

UPF Asia-Pacific ILC 2021 (part 1) - Session III: China's in Korean Reunification

Ursula McLackland
July 7, 2021



Asia Pacific -- The July 7-8 International Leadership Conference 2021 (ILC2021) -- Asia Pacific program convened Session Three, "Korean Reunification: China's Key Role," on July 7 at 1 p.m. Bangkok time. Four speakers from Laos, Mongolia, Nepal and New Zealand presented. Over 1,250 people registered for the session and 328 watched it live on Zoom.

Dr. Mohan Krishna Shrestha, *former ambassador of Nepal to France (2010-2014)*, said one of the biggest challenges for the reunification of the Korean Peninsula is the incompatibility between the governments of North and South Korea. He went on to say that China is set to become the number one country in terms of gross domestic product (GDP) and has great leverage in the Korean Peninsula. He added that although China's diplomatic efforts seem to be based on quiet diplomacy, the country can widen its efforts in far-reaching ways.

Prof. Bo Zhiyue, *founder and president of the Bo Zhiyue China Institute in Wellington, New Zealand*, said that based on its experience of hosting the six-party talks in the past, China could very well play a more effective role in Korean reunification by hosting multilateral talks on the issue. Furthermore, it is imperative that China, a regional leader and an emerging global leader, plays a constructive leadership role in international affairs. The Korean reunification process can provide an excellent opportunity for China to exercise that kind of leadership.

Ms. Adena Mahavong, *presidential advisor of the Yunnan Chamber of Commerce and Industry in Laos*, highlighted that China is one of the fastest growing economies and, as such, is a key player in the global economy. It offers trade and international cooperation opportunities to other nations and has a strong influence on global peace and sustainable development.

Mr. Anar Chuluunbaatar, *an independent researcher at the Karakorum Institute and Pax Mangolica Research Company, Mongolia*, has served as a mediator in the North Korean crisis. He pointed out that Beijing has not only hosted multilateral talks but has also established an important platform for resolving problems on the Korean Peninsula. And, although Beijing has its own strategic interests in resolving the North Korean crisis, there is no doubt that the U.S. needs China's cooperation to solve the problem, he added. He concluded by saying that prospects of Korean reunification seem less viable unless North and South Korea pursue a mutually beneficial, gradual integration that supports peaceful coexistence.

All the speakers commended China for having a key role to play in the Korean reunification process. While China can contribute to the process by hosting various rounds of talks focused on Korean reunification, it was also suggested that a joint statement be issued after each round of talks and that the implementation of these statements be monitored by all parties.