

ANNEX 4: Keynote Speech by the Minister of National Defense, Han Min-Gu

Good morning, this is the Minister of National Defense of the Republic of Korea. I am delighted that Seoul is hosting the 18th ARF National Defense University President Meeting and I sincerely welcome all the presidents and officials from various countries.

The ARF National Defense University President Meeting is a meeting to establish mutual trust and promote regional peace and stability through academic exchange and military cooperation among the national defense universities of various member nations.

This meeting's theme is 'The role of the national defense university in military cooperation for promoting peace and trust in the Asia Pacific region.' In a critical period when the Asia Pacific region is rising as a central pillar of the world security order, it is extremely timely and meaningful for the heads of defense education of various countries to convene and discuss military cooperation in tandem with education.

As you are well aware, both large and small military skirmishes are continuing in the Asia Pacific region today, while transnational threats such as terrorism and natural disasters are also on the rise.

In particular North Korea's nuclear and missile programs are gravely threatening the peace of not only the Korean Peninsula but also the Asia Pacific region and the entire world.

For the sake of peace and prosperity in the region, the best thing would be to identify security trends in advance and prepare for threats that harm regional stability well before they emerge.

However, it is extremely difficult for any one nation to prepare for all the threats alone in today's world of diverse and complex security threats. Therefore, cooperation for joint prosperity, based on trust, understanding, and mutual respect is more important than anything else.

At present diverse regional security consultative bodies are at work, continuously searching for ways to cooperate. These bodies include the Shangri-la Dialogue and the ASEAN Defense Ministers' Meeting.

The Republic of Korea also hosts the Seoul Defense Dialogue, a vice-minister level meeting, in order to promote peace and stability on the Korean Peninsula and the region.

I am confident that today's ARF National Defense University President Meeting will also develop into a security consultative body that contributes to the peace and trust among nations in the region through wide-ranging dialogue and strengthening of bonds achieved by the active service generals and officials who lead defense policy and education.

Moreover, I look forward to an in-depth discussion on defense education, exchange, and cooperation.

Once again, I extend my most heartfelt welcome to all the participants of today's meeting and I wish you a pleasant stay in Korea as you strengthen your bonds. Thank you.