

Hokkaido ILC Focuses on Japan's Role in Korean Reunification

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Sapporo, Japan—The Association of Ambassadors for Peace (AAP) -- Hokkaido of UPF-Japan convened a Hokkaido International Leadership Conference (ILC) online from Sapporo city on March 7, 2021, on the theme, "Japan's Role in Peaceful Unification of the Korean Peninsula and What Hokkaido Can Do," with 60 participants from inside and outside of Hokkaido prefecture.

Mr. Yoshisumi Asai, a lecturer from Doshisha University in Kyoto specialized in the unification of the Korean peninsula from a historical perspective was the keynote speaker. Other presenters included Mrs. Hiromi Kojima, president of Sapporo City Council Japan's Korea Parliamentary Friendship League, and the Mrs. Eun-Sook Oh, vice president of the Hokkaido Women's Association of the Korean Residents Union in Japan.

Mr. Asai, who spoke on the "Peaceful Unification of the Korean Peninsula and Japan," began by explaining the history and situation of the peninsula. He then emphasized the importance of cooperation among Japan, the United States and South Korea for the peaceful reunification of the peninsula to occur. "Relations between Japan and South Korea have deteriorated, and the isolation of South Korea through 'balancer' diplomacy by the administration of Moon Jae-In has hampered [cooperation among] Japan, the United States and South Korea," he said. "In addition, for reconciliation between Japan and South Korea to take place, it is necessary to ease the interests [of] major powers in the region by establishing a Northeast Asia Economic Mutually Prosperous Sphere with support from Koreans living abroad in China, Russia and other countries. And, the Japan-Korea Tunnel is an effective project for that purpose."

Mrs. Kojima commented: "I want to expand the circle of exchanges between Japan and South Korea at the grassroots level. I realized the importance of understanding Japan-ROK relations from a broad

perspective of Northeast Asia." Mrs. Oh, who has been living in Japan for 30 years since her marriage, said, "I have always been thinking about what I can do for both Japan and Korea. When I heard that collaboration between Japan and South Korea would [support] the unification of the peninsula, I felt that what we had done was not a mistake."

Afterwards, a former member of the House of Representatives of the National Diet of Japan Hon. Seiichi Shimizu, current chairman of the AAP-Hokkaido, summarized the discussions by underscoring that "If the two Koreas become one, a Northeast Asian economic sphere will be created. The linking of the Japan-Korea tunnel in the south, connecting of Hokkaido and Sakhalin in the north, and the waterfront reaching up to Siberia, Hokkaido will surely benefit greatly. I want to take back [what I learned today from the different perspectives the speakers gave] and move forward."

