

New Milestone for Reunification of Korea

From October 2 to 4 last year there were meetings and talks in Pyongyang between Kim Jong Il, chairman of the National Defence Commission of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, and Roh Moo Hyun, president of south Korea. The top leaders signed the "Declaration for Development of North-South Relations and Peace and Prosperity".

The Declaration stated tha the north and the south agreed:

1. To uphold and positively implement the June 15 Joint Declaration,
2. To convert the north-south relations definitely into those of mutual respect and confidence, transcending the difference in ideology and system,
3. To closely cooperate with each other in the efforts to put an end to hostile military relations and ensure détente and peace on the Korean peninsula,
4. To cooperate with each other, sharing the understanding of the need to put an end to the existing armistice mechanism and build a lasting peace mechanism, in the efforts to push forward the issue of arranging a meeting on the territory of the Korean peninsula of the heads of state of three or four parties directly concerned to promote the matter of declaring an end to war,
5. To reactivate economic cooperation and bring about its sustained development on the principles of ensuring common interests and prosperity and meeting each other's needs with a view to balanced development of the national economy and common prosperity,
6. To develop exchange and cooperation in social and cultural fields such as history, language, education, science and technology, culture and the arts and sports to add brilliance to the time-honored history and fine culture of the nation,
7. To push forward humanitarian cooperation,
8. To strengthen cooperation on the international arena in the efforts to protect the interests of the nation and the rights and interests of overseas Koreans.

What is most noteworthy in the declaration is the first clause – "the north and the south shall uphold and positively implement the June 15 Joint Declaration".

In June 2000, DPRK NDC Chairman, Kim Jong Il, and the then south Korean president, Kim Dae Jung, had a historic Pyongyang meeting, which gave birth to the June 15 Joint Declaration that turned over half-a-century-long north-south relations of hostility and confrontation to the one of reconciliation, cooperation and reunification. The keynote of the June

15 Joint Declaration is “by our nation itself”, that is, independence. The declaration made public last October reconfirmed the principle of independence, the nucleus and basic cornerstone of the reunification of Korea, and made a definite promise that the reunification issue will be settled independently, attaching importance to the dignity and interests of the nation and subordinating everything to this principle.

Another remarkable thing in the declaration is that it dealt with the military issue as well as the political one. In other words, it has made new proposals to definitely convert north-south relations into those of mutual respect and confidence and closely cooperate with each other to ensure peace on the Korean peninsula.

In the declaration the north and the south agreed to adjust their legal and institutional mechanisms and to hold talks between the minister of the People’s Armed Forces of the north side and the minister of National Defence of the south side for building military confidence. They also reached an agreement on cooperating with each other in the efforts to push forward the issue of arranging a meeting of heads of state of three or four parties directly concerned with the Korean war in the early 1950s, on the territory of the Korean peninsula to promote the matter of declaring an end to war. The proposals have opened a bright vista for removing the main obstacles to the reunification of Korea.

The declaration made concrete proposals for developing cooperation in different fields such as the economy, culture and humanitarianism.

The north and the south agreed to encourage investment for economic cooperation and push forward the building of economic infrastructures and the development of resources and grant all types of preferential treatment and privileges to suit the peculiarities of cooperation undertakings within the nation.

The proposed establishment of a “special zone for peace and cooperation on the West Sea” covering the Haeju area and adjacent waters which is near to south Korea and other cooperation projects stipulated in the declaration opened bright prospects to expand the zones for inter-Korean cooperation to Anbyon on the east coast and Nampo on the west coast of the north side along with the Haeju area beyond the existing Kaesong Industrial Zone. The declaration also contained the issues of jointly using relinked railways and motorways to be discussed and implemented, opening the Mt. Paektu – Seoul direct air route to extend the on-going tour of Mt. Kumgang by south Koreans to Mt. Paektu, the highest and ancestral mountain of Korea, letting the cheering groups of the north and the south go to the 2008 Beijing Olympics by using the train to run along the line in the north side, expanding the meeting of separated families and relatives and promoting the exchange of video correspondence, permanently posting representatives of both sides at the reunion center at the Mt. Kumgang resort when completed with a view to putting the meeting of separated families and relatives on a regular basis – all of which have been presented in a concrete and advanced way, giving confidence in and optimism for the future development of the north-south relations and the prospects of reunification.

Seven years ago, the Korean nation was provided with the June 15 Joint Declaration, the milestone of reunification, and this time it has the new one which is more concrete and detailed.

The implementation of the “Declaration for Development of North-South relations and Peace and Prosperity”, a new milestone for reunification of Korea, will surely bring about the day of the Korean reunification.