

23 July 2002

**Statement of H.E. Dr. Han Seung-soo,  
President of the 56th Session of the General Assembly,  
at the Asia Society**

Korea and Australia - Expanding Partnership into the Future  
Introduction

Mr. Woolcott, Founding Director of the Asia Society of Australia,  
Distinguished Members of the Asia Society,  
Ladies and Gentlemen.

I would like to first thank the Asia Society for giving me the opportunity to say a few words about the bilateral relationship between Korea and Australia. I also wish to express my appreciation to Chairman Morgan for his generous introduction and the warm welcome he has extended to me. Let me also commend the Asia society for its excellent work in promoting closer understanding between Australian and its Asian neighbors, including Korea.

Although my time in Australia is fairly brief, I feel it has been productive. Last week, I co-chaired the 4th Korea-Australia Forum in Hobart and just yesterday, I visited Canberra where I had a chance to exchange views with Australian leaders on matters of mutual interest. My appearance before the Asia Society will be my concluding event in this visit to Australia.

During my brief stay to Australia, I have been able to confirm that the dynamic relationship between our two countries is in robust health and getting stronger.

Current Bilateral Relationship

The fact that Korea and Australia have maintained such an excellent relationship has not been a matter of chance. It is the result of the ceaseless efforts that our two countries and peoples have made to build on our shared values and interests to pursue common prosperity.

A Shared Belief in Democracy

Firstly, Australia and Korea are united by their shared commitment to democracy and democratic institutions.

During the Korean War, Australia was the second country, after the United States, to send its young men and women to help defend Korea from communist invasion. In the process of

political development and democratization of Korea during the last few decades, Australia also has provided consistent and steadfast support.

Korea is now working closely with Australia to promote democracy within this region. Moreover, Korea has participated alongside Australia in the peacekeeping operations in East Timor and has played a substantial role in the process of achieving independence and reconstruction in East Timor.

#### Cooperation for Regional Security

Secondly, both countries share similar perspectives on issues relevant to regional security and are making concerted efforts to maintain peace and security in the region. Australia recognizes that maintaining peace on the Korean Peninsula is the most important factor underpinning the stability and security in the Northeast Asian region. Accordingly, Canberra encourages and supports Korea's "peace through engagement policy" towards North Korea.

At the same time, Korea also recognizes that Australia has a vital role to play in the promotion of stability and good governance in the South Pacific region and has indeed made important contributions to sustainable development and political stability in the region.

#### Complementary Economic Structures

Thirdly, we have developed a rapidly growing, mutually beneficial trading relationship, owing to the highly complementary economic structures of our two countries.

At present, Korea is Australia's fourth largest trading partner and Australia, Korea's tenth largest trading partner, with the volume of bilateral trade amounting to US\$7.7 billion per year.

Considering rapidly globalizing world economic situation, both countries from now on have to seize the fresh opportunities for new types of trade and investment that are emerging

#### Scope for Further Cooperation

##### Distinguished Guests,

Last year, we celebrated the 40th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic ties between our two countries. Of course, we should not forget to note that the opening in 1953 of the Korean Consulate General in Sydney already marked the beginning of our close relationship. During this period, much has been achieved, but much more is still to be accomplished through our joint efforts.

However, lest we forget, the vitality of our bilateral relationship can only be sustained through strenuous mutual efforts to broaden its scope. Both countries, as middle-ranking powers in this

region, have established an important economic presence throughout the world. There is still great untapped potential for cooperation between our two countries in various fields.

### Economic Cooperation

We should certainly continue to build upon the economic complementarity of our respective economies. At the same time, more needs to be done to explore new areas of economic cooperation so as to bring the trade relationship into better balance. Fortunately, both Australia and Korea were ahead of most countries in the region in carrying out liberal economic reforms, and this has enabled us to effectively cope with the challenges arising from globalization.

In the process of recovering from the financial crisis of 1997, Korea has been earnestly carrying out economic reform and restructuring, thus, among others, creating a much more attractive environment for foreign direct investment. Korea's ability to attract high-tech investors has greatly contributed to the rapid development of knowledge-based industry. In particular, in the information and telecommunications industries, Korea is proud to be acknowledged as a world-class competitor.

I am pleased to note that Australia has also carried out economic reforms, including labor relations and taxation. Through investment in research and development for high technology, Australia has become a world-class leader in the application of new technology in information, bioscience and the environment.

In this regard, the joint study commissioned last year by our two governments to explore new opportunities for economic cooperation was extremely timely. The study suggests that we should aim to create a synergy effect by combining Korea's manufacturing technology, capital, and global sales networks with Australia's advanced technology. This is a challenge to the creative energies of the Korean and Australian business communities which, I am sure, they are capable of meeting.

### Regional Cooperation

The issue of regional cooperation has been the subject of intense discussions in the Asia Pacific region and presents new horizons for further cooperation between our two countries.

Australia's efforts to engage with Asia over the last 30 years have borne abundant fruit. Together with Korea, Australia played a leading role in the launch of APEC. I can well recall my own involvement in the process of creating APEC when I was Korea's Trade and Industry Minister in the late 80's.

With regard to regional security, Australia's participation in the ARF demonstrates the strength of its commitment to peace and stability in the region. I believe that Australia needs to continue efforts to broaden its engagement with Asia. It is my hope that Australia will join in the discussions on regional cooperation in the near future. Australian participation will undoubtedly be beneficial not only for Australia but also for Asian countries. Australia will be able to

contribute to the effectiveness of discussions on regional cooperation, while adding to the diversity of such discussions at the same time.

In the specific framework of Northeast Asian affairs, we also appreciate the constructive role Australia has consistently played in persuading and encouraging North Korea to become a responsible member of the international community. We sincerely hope that Australia will continue such contributions to peace and stability on the Korean Peninsula in the years to come.

### Tourism and Culture

At the person-to-person level, it is encouraging to see that Koreans and Australians are getting to know each other better. In recent years, Australia has become an increasingly popular tourism, education, and immigration destination for Koreans. Each year, more than 150,000 Korean tourists visit Australia, and 12,000 students are currently enrolled at various Australian institutions. Roughly 45,000 people of Korean origin in Australia contribute to the prosperity of this multicultural society.

In this regard, I would like to commend the Australia-Korea Foundation for its excellent work in promoting closer relations between our two countries. Having just recently come from Hobart, Tasmania, where I participated in the Fourth Australia-Korean Forum sponsored by the Foundation, I can speak from experience.

Another excellent initiative on the Australian side is the NALSAS (National Asian Languages and Studies in Australian Schools) program to encourage education in four Asian languages, including Korean, in Australian schools. However, I recently learned of the decision made by the Australian Federal Government to cease financial support for the NALSAS program. In light of the program's effective contribution to promoting mutual cultural understanding, I am concerned that this may discourage young Australians from learning Korean and, in the long run, result in a lack of interest and understanding in the Korean language and Korean culture.

I would also like to underline the importance of exchanges in the fields of sport. Australia has hosted the Olympics twice, most recently the 2000 Sydney Olympics. Korea hosted the Seoul Olympics in 1988 and has just co-hosted the 2002 FIFA World Cup - the very first in Asia. I am sure that the success of the Korean team in the 2002 World Cup helped to enhance the pride not only of the Korean people but also of Asians, as a whole. Since we Koreans and Australians are sports lovers, as well as gifted sportsmen and women, exchanges in sport activities will contribute immensely to the forging of genuine friendships between the peoples of both countries.

I would like to take this opportunity to mention that Korea is planning to host an international exposition in the southern port city of Yeosu in 2010 on the theme of harmony between mankind and the sea.

At this point, we are seeking to obtain official authorization for the expo from the BIE in Paris. We would greatly appreciate Australia's support in this regard and, later, Australia's active participation in the event itself.

#### Korea and Australia at the United Nations

Before concluding my remarks, as the President of the United Nations General Assembly, I would like to comment briefly on Australia's role at the UN. As one of the founding members of the United Nations, Australia has made invaluable contributions to the work of the UN. At the genesis of the United Nations, Australia not only served as the very first president of the Security Council, but also provided basic framework behind the creation of Economic and Social Council, leaving her legacy at the United Nations in terms of peace and security on the one hand, and economic and social development on the other.

Throughout her participation at the United Nations, Australia's balanced and reasonable approach based upon her firm commitment to peace and prosperity in the world has long been a model for Member States of the UN. During my own presidency, the Australian Mission has provided great encouragement and assistance to my office by presenting sound views as well as playing a pivotal role in forging a sensible consensus among Member States on a variety of issues facing the General Assembly.

#### Conclusion

#### Distinguished Guests,

Historical prediction is always hazardous. But despite the Asian financial crisis of a few years ago, I remain confident that the Asia-Pacific region will have a greater influence in shaping the global economy and political system of the 21st century than any other world region. I believe that our two countries will share in that influence to a degree disproportionate to our relatively modest population size. But, most importantly, I believe we can provide a model to other countries within the region and beyond of how two nations so very different in history and cultural background can create an enduring partnership grounded in both convergent interests and shared values.

Thank you for your time and attention.