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The United Nations and Korean Leadership

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STEPHEN NOERPER:

Welcome to The Korea Society, and welcome to *Studio Korea*, today addressing the United Nations and Korean leadership. It's been an active week at the UN; we've had a resolution in the United Nations on the North Korean launch, which attracted a very strong response from North Korea. That has dominated the news cycle today.

What we're hoping to do here today with our special guests Michèle Griffin from Policy Planning at the United Nations; Frank Schroeder from the Climate Change Support Team, also in the Office of the Secretary General; and Ambassador Shin Dong-ik of the Permanent Mission to the United Nations for the Republic of Korea is discuss the United Nations by way of Secretary General Ban Ki-moon, his first term and looking forward. We'll turn to Ambassador Shin for a discussion of Korea's two-year seat on the UN Security Council, and its presidency in February. And then we'll turn to Frank to talk about the Green Climate Fund and this very exciting international initiative sited at Songdo, Incheon.

First, welcome to Michèle Griffin from Policy Planning, who has very extensive professional career. She is Director of Policy Planning and Chief of the Policy Committee supporting the Secretary General. She served for a decade in political affairs on a wide range of development and security issues. She's also taught at Columbia University. Michèle, welcome, and if we could get some of your thoughts about Secretary General Ban Ki-moon, his first term, and as we look forward, what to expect.

MICHÈLE GRIFFIN:

Worth bearing in mind about the Secretary General is the fact that this is one of the first Secretaries General who has essentially lived as a child with the issues that the UN is most concerned. He experienced war, and he was displaced. And I think that you see that in a lot of what he does. He cares deeply about the UN's mission and about the charter, and we feel that every day in our working with him.

Before looking at his second term, and the issues that he might want to draw most attention to, I think there's a couple of things worth bearing in mind about his role. The role of the Secretary General is a balancing act between so many competing agendas and interests. It is, in fact, not one job. It's probably

ten, if you were to break it down into its constituent parts: managing a huge UN system, doing the bidding of 193 Member States. He is an advocate for the principles, the charter, human rights and international humanitarian law; but he is also somebody who has to balance that advocacy role with access on the ground for humanitarian assistance and political entry points to try to move political situations. He, himself, embodies a massive number of interests and agendas in one person.

And the UN, likewise, is many different things. It's an actor in its own right with many different agencies, funds, programs, and peacekeeping operations; plus an arena where Member States come to negotiate. The Secretary General sits atop this vast system. I think it's always worth bearing in mind those many hats he's wearing at any given time.

Looking ahead at his second term, he has identified five major areas. There are obviously many, many priorities that Member States have and that we see globally needing attention. [There are] many different situations, from Syria to Mali to DPRK to DRC, that are atop the headlines. But the Secretary General has identified five sets of issues where he sees that collective action, multilateral action, people coming together solving problems together, and needs crucially come together.

I think the first of those is sustainable development, obviously, writ large; I think development and climate change. And if there's one defining issue from his first term, I think, really climate change is it; and it probably will also be a defining issue in his second term. We're increasingly aware of the kind of limits of the planet's resources, and we're looking at a global growth in the middle class and consumption patterns that will continue to stretch [and] test those limits, and the kind of urgency of coming up with solutions for climate change and solutions for development allowing economic growth around the world, but not at the expense of the climate. I think if I had to say the one defining issue that I suspect will dominate his second term, that might well be it.

Another set of issues that the SG, as a person, feels deeply is the need to be more preventive-minded, whether you're talking about natural disasters or conflict, [and] building up the resilience of the poorest countries to continuous shocks to crisis and conflict. We're seeing a situation in which the developing world is leaving behind the most fragile countries. The Millennium Development Goals have not been met in any of the fragile countries; and so, this nexus of fragility and vulnerability to shocks and natural disasters and conflict.

We see it in Mali and the Sahel. We're seeing it in Afghanistan and Somalia. So, those sets of countries and sets of issues, I think, and trying to overcome the inevitability of the political; politicians' time horizons are very short, and the Secretary General is somebody who feels deeply the need to think long-term, and to push politicians to think beyond their own tenures to doing something really meaningful. I mean, the same applies for climate change.

Obviously, the peace and security agenda, which the Ambassador may talk about from the perspective of the Security Council, is front and center always for the Secretary General, and will remain so in his second term. As mentioned, Mali, and Syria is obviously a dominant concern right now. The DPRK and the recent messaging coming from Pyongyang is of major concern.

I think building up the UN's ability to do more in the cases where we have failed to prevent problems in conflict-prone and conflict-affected countries. We need to do more in partnership with others such as the African Union. If you look in Somalia and you look in Mali, we're never really the only actor. We're always one of many. Trying to marshal all of those actors in favor of a lasting solution in the conflict-prone countries around the world would be a major focus of his second term.

He has identified transition, writ large, as another major area of focus. That means the so-called Arab Spring-type transitions (transitions towards democracy) which we've all been very excited by. These also have unleashed many questions about where the world is going. Also, economic transitions and transitions in places like Myanmar and elsewhere, that maybe aren't as much in the headlines, but about which the

Secretary General cares very much and where the UN, I think, is trying very hard to be supportive of these countries and to be anticipating the possible repercussions regionally and nationally of some of these transitions. Transition can be very exciting when people begin to have a voice, and begin to be able to hold their governments more accountable, and to ask more of their governments; but it can also unleash a lot of uncertainty and stress on a society—and the UN tries to be there to support countries in all facets.

And then, finally, I think promoting the participation of women and young people in solving some of these problems that I've talked about, and preventing violence against women and discrimination is a fifth real area of focus for the Secretary General. It's something he has identified as something he would like to marshal more support and attention behind. He recently appointed the first UN Youth Envoy to bring the voice of young people more into the processes of solving problems that affect them. So, those would be, I think, five big sets of issues that he cares deeply about, and hopes to show leadership on in his second term.

STEPHEN NOERPER:

Before this session, you mentioned the SG's work ethic, for which he has an impressive reputation. You also noted that Korea brings something different, both by way of its individuals and as a Middle Power. Your career has dealt a lot with the P5, and with the poorest of countries, so you described this as something newer.

MICHÈLE GRIFFIN:

I think that the world is changing in ways that we have yet to fully recognize. Power is shifting, definitely, away from the traditional, Western countries and toward some of the Middle Powers, as they're called; but also away from states completely, and toward coalitions and networks of people who can come together in search of solutions for countries. We need more actors, frankly; a more diverse set of actors and a greater number of actors to solve most global problems. Perversely, of course, we need fewer actors. I think even individuals, now, have the power to disrupt and cause global problems; so, it's an interesting set of developments.

But certainly, having spent my career mostly in the kind of political and peace and security sphere, I definitely feel this change and feel the need to think about how Middle Powers can think of the UN as their UN, and come to the UN to solve problems they care about, and be part of solutions to global problems—that it's not just, I think, the traditional feeling of a North-South divide or of the permanent-size members of the Council being so powerful; and then the recipient countries where we are, for instance, deploying peacekeeping operations is simply accepting that help. It's no longer quite as simple as that.

I think every Member State of the UN has a way in which they can contribute to solving certain problems, even as they may receive support on another issue. And frankly, the countries of the West need a huge amount of support from the UN, and from the kind of solutions that are brokered through the UN, to their challenges, be they climate change, or migration, or other. There are many, many issues that I think need to be resolved collectively. That's not to say the UN is the sole actor in resolving some of these issues; but it is an arena, as I said earlier, where these issues are discussed, and that's where I think the Middle Powers, like Korea, are playing an increasingly important role.

STEPHEN NOERPER:

On the theme of rising Korean leadership, we turn to Ambassador Shin Dong-ik. Ambassador Shin serves as the Deputy Permanent Representative for the Republic of Korea to the United Nations. He served prior as the individual in charge of international organizations within the Foreign Ministry of Korea, and was in New York prior. He has had a very distinguished career that goes back to his joining the Foreign Service in 1986. And so, I'd like to ask you about your vision in terms of Korea playing that expanding role, as well as, in particular, having a two-year seat, now, on the Security Council and taking the presidency for the first of its two terms beginning February 1. Your thoughts on what Korea will do with that opportunity?

SHIN DONG-IK:

I'd like briefly to touch on the Secretary General's agenda. Korea is fully, support his initiatives this second term. He has offered his priority agenda for 2013, and we fully share and support his ideas. In 2012, Korea served as co-chair of the Rio-plus 20 Prep Committee, that is the Preparatory Committee meeting to prepare the summit for sustainable development held in Rio de Janeiro. Korea was president of the executive board of UN Women, dealing with all the women-related issues. So, we strive to play our part in supporting the Secretary General's initiatives.

For Koreans, personally, I think we value this opportunity highly, the Security Council, and the Secretary General, who is doing an excellent job this second term with four years to go. And, at the same time, we think there is a tall order from international community for Korea to do more, and make substantial and visible contributions in maintaining peace and security and in promoting human rights and development in the world.

Turning to our bid and utility of Security Council membership. Since joining the United Nations in 1991, Korea had the chance to serve in the Security Council first in 1996 and 1997. And five years later, Korea had the chance to provide the President of the General Assembly (PGA); former Prime Minister Han Seung-soo was PGA. And another five years later, Secretary General Ban Ki-moon was elected. Five years later, he was reelected. And now we serve as a Security Council member for a second time.

Since being elected last October, we have asked ourselves what we can do for the United Nations. Some people suggest Korea can play a unique role. The definitions of unique may be quite different, but in my interpretation, is unique role is a bridging or connecting role between the two divided parts of the world (the South and North, as mentioned). We understand the difficulties and hardship facing Africa and other underdeveloped regions. We've suffered from colonial rule and war. Accordingly, we would like to share our experience, our know-how—how we could transform our country from a very poor and underdeveloped stage to a more modern and industrialized status. That's the experiential asset we can share with other members.

In the Security Council, we hope to employ that asset in the area of security and peace-building; lessons in how to rebuild and how to establish good governance to become a more modern and democratic country. That's one part on which to concentrate the next two years.

By way of security issues, the Republic of Korea faces a constant threat from North Korea. The ROK remains under threat from the nuclear and WMD capabilities of North Korea. These are urgent issues we have to address in a multilateral setting, as well as on a bilateral basis. The UN Security Council adopted Resolution 2087, which strongly condemns North Korea's launch of long-range missiles, and demands stopping all development of nuclear weapons and WMD, and imposing new sanction measures. This was a unified, common message to North Korea not to develop further nuclear weapons or WMD, and please take care of its people, the livelihood and welfare of its own people. They should adopt a people-first policy, not a military-first policy. We'd like to continue to engage North Korea, but at the same time in the United Nations, we need to take action if there is another provocation, nuclear testing or further launching. So this is clear violation of international norms, and Security Council resolutions should be abided by, by all members according to the Charter.

Though this is a matter of urgency (inside and outside the Security Council), we don't want to be hostage to North Korean issues, and we want to do more globally. We seek to expand our contribution to the region and world. That's why we hosted several important international conferences: the G20 leaders summit in 2010, and conference on aid effectiveness in Busan. Last year we hosted the Nuclear Security Summit, which is in keeping with our Security Council activities dedicated to maintaining peace and stability in our region and around the world.

We are learning process on many issues. With Africa, the distance from our region is far, but under the

global Korea foreign policy, we expand our interests and contributions, bilaterally and on multilateral bases. We expanded our ODA, and are using these channels and expertise to help.

How would we like to have been seen in the Security Council? As moderate and constructive, and as an innovative country who did a very good job. For the presidency, we have a seasonal and regular agenda. Most topics address concerns in Africa and the Middle East; more than 60 or 70 percent of our discussions and consultations concentrate on those issues, including the current pending issues is Mali, DRC and Central African Republic. And the Syrian issue too is very serious.

We also contribute on human rights issues, which may rise to discussion in the Security Council, but in general are addressed in the Human Rights Council, to help those suffering in many countries where serious human rights violations are under way. One example of action is that Korea was one of five Security Council member countries who signed a letter that requested the Council to refer the situation in Syria to the International Criminal Court (ICC). With 60,000 Syrians killed, we would like to resolve that issue by every possible means, in the Security Council as well as the International Criminal Court.

In the same context, the North Korean human rights issues would be handled first in the Human Rights Council and maybe in committee and they General Assembly, which adopted resolutions about nine times since 2005. Korea has been a cosponsor of those resolutions on DPRK, Myanmar, Syria and Iran. So, Korea is traditionally a strong advocate in promoting human rights. On Myanmar, it led to a success story—how to better engage that Asian country. Korea is the only one that cosponsored so many resolutions since 1998.

Another important agenda area that is emerging is women's issues. In 2012, as noted, we were president of UN Women; gender equality and empowerment of women is on our priority agenda. In Korea's Foreign Ministry, for example, of new diplomats, half are female. Women are taking very important positions throughout society. And finally, as you know well, we have elected a female president, the first in our region. I think this is our mandate: to promote the rights of all people, particularly women and children.

STEPHEN NOERPER:

That's a very impressive leadership stake. You've used the word innovation, and so for our final segment, I turn to Frank Schroeder, Senior Advisor in climate change and sustainable development matters in the Executive Office of the UN Secretary General. Frank has had wide exposure on these issues, and was connected with The New School. Frank, if you could share with us your thoughts on the innovation and excitement around the Green Climate Fund, whose host is Songdo, Incheon.

FRANK SCHROEDER:

The excitement is that the Green Climate Fund was created as an operating entity of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. That's the venue where the climate change negotiations take place, and it's intended to raise funding and to support project programs, policies and other activities in support for developing countries in their efforts to combat climate change, so it's very important to have such an entity. And this has happened in the context of an agreement in the climate change negotiations by developed countries collectively to commit to mobilize \$100 billion annually by 2020 to support developing countries in these objectives. So, with the creation of the Green Climate Fund, there is now this momentum in the climate change discussion of scaling up this money for delivering on this commitment.

The Green Climate Fund is not fully operationalized yet. It has now a board, which is comprised of twenty-four members, with equal representation from developing and developed countries. Interestingly, [there are] many members from finance ministries, which shows finance ministries pay a lot of attention to this new instrument. They're not usually the key player in the climate change negotiations. And then the next question was for the organization, "who will host the Climate Fund?", and there was very intense competition among major countries to host this fund; but in the end, Korea succeeded as the host country

by consensus. I think there's several reasons for this I want to mention.

First of all, Korea had a very strong bid and made a very strong case that it's a global leader on the environment. It's perceived as strongly committed to promoting the concept of green growth, which means climate change or tackling climate change is not only a challenge, but an opportunity. It's an opportunity to create economic growth; as an example, the Korean stimulus program in response to the 2008 financial crisis—a major part was used for investment into the environment; so, that's very innovative. And maybe, also, one reason why Korea came out of the crisis quite strongly and quite quickly was because Korea has become, thanks to government support, a key player in technologies for green development, which benefits not only Asia, but also other countries around the world who can make use of those technologies.

And then, I think, it needs to be said that Songdo, Incheon is a very special place. It's perceived as a city for the future. It has supplied state of the art energy efficiency programs. It's fully digitally wired. It has first class green technology. And this is within a context that 80 percent of emissions are produced in cities as a result of development and organization, and here, in Songdo this was tackled quite effectively. And, of course, as the Ambassador mentioned, before, members in the end decided that Korea can play an important bridge between the developing and the developed world, and that was also one reason it won the bid.

There are still some challenges ahead, because we're only halfway through. I mean, the two decisions to have a board for the fund and to have a host country are very important for the organization of the fund. But major aspects still need to be decided until the fund becomes fully operational, and also can accept funding and money to start funding projects in the developing world.

And this means members of the board have to decide on its business model—which financial mechanisms should be supported and which not, and what's the role of the private sector. I think it's very important to understand that there are enormous investments needed in order to enable the transformation to green growth or to tackle climate change worldwide, so the private sector has a role to play. Public money can be used to catalyze private funding.

So, these are all elements which have to be formulated in a business model and to understand what role this fund will have, because the Green Climate Fund is not the only player. There are other players out there. There is the Global Environment Facility. There is the World Bank. There are a lot of bilateral initiatives. And so, the financial architecture of all these different entities, however they're cooperating in relation to each other, still has to be worked out. And of course, that's why there's still some ground to be covered in order to get there and to become very active.

[End]