



Luncheon Keynote Speech by CHOO Mi-Ae
Member of the 19th National Assembly Republic of Korea, New Politics
Alliance for Democracy Party / Trade, Industry and Energy Committee

It is a great honor to hold the 1st China, Japan, and Korea Cooperation Dialogue here in Seoul to seek the future prosperity of Northeast Asia. I would like to extend a warm welcome to Mr. Zhang Yunling, Director of International Studies at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences (CASS), Mr. Kazumasa Kusaka, Chairman of the Japan Economic Foundation (JEF), and everyone else who has come here today. I also would like to express my special thanks to our co-host Mr. Ro-Myung Gong, former Minister of Foreign Affairs of Korea and Chairman of the East Asia Foundation, for organizing today's conference, and to all of you who have made significant contributions to the development and harmony not only in China, Japan, and Korea but also throughout Northeast Asia. China, Japan and South Korea have long shared Confucianism culture. Due to our geographical proximity, our 3 nations have enjoyed a constant exchange of goods, services, and human resources and have shared important cultural traits. The same still holds true today. The politics and economies of our three nations are dynamic, flexible, and closely related to each other. As you are well aware, China, Japan, and Korea are currently engaging in negotiations to reach a free trade agreement. The FTA will create a huge regional market, accounting for up to 20% of the total world GDP and amounting to 14 trillion US dollars with a population of 1.5 billion consumers.

Honorable participants,

I joined Session 1 in the morning as a panel member and discussed the FTAs that Korea has reached so far. Considering the expansion of globalization and the entailing changes to the global trade environment, trade liberalization represented by neoliberalism may be an inevitable trend. Over the past 15 years, Korea has signed FTAs with a total of 47 nations around the world, including the U.S. and the E.U.. Korea and China have concluded substantive negotiations on a bilateral free trade agreement recently. However, we have also suffered unexpected side effects along the way. Some criticize the government as being focused only on increasing the number of FTAs, while failing to weigh how they would affect workers for non-competitive industries under FTAs. The biggest victim in the process of Korea's trade liberalization is the agriculture sector. To prepare for the adverse effects of opening its agricultural market, Korea adopted a policy of nurturing corporate agriculture as a means to promote large-scale farming, thereby reaching economies of scale and enhancing its agricultural competitiveness. The policy, however, has worsened income disparity in rural areas more than in urban areas and has also worsened population ageing in rural areas. Worse still, there was a large illegal social scandal surrounding the rice subsidies fund allotted for farmers. These poor policies by the government could not improve Korea's low agricultural competitiveness and still remains almost at the bottom of OECD

nations. The agriculture industry is still a valuable public good despite its vulnerable comparative advantage. We should reassess and highlight the agriculture industry as it contains a number of values, such as food security, national land management, the environment, and ecosystem conservation, which cannot only be measured through 'the theory of comparative advantage'. Only then can sustainable national growth be guaranteed. Of course, free trade is also an important value we should protect. We should not be given a choice between agriculture and free trade. We should strive to achieve both of them at the same time. However, the Korean government has yet to come to this concept. Sustainable development cannot be achieved only when the government stresses the bright side of FTAs. It is clear that less competitive sectors or groups will suffer once the FTA is reached. If we expedite the FTA without coming up with any proper protection measures for them, it will be like sharing a poisoned chalice.

Ladies and gentlemen,

In 2nd Session to be held this afternoon, an in-depth discussion will be held on the environmental issues surrounding the three nations under the theme "Emerging Environmental Concerns and Trilateral Cooperation." It is our responsibility to protect and conserve the environment for future generations. Korea, China, and Japan suffer greatly each year from yellow dust and fine dust particles. This shows that Northeast Asia forms a single ecological community. China also realizes the gravity of its domestic air pollution problem, especially that of fine dust particles, and is making massive investments to solve the problem. We should need to discuss seriously about these problems because we share a same environmental community. Concerns about marine ecosystems are also high on our agenda. The Korean government estimates that 72.5% of marine debris drifting to Korea from abroad originates from China. If we takes nationalistic perspectives when it comes marine waste, it will only cause unnecessary conflicts between us. This problem cannot be solved by one nation alone. When it comes to marine waste, all of us are not only the offenders but also the potential victims. In order to solve cross-border pollution, it is more appropriate to seek cooperation for the development and dissemination of necessary technologies and devices than to play the blame game. Environmental issues do not stay within national borders. We all should work together to improve the condition of our shared environment, placing the emphasis on our peaceful co-existence.

Respected participants,

Countries around the world are building regional trade blocks through regional cooperation. Northeast Asia has been lagging behind in such efforts. This is because we have many stumbling blocks and challenges in our path to the peace and co-prosperity of China, Japan, and Korea, such as environmental issues, historical issues, and territorial disputes. You are the ones who can do this, standing at the forefront of cooperation in the region. China, Japan, and Korea should end

the hatred and conflicts of the past and move towards a future-oriented, strategically cooperative relationship. To this end, more exchanges should be encouraged at the private sector level such as academia and industry. There is an old saying that good company makes the road shorter. It is my hope that today's conference will lead us onto the path of cooperation and friendship and help us drive the growth of not only Asia but also the whole world.

Thank you for your attention!