

# EXCLUSIVE: Seoul peace summit draws comments from North Korea, Dick Cheney



In this undated photo taken during the period of Dec. 28 to Dec. 31, 2019, provided by the North Korean government, North Korean leader Kim Jong-un attends a Workers' Party meeting in Pyongyang, North Korea. Independent journalists were not given ... more >

By Guy Taylor - The Washington Times - Wednesday, February 5, 2020

SEOUL — Past, present and future leaders from around the globe gathered at a summit here in the South Korean capital this week to call for world peace and the reunification of the Korean peninsula.

North Korean leader Kim Jung-un even chimed in with a message sent to the event's organizers, expressing his hope that the ongoing effort will "achieve national peace, prosperity, and unification."

The World Summit 2020 is featuring a line-up of high-profile speakers, from U.S. political torch-bearers such as Newt Gingrich to former U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki Moon, offering both hope for diplomacy as well as warnings about the gravity of the ongoing nuclear standoff with Pyongyang.

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In a video message set to air at the summit Thursday, former U.S. Vice President Richard B. Cheney underscored the need for denuclearization and voiced frustration over North Korean gamesmanship in talks President Trump has pursued with the rogue regime since his first historic summit with Mr. Kim in 2018.

“Unhappily, there has been no visible improvement since then and it’s not for lack of trying on our side,” Mr. Cheney said in the video message provided to The Washington Times. “Our negotiators have simply run up against the reality that the regime in the North has its own agenda, part of which is to buy time and extract concessions, while giving nothing meaningful in return.”



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While Mr. Cheney said diplomatic engagement with North Korea “is certainly better than having no contact at all,” the former vice president implored current U.S. leaders to stay “absolutely fixed on our security objectives, with every incentive that can help, but no backing down on denuclearization.”

Mr. Ban cast a broader message in his own remarks to some 3,000 political, religious and civic figures from 170 countries who were on hand at the summit in Seoul on Tuesday, reminding them that “lasting peace and security is humanity’s purest wish.”

Several current heads of state are attending the event hosted by Hak Ja Han Moon, the leader of the Unification Church, in celebration of the 100th anniversary of the birth of her late husband, the Rev. Sun Myung Moon, who devoted his life to the promotion of world peace and the reunification of the Korean Peninsula.

Organizers said the message from North Korea, dated Jan. 30, 2020, was addressed to Mrs. Moon with text indicating that Mr. Kim “sends his Congratulations commemorating the 100th birthday of Rev. Sun Myung Moon and the 77th birthday of Dr. Hak Ja Han.”

“Our chairman Kim would especially like to send his warm regards to Dr. Hak Ja Han. We sincerely hope that Dr. Hak Ja Han will continue the work of Rev. Sun Myung Moon and achieve national peace, prosperity, and unification,” said the message signed by Kim Young-cheol, a high-ranking official within the North’s isolated dictatorship whose name is often printed in English as Kim Yong-chol.

A copy of the message shown to The Times noted his position as chairman of the North Korean government’s Asia-Pacific Peace Committee, as well as vice chairman of the Central Committee of the Workers’ Party of Korea for South Korean affairs and the head of the United Front Department.

Rev. Moon was born in what is now North Korea and met with Kim Il-sung, the founder of North Korea and Kim Jong-un’s grandfather, in a 1981 summit.

At the summit in Seoul, meanwhile, Mr. Ban asserted that in order to end one day the conflict that has divided North and South Korea for seven decades, “long-standing national division, conflict and antiquated Cold War confrontation must fundamentally be dismantled and give way to new essential values underpinned by peace, coexistence, cooperation, prosperity and reconciliation.”

“I firmly believe that this summit will serve as an important springboard for gathering the most substantial support of the international community in achieving this vision for the sake of a unified Korea and for the sake of the international community more widely,” the former U.N. secretary-general said.

It’s a message that resonates among those seeking a diplomatic solution to the North Korea crisis, which has been a key focal point of the Trump administration’s foreign policy over the past three years. President Trump, who has met three times personally with North Korea’s leader since coming to office in early 2017, continues to pursue negotiations with Pyongyang despite a stall in talks over recent months.

The pursuit of a reunified Korean peninsula has been an undergirding principle behind the Unification movement that grew from the Unification Church that the Rev. Moon founded in 1954.

Mrs. Moon has led the movement since a few years before the 2012 death of the Rev. Moon, whose ministry grew from a tiny, embattled church in South Korea to a global spiritual movement and an affiliated commercial empire comprising real estate, manufacturing and agricultural operations, as well as media properties including The

Washington Times.

Mrs. Moon cast a message of peace in remarks Tuesday, asserting that “peace cannot be realized by a single individual or a single nation.”

“When we look at the situation in today’s world, there are over 200 nations and they all have a common hope, which is the realization of lasting peace,” she said. “If all the nations of the world could unite for the sake of peace, many of today’s challenges could be resolved.”

Mrs. Moon was flanked on stage by representatives from several religions. Hindu, Buddhist, African Traditional, Christian and Muslim leaders opened the event with interfaith invocations, featuring a special “water ceremony” that saw each pour their own chalices of water into a collective bowl.

Dozens of current and former political leaders were also on stage.

Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Sen sat next to Mrs. Moon. Former Nigerian President Goodluck Jonathan presented her with a large bouquet of flowers. Guatemalan President Jimmy Morales and a range of others, from Brigi Rafini, the prime minister of Niger, to former Indian Prime Minister H.D. Deve Gowda thanked her in their own peace-promoting speeches.

“It’s really appropriate that we are here on the 100th anniversary of Rev. Moon’s birth, because out of the devastation of World War II and the Korean War, he and his bride found the courage to dream that they could achieve something and it is amazing what they have created together,” said Mr. Gingrich, a former speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives.

"I think each of us should take some courage from their courage," the Georgia Republican said. "Each of us should share the vision that everywhere across the planet on every continent people can be brought together and that only by finding a way to work together will we avoid the disasters that would otherwise afflict the entire human race."

Among the more stirring speeches was one by Philippine Vice President Maria Leonor Robredo, a political rival of Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte.

Ms. Robredo recounted how her nation was the first to deploy combat troops to support South Korea at the start of the Korean war and called for a renewed global push for world peace, human rights and democratic ideals in the decades to come.

"Seventy years ago, thousands of lives were offered in this sacred ground in the name of freedom and democracy," the Philippine vice president said. "Today, we recommit and consecrate our lives in protecting those precious ideals."

"Today's gathering is an important step in rebuilding a new brand of leadership and democracy for the world," Ms. Robredo added. "We dream together of a better and more peaceful world, a world created by those who are brave enough to stand up against abuse and corruption, a world that does not tolerate exclusion and discrimination based on one's race, color, belief and gender, a world that does not stifle the voice of truth and dissent."

"We need a better, kinder world, one where the values of equality, liberty are spread throughout the world and where freedom and democracy thrive," she said. "For the longest time many of those who have been excluded in our quest for economic growth and prosperity continue to struggle in the peripheries. Let us not forget them. As we dream of bigger things for the future, now more than ever, we must ensure that no one has been left behind in our quest for genuine and inclusive development."

Others expressed appreciation for the thousands who made the journey to attend the gathering at a moment of heightened concern in Asia over the spread of the coronavirus that began in China last month.

"The fact that, despite the coronavirus spreading around the world, so many leaders are here means that we are all committed to peace, harmony and prosperity and reconciliation among the people," Mr. Ban said. "Thank you coming from afar."

Organizers said the summit includes breakout programs involving a range of organizations tied to the Unification movement, including the International Association of Parliamentarians for Peace (IAPP).

Former Republican U.S. Rep. Dan Burton, the IAPP's co-chairman, said a focus of the association centers on addressing "the danger a divided Korea poses for the rest of the world, now that nuclear weapons are part of the equation."

"This year will mark 67 years since the Korean War ceased without ever being declared to be over, and if anything, the situation has grown worse," Mr. Burton said, adding the IAPP calls on "all nations to emphasize that the path for peace on the Korean Peninsula requires cooperative engagement between China, Russia, the U.S., Japan, North Korea and the Republic of Korea."

"In the Nuclear Age, it is essential that we work together to find solutions that will solve our problems in a peaceful way. We really have no choice," he said. "A war that gets started always runs the risk of turning nuclear, and we know what could happen then."

The summit in Seoul is being sponsored by the Universal Peace Federation (UPF), a core organization of the Unification movement.

In announcing Tuesday that North Korea had sent a message ahead of the summit, UPF International Chairman Thomas G. Walsh told participants: "I think Dr. Hak Ja Han Moon is thinking we will, before long we will have a summit in Pyongyang."

"What do you think about that," Mr. Walsh said to rousing applause.

"I think so," he said. "We are going to bring peace to this world. We're gonna do it."

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