

International Association of Parliamentarians for Peace –

HIGH-LEVEL BRIEFING – OTTAWA, CANADA - JUNE 19, 2018

“Can strategic trade with North Korea Help Promote Peace and Prosperity” was the theme of a high-level briefing held on Parliament Hill in Ottawa, Canada. The meeting organized by Universal Peace Federation was made possible by the offices of the Honourable Robert-Falcon Ouellette, Member of Parliament for Winnipeg Center, who secured a prestigious room in the House of Commons, complete with translation facilities for our two official languages.

The briefing, centred on a panel of four experts and a keynote speaker, focused on inter-Korean relations, the question of the reunification of the two Koreas, Canadian-Korean relations, international trade, human rights, diplomacy, the evolving geopolitical realities in the region and more.

The session opened with Dr. Moonshik Kim, chair of UPF, Canada, and the Hon. Robert-Falcon Ouellette, giving welcoming remarks to the group. Dr. Daniel Stringer then contextualized the briefing (which was taking place a short week after the historic Trump-Kim Summit in Singapore) by posing for the panel the simple question: *Could North Korea transition from a command economy into a burgeoning entrepreneurial economy, as China has done, and is there a role for Canada to play through a limited, selective and verifiable trade arrangement with North Korea designed to bring a modicum of prosperity to the ordinary citizenry.*

The first presentation delivered by a young Research Analyst, Yun Sik James Hwang, with the NATO Association of Canada, addressed the high economic cost of North-South integration and called for empathy, not sympathy, for the North Korean population. He reminded us of past investments that western companies had made in North Korea only to have them nationalized.

Dr. Tina Park, one of Canada's foremost experts on North Korea and Canadian-Korean relations and co-founder & executive director of the Canadian Centre for the Responsibility to Protect, based at the Munk School of Global Affairs, at the University of Toronto, followed by speaking of Canada's long-standing relations with Korea and pointing out that Canadians first visited the Korean peninsula as missionaries in the 19th century. Suggesting that human rights concessions should precede any increase in trade with the North, Park noted that despite \$1 billion going to the South Korean Ministry of Unification each year, young people, a large demographic in that country, are not keen on reunification.

Hon. Margaret Huber offered her perspective as a long time Canadian diplomat. Having travelled to South Korea first in 1975 and North Korea in 1983 with the Canada Trade Commission, she noted that unpredictability is a big problem for trade and commerce, not to mention diplomacy. Observing that engagement is an instrument of statecraft and not an endorsement of a foreign government's policies, she declared that North Korea was winning on the world public relations front. With the 4th largest standing army in the world, what does North Korea want from Canada? she asked. Perhaps recognition in the form of an embassy in Ottawa. For greater diplomatic success in dealing, for instance, with North Korea, Huber recommended increased academic exchange, an interdepartmental study group, and greater training for diplomats in hard languages like Korean.

Zhihao Yu, full professor at the Department of Economics, Carleton University, spoke about the trade-compliance dynamic. While noting that trade can be restricted or unrestricted, he suggested that as the volume of trade increases, so does North Korea's risk of loss due to non-compliance with international

security obligations specifically related to nuclear weapons – concluding, however, that opening a greatly increased trade with North Korea and ensuring regime security would produce a similar result to that of the US opening up trade with China in the 1970's. He said that in fact, North Korea looks like China in the 1960's.

After a health break, the group convened again to hear the keynote address given by Alexandre Mansourov. Introduced by Robert-Falcon Ouellette, Dr. Mansourov proceeded to outline four schools of thought on why North Korea suddenly shifted its approach toward the USA:

1. Due to the pain of sanctions
2. Kim's cunning tactical plan to buy time
3. Kim is experiencing a transformation of his soul and outlook
4. Fear of unpredictable US action

Noting that US President Trump and North Korea's Chairman Kim set up a hotline between them and that Pompeo's team spent a lot of time in North Korea preparing for the summit and will soon return to the North, Mansourov pointed out that Trump cut the Gordian Knot by using positive sum diplomacy and thinking outside the box. Among other disclosed and non-disclosed results of the summit, North Korea has agreed to reduce the size of its army and remove all surface to surface missiles positioned at its border with the Republic of Korea.

On human rights, Mansourov's comments ran counter to the current portrayal of the situation in North Korea. As a child of a non-survivor of the Soviet Gulag system, he called the characterization of the human rights situation in North Korea as highly politicized - there are no gas chambers, no gulag, no mass graves. Families of incarcerated parents are allowed to stay together with their parents, for example, he said.

The conference concluded with extensive discussion and contributions by the members of parliament and other participants.

Inspired and guided by the timely vision of Daniel Stringer, conference coordinator, the briefing was organized and executed by the dedicated UPF Canada team with much of the work done *pro bono*.

Report written by Robert Duffy, Secretary-General, UPF Canada