

2nd KOREA-AFRICA FORUM SEMINAR
South African Institute of International Affairs
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Programme Director
Distinguished Guests
Ladies and Gentlemen

Korea –Africa context

It is a great pleasure and privilege for me to welcome all our distinguished guests from the Republic of Korea and from our Continent. To our Korean guests, I say welcome to Africa, which is the cradle of humankind, the continent of possibilities.

On this occasion of the 2nd Korea-Africa Forum, the Republic of Korea and representatives from the countries of Southern African have gathered together for the first time in Africa.

We are grateful for this initiative and for the commendable efforts of the various interlocutors for participating in this Forum which will surely help to further deepen an understanding of Africa's development challenges, and further forge the existing cooperative links between the countries in Africa and the Republic of Korea.

Ladies and gentlemen

It should not be a surprise that South Africa is co-hosting the 2nd Korea-Africa Forum. South Africa was requested to host the Forum by Prime Minister Han Duck-So during Deputy President Puzelle Mlambo-Ngcuka's official visit to the Republic of Korea in May 2007.

We cannot forget the historic ties between our two countries which date back to the Korean War of 1950-53, when South Africa's Air-force 2nd Squadron, the "Flying Cheetahs" participated as part of the UN Allied Forces. This act of solidarity and concrete expression of support remains an unforgettable act in the minds of many Koreans and South Africans, thus making South Africa a natural ally of the Korean people.

South Africa applauds Korea's enormous strides in dealing with poverty and improving the living standards of a once war-ravaged country and a hungry nation. This history allows for our sharing of common interests within the global spectrum of alleviating poverty, unemployment and other impediments to true and lasting social justice.

I believe that Korea is well poised to assist in resolving Africa's difficulties. It should be noted that Korea's advanced technologies, efficient and effective management expertise, extensive experience in fostering human resources development and commercialisation techniques, are estimated to bring tremendous synergies when combined with the abundant resources of Africa.

Thus African nations, welcome the Korea Initiative for Africa's Development, with a vision that world peace and common prosperity of the 21st century should be realised together with the African countries. Korea also desires to play a full part in the international endeavour to achieve the UN Millennium Development Goals.

Africa

Africa, the birthplace of ancient humanity, has an area of 30 million square kilometres, or 22 per cent of the earth's total landmass, and its population stands at about 900 million, which is expected to grow to nearly 1.5 billion in 35 years, the majority of the population having a young demographic profile. When political democratisation, levels of education, medical enhancement are achieved, these promising potentialities could equip the region with highly skilled, quality human resources.

Furthermore, the Continent not only possesses an abundance of natural resources, but also holds a great deal of the world's resources of iron materials, which include rare minerals and an increasing percentage of the world's crude oil output. Currently there are 53 African countries which are UN members, about 30 per cent of UN membership, and it is therefore crucial to gain African support in creating a new and balanced international order.

However, the reality of the situation in many parts of Africa, make it difficult for African people leaders to fully realise their potential, and its development potential, together with political instability, pose an obstacle to sustainable growth in many areas. Up until 2000, Africa's GDP per capita was estimated at US\$ 520, which is small for such a big continent, and 40 per cent of the population still lives on less than S\$ 1 a day. The continental bloc only represents 2 per cent of global trade, with exports mostly based on primary products and imports of manufactured goods. Furthermore, 40 per cent of trade imports are immediately lost to paying debts and interest accrued from foreign loans.

Infrastructure in Africa, such as telecommunications, electricity, roads and railways require upgrading, and the Continent also lacks networks linking 7,000 kilometres of land from Cairo, Egypt, to Cape Town, South Africa, and from Dakar in the west to the Horn of Africa in the east. Most of all, the scourge of HIV/AIDS is causing an enormous burden on African society as there is a decline in life expectancy, the increasing number of orphans, and the loss of labour which present obstacles and challenges to the bright future Africa can achieve.

Rapid globalisation in recent years has led to growing interdependence between countries, thereby causing specific or local issues to have more extensive implications which require global action. There is a need to recognise that without resolving African challenges, the world cannot rest in peace, and this puts the necessity of poverty elimination, education enhancement and international assistance at the forefront of tackling the challenges that confront the well-being of Africans.

Mindful of the growing challenges confronting the developing world in general, international consensus has been reached concerning poverty eradication, and as part of the resolve, countries are calling for an increase in ODA and increased support from the developed world. As a result, the MDGs were adopted at the UN Millennium Summit in 2000. However, many developing countries have already indicated that they will be unable to meet the MDG targets.

In order to secure human and material resources for Africa's development, major actors in the international arena must be convinced to be faithful to their resolve and fully implement the goals for Africa's development. However, it is important for Africa to take the initiative in taking *ownership* and to build *partnerships* to phase out Afro-pessimism that is still prevalent in the world today.

Korean development since the mid-1950s

It is widely known that in the aftermath of the Korean War, the Republic of Korea's GDP per capita in the 1950s was US\$ 74, rising to US\$ 80 in the 1960s, less than that of Ghana's. Within 50 years, Korea has moved from developing country to developed country status, and became a member of the OECD in 1996. The question must be asked: how was this achieved? Was it a miracle? No it was not a miracle at all, people worked, not only harder, but smarter giving us all hope that no development situation is so desperate that something cannot be done about it.

Under the market-orientated authoritarian regime of President Park Chung-Hee (1961-1978), Korea embarked on a process of economic modernisation whereby he single-mindedly directed resources to promoting high economic growth rather than to the goals of redistribution and social justice. By working 12 hours a day, seven days a week for 30 years, Korea industrialised successfully.

This Peninsula, which was a modest, pest-inflicted backwater, is today the 6th largest car manufacturer in the world. Due to his dictatorial tendencies, President Park was

assassinated by his own men in 1978, but today there is a process of political rehabilitation taking place, and he is revered as a leader, "a strongman with vision".

In the exercise of building a modern Korea under President Park, self-mobilisation programmes were initiated on a wide scale: religious organisations were brought on board as was civil society to bring about new ways of doing things, and to establish a new value system. There was a very clear understanding that in terms of economic survival, there was a clear need to cut the party political agenda from national development objectives.

In the early days of industrialisation, there was a deliberate concentration to channel resources to specific sectors. Money that was available was poured into industrial development projects. Right up to the 1970s, the Government did not pay a great deal of attention to socio-economic development. Even well into the 1970s, it was not possible to spread economic development evenly between rural and urban areas, survival economics still dictated priority areas.

In the early 1970s, the Government also launched the "New Village Movement" or *Saemoul Undong*, to improve the quality of life in the rural villages. These self-help projects *inter alia* were aimed at changing the value system of the rural people.

President Park was convinced that too many people in rural areas were idle during the long winter months, and that they could be better employed in year-round economic generating enterprises. A thorough mass media strategy was initiated to sell new thinking. The whole development context included the upgrading of basic rural infrastructure, the provision of clean drinking water and sanitation, and income-generating programmes through corporate effort and competition i.e. the year-round greenhouse horticultural projects (vegetables, fruit and flowers etc.).

There were also rewards for model villages etc. These community initiatives led to an increase in the confidence of rural people in themselves, and the courage to identify new challenges and initiatives. Community leadership became very important to deliver on real benefits in daily life.

Although only having a population of approximately 49 million, Korea has clearly indicated that the path to survival in the new millennium is to interact positively with globalisation and to compete successfully in the international arena with other developed economies. It has thus decided to engage its neighbouring countries, in spite of traditional suspicions of China and a historic legacy of mistrust of Japan. Education is highly valued in Korea.

Although Korea has already moved into the higher echelons on the information-technology age, it still boasts world-class industries in electronics, textiles, ship-building, car manufacturing and steel production.

Korea-Africa relations

Both Africa and Korea experienced colonialism and share a history of colonised nations. For Korea, war and poverty followed independence from the colonial power, and economic development followed later.

The focus of Korean diplomacy in Africa is based on three issues: First, Korea upholds the universal value of promoting mutual prosperity for every nation of the world. Second, Africa, is a treasure house of energy and other resources, and is also an emerging market, and thirdly the world order is forecast to evolve into a balanced and just regime as Africa grows and gains more influence in the international community.

South Africa, Africa and the Republic of Korea

Ladies and gentlemen

We can no longer talk of investment in South Africa without considering the integral nature of South Africa's relationship with other countries in Africa. South Africa's economic and political

relations on the African Continent have shown dramatic improvements and created many new business opportunities. Trading with and investing in other countries in Africa represents one of the most dynamic areas of growth for the development of Africa.

South Africa is confident about the positive changes that have taken place in Africa where the number of conflicts have been dramatically reduced, there is a broad commitment to democracy and good governance, and governments are increasingly finding ways to stimulate economic growth. Trade more than aid, but not without aid.

South Africa has been part of initiatives to stimulate regional economic development and we are already starting to see the positive outcomes of these initiatives with faster economic growth taking place on the African Continent for the first time in many years. But we have a long way to go.

Observations

Africa is very different to Korea for a wide number of reasons, in that Korea first sought relative economic prosperity before walking the path to democracy. Korea is a homogenous nation, speaking one language within the Confucian cultural mindset. However, in a certain sense, Africa is now where Korea was in the mid-1950s in economic development terms.

In Africa we are only now really beginning the process of an arrested development. We want to learn from the lessons experienced by Korea in its amazing and intense growth especially in the last quarter of the 20th century with a GDP that is higher than many sub-Saharan countries put together. Africa can learn from Korea what it takes to be a winning nation by gaining a better insight into Korea's mistakes and successes.

Ladies and gentlemen

I hope that during our deliberations today, our experts will put their minds together, developing proposals that should influence our policies and bring our people closer to one another. This I leave in the hands of the very capable experts of the Korea Institute for International Economic Policy (KIEP) and the South African Institute of International Affairs (SAIIA).

Once again, I wish to welcome you and hope you will enjoy your stay. Thank you.