

Full text of Lee's address to U.S. Congress

WASHINGTON, Oct. 13 (Yonhap) -- The following is the full text of South Korean President Lee Myung-bak's speech at a joint session of the U.S. Congress on Thursday.

Mr. Speaker, Mr. Vice-President, distinguished members of Congress, ladies and gentlemen, It is a great privilege to speak to you from this podium, in this great institution representing democracy and freedom. And I am particularly grateful to the leadership of both parties for their hard work in trying to get this agreement passed and to all the esteemed members of Congress for their support, in ratifying the Korea-US free trade agreement last night, in a swift manner which, I am told, was quite unprecedented.

I flew halfway round the world to be here today among friends, thinking about and deeply grateful for the friendship between our two countries.

For Korea, America is not a distant land.

America is our neighbor and our friend. America is our ally and our partner.

There is a Korean expression that describes our sixty-year partnership: "katchikapshida".

In English, it means "We go together."

Yes. We have been going together for sixty years.

For the last sixty years, remarkable changes took place in both of our countries.

For the United States, it has been a journey to new frontiers - on this planet and beyond.

It has been a journey of achieving fantastic breakthroughs in science and technology which led to the advent of the information age.

It was a journey of developing new cures and making advances in machineries. And throughout this journey, you served as the greatest inspiration for peace and prosperity the world has ever known.

For the Republic of Korea, the last sixty years has been an incredible time of transformation and renewal.

It was an epic journey from poverty to prosperity; from dictatorship to a thriving democracy; from a "hermit nation" to a "global Korea".

Korea's story is your story, too.

And that fact is clear in our capital city, Seoul.

During the Korean War, Seoul was almost completely destroyed.

Today, however, Seoul is reborn.

Where there was once rubble now stands the Seoul Tower, looking out over a thriving modern metropolis. In the streets where women and children searched the wreckage for fuel, soon vehicles powered by magnetic strips will roam the streets. Seoul is also the most wired city on the planet.

Seoul is also one of the most dynamic and cosmopolitan cities in the world. Last year, Seoul was host to the G20 Summit and next March it will host the second Nuclear Security Summit which will be attended by more than fifty heads of state and government.

To mark the 60th anniversary of the Korean War, we invited American veterans back to see the land they helped liberate. And when they visited Korea, they found very few landmarks that they recognized from the war. Instead, they saw in Korea what you see here in the United States today.

The pace and the pulse of modern life.

A creative entrepreneurial spirit that knows no bounds.

A sense of self-confidence, optimism and pride.

And an unshakable faith in freedom; in free-elections, a free press and free markets.

Ladies and gentlemen, these are the values that we share.

Your great president and statesman, Thomas Jefferson, said that the only safe place to locate "the ultimate powers of the society" is in the hands of "the people themselves."

These same values can be found in Korea, too.

One of Korea's greatest kings, King Sejong, said 600 years ago that "The people are heaven. The will of the people is the will of heaven. Revere the people as you would heaven."

Here, an ocean away, in the People's House, these ancient words of our ancestors that calls us to revere our people, still ring true.

We also share a belief that political freedom and economic freedom must go hand in hand.

During the 1960s, Koreans demanded democracy and freedom. As one of the student leaders who organized protests calling for democracy, I was caught and imprisoned but this only

strengthened my conviction that universal rights such as democracy, dignity of man and human rights must never be compromised.

At the same time, the Korean people yearned for another kind of freedom - freedom from poverty.

Back then, Korea's per capita GDP was less than \$80.

University graduates roamed the streets, unable to find a job.

Opportunities were scarce.

It was difficult for people to have hope for the future.

This is when I realized that even if we had political freedom and democracy, we would not be truly free without economic freedom.

So, after I was released from prison for my political activities, I joined a small local company. This company, which had less than hundred employees at the time, later evolved into a global conglomerate with over 160,000 employees. And as one of its youngest-ever CEOs, I was privileged to be part of Korea's remarkable economic rise as Korea's economy grew into being near the global top ten. Along the way, I was able to escape poverty myself but being able to contribute to my country's growth will always remain one of my proudest moments.

As you can see, we have won the fight to win two very important freedoms- our political freedom and our economic freedom. Very few countries were successful in their quest to win freedom from poverty and freedom from oppression. And Koreans are proud of this.

And they also know that your friendship - and our alliance - has been indispensable throughout this remarkable journey of hope. And this is why all of you should be proud of what Korea and the Korean people have achieved.

Nevertheless, I still get asked by many foreign leaders: how did a country with no natural resources, no technology, no capital and no experience manage to achieve so much in just one generation?

My answer to them is simple: the power of education.

The Korean War, as I've said, completely destroyed my country.

The people had nothing to eat and nothing to wear.

For years, we relied on foreign aid.

But the Korean people believed in one thing and that was education.

Even if parents had to work day and night and drink nothing but water to chase away their hunger, they spared nothing when it came to their children's education.

My parents were the same. They were determined to give their children hope by giving them a chance to learn.

And I was determined to learn. I used to be a street vendor selling anything and everything during the day and attended night school.

After night school, however, going onto college was but a dream; yet, I managed to get in through the help of others. Although I had to wake up every day at 4 am to haul garbage to pay my way through college, I knew that learning was the key.

My parents, all Korean parents, believed that education was the best way to break that vicious cycle of poverty.

These children later became the lead actors in this great drama.

Their sweat and tears is what transformed Korea from being one of the poorest countries in the world to one of the most dynamic today.

Our desire for learning continues.

Currently, there are more than 100,000 Korean students studying in your schools. These young students will become the leaders of tomorrow; they will become scientists and doctors, bankers and engineers, teachers and artists; they will continue to contribute to making both of our countries stronger. And they will bring our two countries closer together.

Distinguished members,

Today, the United States and Korea have one of the closest, most important economic relationships in the world. For both countries it has brought untold benefits and opportunities. Our trade in goods, services and mutual investments has grown dramatically.

We invest in you - and you invest in us - because we are interdependent.

When we trade together, we grow together.

When we build together, we rise together.

And when we work together, we win together.

We see this in the towns and cities and states this Congress represents.

We see it in West Point, Georgia, where a new Kia automotive plant is expected to create

1,400 new businesses and more than 20,000 new jobs nearby. We see it in Midland, Michigan, where Dow Chemical, a distinctly American company and Kokam Engineering, a distinctly Korean company, have joined together to make some of the world's most advanced batteries - the building blocks for a new era of electric vehicles.

And we have more than 10,000 Korean companies, including global conglomerates such as Samsung and LG, doing business and investing all across America.

And we see such cooperation in Korea, as well.

Just west of Seoul, a GM Korea joint venture is manufacturing and selling Chevrolets to Korean consumers. Sales are up 27% in just the first six months since the brand was launched. And 55% of Koreans say they would consider buying one.

And our cooperation is not just limited to automobiles. Many others, from microchips to biotech, provide similar examples. Our mutual investment is yet another good example.

Mr. Speaker, distinguished members of Congress,

Thanks to all of you in this chamber, our economic ties are becoming even stronger.

The Korea-US Free Trade Agreement was ratified by this Congress here last night. Here, where the Mutual Defense Treaty was signed by Korea and the United States in 1953, a new chapter in our relationship has opened. Our relationship has become stronger.

The Korea-US free trade agreement is a historic achievement, a win-win for both countries. This agreement is a major step toward future growth and job creation. It is a win for our corporations. It is a win for our workers. It is a win for small businesses. And it is a win for all the innovators on both sides of the Pacific.

Perhaps you have heard what the experts have said: that America's economic output will grow more due to the Korea-US free trade agreement than from America's last nine trade agreements combined.

This deal also has fair labor provisions. It has rigorous environmental standards. And it has strong protections for intellectual property rights.

These provisions will improve our business environments. These provisions will allow for us to widely share the benefits of trade more than ever.

In this century, much has changed but not this basic truth: open markets build strong economies.

And in this 21st century, I firmly believe economies must be green to grow.

Unfortunately, this was not always our way. For far too long in my country, growth came at a cost. Rapid economic growth cast a dark shadow - in our environment, in the air that we breathed and the water that we drank.

This is why when I was mayor of Seoul, I considered it my calling to restore Seoul's Choenggycheon stream which was neglected for decades. The restored stream revitalized the surrounding landscape; revived commercial activity and enriched the lives of the people in countless ways.

As president, I announced a new national vision: low carbon green growth.

And it is our goal to become the world's seventh-largest green economy by 2020. The benefits of green growth are real. This is why we are investing heavily in the research and development of next-generation power technologies such as the smart grids. This is why we are trying to become the leader in renewable energy sources. This is why we've required our biggest carbon-emitting companies to set greenhouse gas targets this year. They will, of course, work to deliver on their promise.

I am aware that the US is also taking measures to ensure a sustainable future. Some of those steps we are taking together.

For example, in 2009, our governments signed a statement of intention to work together on renewable energy, energy efficiency and power technologies. The Chicago Smart Building Initiative is a good example of our cooperation. And during my visit this time, our two governments signed a statement of intent on the Joint Research Project on Clean Energy. Joint investments and cooperation will only increase; our work will lead to tangible results that will benefit mankind.

As our countries move down this path, we will be moving even closer together. We will move forward together.

Distinguished members, ladies and gentlemen,

The strength of a country is not measured in dollars alone.

Our mutual defense keeps us strong. And it keeps us safe.

Ours is an alliance forged in blood. That is how we Koreans describe it.

Fifty-eight years ago today in October 1953 here in Washington DC, the Republic of Korea and the United States signed the Mutual Defense Treaty. In the words of that treaty, we pledged our "common determination to defend (ourselves) against external armed attack so that no potential aggressor could be under the illusion that either of (us) stands alone in the Pacific area."

But, we know that defending freedom is never easy.

It is never free of cost or free of risk.

For this, I want to thank you. I thank you, on behalf of the Korean people, for standing by us in times of darkness.

We also want to thank the 28,500 American men and women in uniform who serve today in Korea. We want to thank you for keeping faith with the generation of your parents and grandparents, defending freedom on the Korean Peninsula.

Today, I would also like to thank the Korean War veterans who are here with us today. They are Representatives John Conyers. Charles Rangel. Sam Johnson. And Howard Coble. We thank these gentlemen for their service. Thank you.

To these gentlemen and to millions of others, the Korean War or the division of the Korean Peninsula are not abstract concepts.

They are not abstract concepts for me, either.

My older sister and younger brother, both just children, were killed in that war. I will never forget them. I will never forget how my mother tried so hard to keep them alive. With the war raging all around us, there were no doctors and we couldn't afford to buy medicine. My mother stayed up all night, praying to God. Many Koreans still live with such pain.

I recognize the reality that Korea has been split in two.

But I will never accept it as a permanent condition.

The two Koreas share the same language, history and customs. We are one people. In both Koreas, there are families who have never spoken to their loved ones for more than half a century. My hope is that these people and all 70 million Koreans will enjoy real happiness, real peace.

And for this, we must first lay the foundation for peace on the Korean Peninsula.

And upon this foundation we must strengthen cooperation between the two Koreas. We must seek the path that will lead us towards mutual prosperity.

And we must achieve peaceful unification.

A unified Korea will be a friend to all and a threat to none.

A unified Korea will contribute to peace and prosperity, not only in Northeast Asia but far beyond.

We therefore must achieve the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula.

And North Korea must give up their nuclear ambitions.
Korea and the United States stand united.

We are in full agreement that the Six Party Talks is an effective way to achieve tangible progress.

We are in full agreement that we must also pursue dialogue with North Korea. However, we must also maintain our principled approach. A North Korea policy that is firmly rooted upon such principles is the key that will allow us to ultimately and fundamentally resolve this issue. North Korea's development is in our collective interest and this is what we want; however, this depends on its willingness to end all provocations and make genuine peace. We will work with you and the international community so that North Korea makes the right choice.

Distinguished members,

Our mutual defense treaty has ensured stability and prosperity to flourish not only on the Korean Peninsula but across Northeast Asia.

Northeast Asia today is a more dynamic region than ever. And economic change in this region brings geopolitical change. It brings shifts in the balance of power that has long prevailed.

The United States, as a key player of the Asia-Pacific region and as a global leader, has vital interests in Northeast Asia. For Northeast Asia to play a more constructive role in global affairs there must be peace and stability in the region.

And your leadership that has ensured peace and stability of Northeast Asia and beyond in the 20th century, must remain supreme in the 21st century.

The ideals that you represent and the leadership that allows for such ideals to become true, must continue.

There remain many challenges in the world today and your leadership is vital. Terrorism, proliferation of WMD, climate change, energy security, poverty and disease - these are just a few of the challenges that require your leadership.

In this regard, our free trade agreement has significance because it will be a force for stability. Because lasting stability, again, depends on economic opportunity being open and robust. Our relationship can be the catalyst that generates growth all along the Pacific Rim. And in doing so, it will make clear how fully our fates are connected.

More than ever, Korea is looking beyond the horizon. It will willingly embrace its international responsibilities. It will work to resolve global challenges.

Since becoming President of Korea, my vision for Korea in the coming decades is for a global Korea.

Global Korea has joined United Nations peacekeeping operations in East Timor, Lebanon and Haiti. Korea was the third-largest contributor of troops to the coalition forces in Iraq. We have sent reconstruction teams to rebuild Afghanistan. Our naval vessels support the US and EU in fighting against piracy off the coast of Somalia. We will take part in the international effort in bringing democracy to Libya and rebuilding its shattered economy. We have pledged to double our overseas development assistance by 2015. Next month, the High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness will be held in Busan, Korea's second-largest city.

In these and countless other ways, Korea will carry out its duties as a responsible member of the international community. As we face the many global challenges that lie ahead of us and as we promote universal values, Korea will remain your partner and friend.

In 2009 when President Obama and I signed the Joint Vision for the Future of the Alliance, we agreed to work closely together in resolving regional and international issues, based on shared values and mutual trust.

During our summit today, we renewed this commitment. We also reaffirmed our commitment to face the challenges of today for the generation of tomorrow.

Our alliance will grow and evolve.

And it will prevail.

Mr. Speaker, distinguished members of Congress, ladies and gentlemen,

Before I part, I want to thank you again for the honor of addressing this Congress. I would also like to thank President Obama and Mrs. Obama for their invitation.

I also take this opportunity to pay tribute to the 1.5 million Korean-Americans who have been contributing to this great country. As president of Korea, I am proud that they are giving back to the country that gave them so much. I am also deeply grateful to you and the American people for giving them the chance to make their dreams come true.

Your ideals and aspirations have been ours as they have been for much of the world.

Half a century ago, young Americans served in the Korean War "for duty beyond the seas." Today, our peoples hear the same call. Not always active combat. Not always to brave the rugged mountains or bitter winters. But it is an important duty nonetheless - a charge to help create a more peaceful, more prosperous world.

In the 21st century, duty and destiny calls us once again.

As before, let us rise to meet the challenges.

Let us go together.

Together, and forward.

God bless you, God bless America.

Thank you.

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