

UNITED NATIONS



NATIONS UNIES

**THE SECRETARY-GENERAL**

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**ADDRESS AT DINNER ON THE 50<sup>TH</sup> ANNIVERSARY  
OF THE KOREA SOCIETY  
New York, 15 May 2007**

Ambassador Gregg, Chairman of the Korea Society,  
Ambassador Revere, President,  
Chairman Lee,  
Ambassador Hill,  
Ambassador Choi,  
Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,  
Dear friends,

It is truly a delight for my wife and me to be here. This is not like going out to dinner. This is like coming home.

In fact, it is my home. Let me welcome all of you to my residence. Owing to extensive renovation work at the official Secretary-General's residence at Sutton Place, I am still staying in this hotel.

But on a less material note, let me say that for all the years I have been coming to New York, as foreign minister of Korea and before, The Korea Society has been a home away from home. And for all Koreans and friends of Korea, you provide a bridge between the United States and my country.

Since its foundation 50 years ago, the quality of The Korea Society's programs has been invariably outstanding. Let me congratulate you warmly on this 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary.

But your achievements go even beyond that. You have made it your mission to work for better understanding of issues related to the entire Korean Peninsula. You have helped Washington and Pyongyang know each other better. You have made clear the need to improve relations through diplomacy and a clear grasp of each side's position.

And you have firmly established the Society as the authoritative forum for active discussion on issues concerning Northeast Asia as a whole. I hope you will work to further facilitate active dialogue in the region, so as to help lay the foundations for a peace framework—one which Northeast Asia has lacked, in contrast to other regions.

Ambassador Gregg, let me praise the exceptional leadership and vision you have demonstrated in making The Korea Society what it is today.

On a personal note, I would add that I have always benefited from your guidance—since the days when you were the United States Ambassador to Korea, and I was director-general of the American Affairs Bureau at the Korean Foreign Ministry. I extend my sincere thanks to you.

And let me say how happy I am that you have been joined at the Society by another equally trusted friend of mine and of Korea, Ambassador Evans Revere. Together, you make up a dream team.

I offer my warm congratulations to the winners of this year's Van Fleet Award—Mr. and Mrs. Houghton and Doreen Freeman, and the Korea Foundation, represented by its president, Ambassador Yim Sung-joon.

I am grateful for this opportunity to take all of you on a quick tour of my agenda as secretary-general of the United Nations. I have been in office for only four and a half months. I assure you, I feel more of a sense of responsibility than glory. In any event, whatever moment of glory there was has long since passed.

In some ways, the experience has been like that of riding a very fast horse and seeing the landscape flash by. Even with this very brief and rushed set of impressions, I have become profoundly moved by the professionalism, strong commitment and sense of ownership among U.N. staff, many of whom operate in very difficult situations, often in dangerous circumstances.

Since taking office, I have been committed to a range of pressing priorities, from alleviating suffering in Darfur and working for a durable peace in the Middle East to addressing climate change and strengthening the capacity of our organization. The challenges fall into three broad categories—the geopolitical, those related to long-term vision and goals, and those of putting our house in order.

The most acute of these challenges is of course Darfur. Not only are innocent lives at stake, but also the authority of the Security Council, the image of the United Nations in the Arab world, and the credibility of the United Nations.

I have been working with the Government of Sudan, regional actors and the Security Council to put a credible force of the United Nations and the African Union on the ground. I am encouraged that the Government has accepted the second package of U.N. support to the African Union.

But the government of Sudan will have to honor its commitment to the implementation of this crucial support, and cooperate with the AU and U.N. as it is deployed. The package will also lay the groundwork for the eventual establishment of an

AU-U.N. hybrid peacekeeping operation, the planning of which is being finalized with the African Union.

Enduring peace in Darfur, however, can only be achieved on the basis of a political solution. I have worked closely with AU Chairperson Konaré and the special envoys of the U.N. and the AU to accelerate the peace process and agree on a common strategy. We are currently finalizing a road map for the political process.

And yet, despite our joint efforts to reinvigorate the peace process and strengthen peacekeeping in Darfur, the violence continues. The toll it has taken on human lives is intolerable. Everything possible must be done to secure an immediate ceasefire and return to the path of dialogue.

The international community must also continue to provide support and focus on the implementation of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement, even as it exerts its full efforts to bring lasting peace to Darfur.

At the same time, the situation in the Middle East presents huge challenges. I am deeply committed to addressing the complex conflicts in this region, whether it is Iraq, Lebanon or, above all, the Arab-Israeli conflict. Over the past two months, I have visited the region three times.

In Iraq, violence continues to take an unbearable daily toll in civilian lives. We cannot leave Iraq to grapple with this on its own. The international community as a whole, and in particular Iraq's neighbors and regional countries, must work together to help the Iraqi people build a peaceful, unified and prosperous country.

Almost two weeks ago in Sharm El Sheikh, in the presence of more than 70 delegations, the international community launched the International Compact with Iraq. Under the Compact, the government of Iraq has pledged to pursue a program of economic, political, and security reforms, and to promote national reconciliation. In turn, the international community has agreed to help Iraq achieve those goals. A number of countries have made concrete commitments under the Compact—including specific financial pledges estimated at more than \$30 billion. I am encouraged by these developments, and intend to keep pressing for real follow-up.

Also high on our agenda in the region is the situation in Lebanon. Security Council resolution 1701 was crucial in bringing an end to the devastating war of last summer. The cessation of hostilities has held well, and the military and security situation in the UNIFIL area of operation is generally stable. I commend Korea's contribution in sending peacekeeping contingents to UNIFIL.

But as you are aware, Lebanon's political impasse continues, despite sustained regional and international efforts to encourage dialogue and compromise. There are two major issues at stake: the establishment of a special tribunal to try the perpetrators of the

Hariri assassination and other related crimes, and an agreement on the formation of a national unity government.

Yesterday, Prime Minister Siniora of Lebanon asked me as a matter of urgency to place before the Security Council the request that the special tribunal be established without delay. Today, I conveyed this message to the members of the Security Council, who will now consider what action to take.

I am of the conviction that the special tribunal must be established to put an end to impunity for political assassinations. Continued uncertainty about the Tribunal could negatively affect Lebanon's stability.

Throughout the Middle East, and around the world, the Arab-Israeli conflict, with the question of Palestine at its core, remains an issue of profound concern. It is incumbent on all of us to encourage all positive developments, and to build on current opportunities.

I draw hope from some recent developments. The Quartet, bringing together the U.N., the EU, the U.S. and the Russian Federation, has been meeting more often than before, a demonstration of its commitment to find a way forward. The Arab League has underlined its commitment to peace with Israel by stressing the continued relevance of the Arab Peace Initiative. I will continue to encourage movement towards the shared goal of all parties for a just, lasting and comprehensive peace.

At this point, I'd like to inject a note of optimism on a subject which I expect is uppermost on the minds of most of you here tonight—the Korean Peninsula. I remain convinced that by acting together, the international community can help achieve a secure, prosperous, and democratic Peninsula. I also believe that the Korean people's dream of a reunified Peninsula will come true. All of us should embrace the change coming to our part of the world. It is time to set aside the divisions of the Cold War, and focus on the future. I assure you that the United Nations, for which the Korean conflict has been of special significance, will be an active and constructive partner in this quest.

Right now, the nuclear issue remains the most pressing challenge on the Peninsula. As someone who has put his heart and soul into resolving this issue through diplomacy, I am heartened to see the multilateral negotiating process back on track.

Allow me to express my particular appreciation to Assistant Secretary of State Christopher Hill, who is with us tonight, and who personifies the best in American diplomacy. Ambassador Hill has vision, creativity, and a readiness to listen, learn and work with others towards common objectives. Ambassador Hill, I congratulate you, as well as your able co-negotiators from the other countries in the Six-Party Talks, on the accord you reached in February on initial actions towards a denuclearized Peninsula. While we would all like the talks to move at a faster pace, we know that what is needed is considerable patience, perseverance and political will.

At this critical juncture, I want each participant in the Six-Party Talks to know that the United Nations is their friend and collaborator. I am determined to explore every practical way, for myself as well as the United Nations system as a whole, to support, facilitate and contribute.

Of equal importance to me as secretary-general is working for more U.N. assistance to those in most need in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea—especially vulnerable groups such as children, women and the elderly. I am determined, through dialogue and engagement with the DPRK and other countries, to mobilize international support for both humanitarian and longer-term development needs in the DPRK, as well as work for goodwill and mutual understanding in the region.

Beyond a peaceful resolution of the nuclear issue with North Korea, we should aim to establish a peace mechanism, through transition from armistice to a permanent peace regimen.

Everybody stands to benefit from durable peace and prosperity in the Korean Peninsula. A peaceful and nuclear-free Peninsula will serve as a bridge connecting the whole region, with free trade and movement of people. Let us work together towards this bright future. The Korea Society has an invaluable role to play in that process.

Since taking office, I have also worked to strengthen the United Nations' ability to act on a number of global issues that go beyond any one nation or region.

Climate change is a quintessentially global challenge that cannot wait. It will be one of my top priorities, and at long last, it is rising on the international agenda as a whole. The recent report of the U.N.'s Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change emphasizes that the science on climate change is clear, that the warming of the climate system is unequivocal, and that this is happening because of human activities.

The United Nations has a unique role to play in addressing climate change, and I am committed to galvanizing action. Two weeks ago, I announced the appointment of three special envoys who will consult with member states on how we might move forward both in reducing greenhouse gas emissions and in adapting to the impacts of climate change, which are already upon us.

In human rights too, we have an ambitious agenda. I intend to strengthen our mechanisms for the prevention of human rights violations, and to work for steps to make operational the concept of the responsibility to protect.

To address effectively any of the global challenges before us, we must make the U.N. system more coherent in the areas of peacekeeping, development, humanitarian affairs and the environment.

If we are to reach the Millennium Development Goals by the target date of 2015, it is essential that we be able to deliver as one. In this context, I hope that Korea, as a

country that has produced the secretary-general of the United Nations, will increase its official development assistance so it plays its full part in the global efforts to reach the goals.

I am also striving to change the working culture of the United Nations itself. Since taking office, my first priority has been to enhance accountability and transparency for senior managers.

I believe the quickest way to change any culture is to lead by example. On my first day in office, I submitted a financial disclosure statement for standard external review and then made it public.

I have sought to advance mobility by opening up positions in my office to applicants throughout the UN family.

I have asked senior managers to enter into a compact with me, whereby they identify their priorities and goals in a measurable way. Their performance will be subject to annual review.

I have introduced a term limit and set a standard contract period of two years for senior officials. This is renewable, subject to a performance review. And I have asked senior officials to give up their so-called reversion options, under which they used to have the automatic right to revert to their previous level and stay in U.N. service, even after being relieved of their senior position.

For me to succeed as secretary-general, the U.N. will need to work closely with many partners. The relationship with the United States—key to our creation, crucial throughout our history—will be indispensable to our future. I will need our partnership to be strong, deep, and broad—politically, morally, operationally and, not least, financially.

As the first Asian secretary-general since U Thant, I am also committed to working for an expanded role for Asia in the international arena in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. This is a new and exciting challenge: to bring together the U.N.'s universal values and the distinct culture of Asia, in a complementary and synergistic way. To bring more of Asia to the U.N. and more of the U.N. to Asia.

In that mission, The Korea Society has an important part to play. I wish you a most auspicious 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary, and many happy productive years ahead.

Thank you very much.