the massive need for infrastructure from housing to transport to roading both in Pyongyang and in the surrounding districts.

But I felt the most important part of my trip was to evaluate whether this was a country hell bent on war with the heavily armed south, and therefore the US and Japan , or was there a path that New Zealand could assist with that could lead to peace and eventual peaceful reunification.

In hospitals, schools, universities and farms I met normal human beings who work in facilities that are outdated and underresourced. I did not meet one person who wanted to launch a war. The doctors were concerned that the sanction s prevented them from having the equipment and medicines that they needed to treat their patients and the populace. University teachers were concerned that they could not keep in touch with the latest research because of the restrictions on the internet and free access to publications and knowledge. At farming ventures the concern was with the difficulty of farming in the north with such a limited part of the arable land of the peninsula.

But I also found bright eyed young people eager to practise their English and with a zest for knowledge about my country. I had a university teacher , in a very private area, who had studied in the United States tell me that he and his associates were now getting more and more resources and access to the latest international research.

Meeting with the successful Under 19 National Football Team revealed that they were eager to continue to travel abroad and forge links with young sportspeople in other countries, including New Zealand. Perhaps this could be the “ping pong “diplomacy for North Korea?

I met many people who had travelled abroad, and not just to China, who seem determined to assist in bringing North Korea out of isolation.

And all this against a background of material want, controlled information, the cult of the personalities of the great and the dear Leader and a very large army.

But that army it was clear might be able to move south of the Han but would not have enough oil to get back. Nor could it match the military might of the south and its allies the US and Japan.

In conversations with officials it was clear that they earnestly believed their own propaganda ( but of course they would have had no choice if they were to keep their jobs) that the period of the “Arduous March” since the collapse of the market of the Soviet Union was almost over and that national self-sufficiency would see them through.

However, there are signs with the success of the economic free zone with South Korea and the growing trade with both China and Russia that the economic collapse long predicted will not necessarily occur.

Thus there have to be other drivers for opening up the isolated society of the north, easing tensions militarily and clearing a path for eventual peaceful reunification.

Everyone I talked to in the north, officials and non-officials, was in agreement that they wanted to reinstitute the development of closer links with the south including:

Family visits

Educational and cultural exchanges

Continuing discussions on steps to reunification by a step by step process of institutions working together

Greater trade links and economic cooperation.

For the Ministry of Foreign Affairs the key points were:

Resuming the 6 party talks without preconditions

Negotiating a treaty to denuclearise the entire peninsula

A peace treaty of which the United States was part (to replace the Armistice of 1953) guaranteeing that there would be no invasion

Setting in place a process of reunification based on a federal system

The guarantees of non-aggression by the US were seen as an essential step for abandoning the nuclear weapon programme. Official after official emphasised that the invasion of Iraq showed them that they were vulnerable to the American policy of regime change without a nuclear deterrent.

I didn't succeed in setting up a NWFZ for North Korea on this trip. But I did get my cellphone back, as promised, at the airport.

For me this trip was not about agreeing with any particular viewpoint.

It was to see what were the ways that New Zealand could make a positive contribution to peace.

I will now give you what those views are and what I have expressed to our present government.

## **A CONSTRUCTIVE NEW ZEALAND ROLE FOR PEACE ON THE KOREAN PENINSULA.**

### **An independent New Zealand policy on Korea**

New Zealand has respect in the world when it is seen as having an independent foreign policy and not as being the mouth piece of any of the large powers.

We earned that international respect and influence when we became free of nuclear weapons in 1987 despite earning the wrath of the United States.

We increased that respect when we refused, under a Labour-Progressive government of which I was part, to be bullied, as Australia was, into the illegal invasion of Iraq.

We will gain respect and actually be a useful international citizen if we refuse to be categorised as the enemy of either the ROK or the DPRK but take practical and ethical steps to assist in the peace process.

### **The failed policy of isolating North Korea**

North Korea will not abandon its nuclear deterrent through a policy of isolation and sanctions.

US policy towards Cuba and Iran should show that.

New Zealand is a player in the United Nations in ASEAN, APEC and many other international forums.

Our influence on North Korea will be beneficial if it is one of friendship, as it is with South Korea.

Being a friend to the people of North Korea does not mean shutting our mouths on issues of human rights or supporting the development of nuclear weapons.

But we need to ask ourselves what would give us greater influence: cutting off contact or opening our country up to provide a positive example of a democratic country?

### **Scholarships**

We should start by implementing the scholarships programmes that were cancelled after the sinking of the Cheonan. And it shouldn't be limited to 20 scholarships. Bring as many young North Koreans to study here as possible. They will return not only with valuable skills but the experience of studying and learning in an open society. They will also meet and learn from their compatriots from the south who have made New Zealand home.

Let DPRK officials participate in MFAT's English Training for Officials programme as do those from Vietnam –our former “enemy “!!!

### **Ping Pong Diplomacy -Sporting Exchanges**

Then let us follow that up with sporting exchanges (and sporting scholarships) starting with the under 19 football team the pride and joy of North Korea. They will have a lot to teach our young players in terms of skill. But they will learn a lot in return about our way of life. And then begin a regular exchange with all of our compatible sporting codes.

### **Scholar and Artist Exchanges**

Our scholars and artists can deepen the understanding of both countries and lay the basis for a deep going and long lasting influence on how we think about each other.

### **Trade Delegations**

Trade delegations can explore ways of opening up both trade and investment from New Zealand. Perhaps we can work with the successful South Korean companies in the economic free zone on the border?

### **Tourism**

Tourism, both ways, is an obvious way to forge closer links while benefiting the economies of both parties

### **Political Parties**

Political parties (plural in the case of New Zealand), civilian associations etc. can and should be part of the process of exchange.

I am confident that New Zealanders would interact with the people of North Korea in a non-threatening and non-condescending or patronising manner and be willing to learn as well as to advise.

Then on the political stage it is time for New Zealand to find an independent voice an advocate for an end to the Koreas being part of the strategic games of Russia, China, the US and Japan.

### **A Peace Treaty and not an Armistice**

New Zealand can support the ending of sanctions and isolation for the North -it doesn't work and hasn't worked and has only increased the threat of war.

New Zealand can work towards an effective peace treaty which guarantees that the Korean peninsula will not be invaded to replace the Armistice. We have the ridiculous situation that almost 60 years after the end of the war we are still technically at war with North Korea as only an armistice is in place and thus a "temporary" cessation of the war not lasting peace.

### **Support the North East Asia NWFZ**

Let us help with the establishment of a North East Asia NWFZ using our New Zealand experience of setting up a NWFZ in the south Pacific. We can assist with the proposal of the former Japanese Foreign Minister, Katsuya Okada, who has presented a draft NWFZ treaty for the Korean Peninsula and Japan. This positive and constructive initiative would see the whole of the Korean Peninsula and neighbouring Japan becoming free of nuclear weapons with Russia, China and the United States providing negative security assurances to all three countries. Such assurances would be guarantees from the nuclear armed states, binding under international law that they would not be subject to aggression. Already a number of Members of Parliament from the ROK have endorsed this proposal and are working constructively with PNND on its furtherance.

### **Failure of Key government to act courageously, effectively and independently**

The Key government has not picked up this issue, as yet, preferring to travel in the slip stream of American foreign policy rather than making a positive contribution to peace on the peninsula. Korean New Zealanders are in a position (and certainly the New Zealand –Korean MP Melissa Lee is) to ask Mr Key why he doesn't take an independent position and take a leadership position for a North East Asia NWFZ.

We may indeed be a nation of 30 million sheep and 4.5 million people. But it is time on the issue of peace for the Korean Peninsula for New Zealand to be a leader and not one of the sheep.

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