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**Address by
President Moon Jae-in
of the Republic of Korea
at the 72nd Session
of the United Nations General Assembly**

September 21, 2017

First of all, on behalf of the people and government of the Republic of Korea, I would like to take this opportunity to convey my deepest sympathy to the victims of the earthquake that hit Mexico on September 19 and their families as well as the people and Government of Mexico.

I offer my respect and gratitude to all member states and the staff of the United Nations Secretariat for their contributions to world peace and security.

I congratulate Mr. Miroslav Lajčák on his election as the President of the 72nd Session of the General Assembly. I expect that this session will reap all the more meaningful results under his excellent leadership.

I also wish Secretary-General António Guterres great success. The Republic of Korea takes a strong stance in support of the U.N. goals aimed at the prevention of conflicts and sustaining peace. I look forward to the rebirth of the United Nations as an even stronger organization fostering peace and prosperity for all peoples during his tenure as Secretary-General.

Mr. President, Secretary-General and distinguished delegates,

As I prepared this address, I thought about the spirit of the United Nations and the joint mission of us all.

The United Nations is perhaps one of the best institutional inventions created by human intelligence. It was born “to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war” and has unremittingly met the challenges confronting humanity over the past 70 years. The roles and contributions of the United Nations in the international community will continue to grow over time.

Today, the number of transnational issues is ever-increasing and no country can resolve them single-handedly. For this reason, we should truly fulfill the spirit of the United Nations to find solutions to all the problems facing us.

To this end, I hope everyone will pay attention to the Republic of Korea, located on the southern part of the Korean Peninsula at the east end of the Eurasian continent.

I believe the candlelight rallies last winter in the Republic of Korea created a historic moment that is evidence of the brilliant achievement of the spirit of the United Nations. With the power of cooperation and solidarity in defiance of challenges, the rallies forged ahead toward a future aspired to by humanity.

Some of you may remember the scenes of the candlelight rallies shown by the media: streets packed with millions of lights, people expressing their opinions freely and joining in discussions on every street corner where there was singing, dancing and painting, the radiant faces of the parents who took their children by hand to join rallies and the pride of young people who picked up trash on the streets afterwards—all these scenes were very much a part of democracy and peace.

The candlelight revolution in Korea started in a public square where the yearning for restoration of democracy and the Constitution awakened the citizens' collective intelligence. I too participated in the rallies myself just as a citizen. The people of the Republic of Korea achieved democracy in the most peaceful and beautiful manner. They proved the power of popular sovereignty, the quintessence of democracy. They also proved the fact that the power of peace rather than violence can bring greater changes to the world.

The new Administration of the Republic of Korea is made possible by the candlelight revolution. Above and beyond the meaning of a democratic election, this means that the Administration was launched by the participation and aspirations of the people and their awareness that they are the rightful owners of the nation. I am now standing here on behalf of that Administration.

I am very gratified with and also proud of the fact that the Republic of Korea, though belatedly a democracy, showed the world a new hope for democracy.

Now building on that strength, the Republic of Korea intends to play an active role in addressing pending issues facing the international community.

Mr. President,

The Republic of Korea has always taken joint steps with the United Nations. Since the establishment of the Government in 1948, the Republic of Korea has received significant assistance from the United Nations both during the Korean War and in the process of post-war reconstruction. Even though it was not until 1991 that the Republic of Korea could become a member of the United Nations, the country has enhanced its roles and responsibilities as a member state faster than any other nation in the span of just one generation.

From 1993 onwards, Korea has continued to participate in peacekeeping operations. This year, as Chair of the Peacebuilding Commission, it is focusing on resolving the root causes of conflicts.

Over the past five years, the Republic of Korea has increased financial assistance for refugees by 15 times, and last year, it joined the UNHCR's "20-million-plus dollar donors' club." Now expediting the implementation of the Paris Agreement and a shift in energy policy, the Korean Government is also taking the lead in supporting the climate change responses of developing countries through the Global Green Growth Institute and the Green Climate Fund. On top of this, my Administration has met the goal of filling 30 percent of the Cabinet with female ministers, thereby spearheading the efforts to realize gender equality, one of the goals of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

In the years to come, the Republic of Korea will significantly increase its contributions to the United Nations in all sectors.

Among other things, it is truly meaningful that the theme of this session of the U.N. General Assembly "Focusing on People" is in line with the philosophy of governance of the new Administration in the Republic of Korea. "People come first" is the slogan I have used for several years to express my political philosophy. And the "people" are at the center of all policies of my new Administration.

As of now, my Administration is pursuing bold measures to change the economic paradigm in order to deal with economic inequalities that stand in the way of growth and social cohesion. We are now pursuing economic policies focusing on the income growth of individuals and households, and promoting an economy where growth is led by job creation and all people can enjoy equal opportunities and the fruits of growth. This is what we call a 'people-centered economy'.

My Administration's determined endeavors to realize inclusive growth will not be confined to our country. In accordance with this new paradigm, the Republic of Korea will render support for sustainable growth in developing countries.

Mr. President,

I was born in a refugee town in the middle of the Korean war. This civil war, which evolved into an international war, devastated the lives of countless people. Over three million lost their lives, and many of the survivors were deprived of decent living. My father was also one of them. My father, who thought he was taking temporary refuge at that time, could never make it back to his hometown before he passed away. I come from one of the separated families, the victims whose human rights were violated by the War.

The War has yet to come to a complete end. The Korean War, a war that began as an offshoot of the larger Cold War conflict, continues to this day. Though the Cold War ended, and 64 years have passed since the conclusion of the Armistice Agreement, the War remains ongoing in the form of an uneasy ceasefire on the Peninsula, the last residual Cold War order in Northeast Asia. As tensions soar in Northeast Asia due to the North Korean nuclear and missile issue, the memory of war and wounds become more pronounced, and hearts aspiring to peace pound painfully; this is the Republic of Korea on the Korean Peninsula in September 2017.

For me, the President of the only divided country, peace is a calling and a historical duty. I am representing my fellow citizens who sent out a message of peace through the candlelight revolution to the global village where wars and conflicts know no end. At the same time, I am entrusted with a responsibility to safeguard the people's rights to peace—to an undisturbed daily life—as a universal value.

For these very reasons, I hope North Korea will be able to choose on its own a path leading to peace. I believe peace when chosen willingly becomes sound and sustainable.

More than anything else, I am grateful that my convictions are joined by the international community.

Despite the international community's concerted demand and warnings, and to our great disappointment and indignation, North Korea recently carried out its sixth nuclear test and further missile provocations. In the wake of the nuclear test, the Korean Government has made enhanced efforts to convince countries in the region and beyond of the necessity for stronger sanctions and pressure to make North Korea stop its provocations and choose the path of dialogue.

I highly appreciate the U.N. Security Council's unanimous adoption of the North Korea sanctions resolution with unprecedented speed, and with tougher measures than previous resolutions. This clearly reflects that the international community is collectively outraged and is responding under one voice on the North Korean nuclear issue and on the problems occurring on the Korean Peninsula. Once again, as the party directly involved with issues concerning the Korean Peninsula, I would like to express my appreciation to the international community for its shared understanding and support towards the position of the Korean Government.

Despite North Korea's flagrant violation of its obligations and commitments under the U.N. Charter, the Korean Government and the international community are making every possible effort with great determination to peacefully solve the North Korean nuclear issue. The U.N. Security Council sanctions resolutions against North Korea, which have articulated the principles of a peaceful, diplomatic and political resolution of the North Korean nuclear issue, are also part of these efforts.

Once again here at the U.N. General Assembly where nations pledge actions for world peace and the mutual prosperity of all peoples, I make the following points very clear to North Korea and the international community.

We do not desire the collapse of North Korea. We will not seek unification by absorption or artificial means. If North Korea makes a decision even now to stand on the right side of history, we are ready to assist North Korea together with the international community.

North Korea should acknowledge all these immutable facts as soon as possible. It must immediately cease making reckless choices that could lead to its own isolation and downfall and choose the path of dialogue. I urge North Korea to abandon its hostile policies against other countries and give up its nuclear weapons program in a verifiable and irreversible way.

The efforts of the international community should also be further strengthened. It has to strongly and sternly respond until North Korea gives up its nuclear program of its own accord. All nations must thoroughly implement the U.N. Security Council sanctions resolutions and seek new measures in case of any further provocations by the North. It is also important to manage the situation in a stable manner. All of our endeavors are to prevent the outbreak of war from breaking out and maintain peace. In that respect, the situation surrounding the North Korean nuclear issue needs to be managed stably so that tensions will not become overly intensified or accidental military clashes will not destroy peace. We should all remind ourselves of what former U.S. President Ronald Reagan said: "Peace is not absence of conflict, it is the ability to handle conflict by peaceful means."

I would like to make a special request to the member states of the United Nations and in particular to the U.N. Security Council. In order to fundamentally solve the North Korean nuclear issue, the basic spirit of a security community enshrined in the U.N. Charter should be fulfilled on the Korean Peninsula and in Northeast Asia. The basic pillar of security in Northeast Asia and multilateralism should be wisely combined.

The spirit of the United Nations is to realize global peace through multilateral dialogue. The Korean Peninsula is where that spirit is most desperately needed. The realization of peace is the issue for which the United Nations was created, for which it is aiming and which it is in the process of achieving. We need the United Nations to play a more active role on the Korean Peninsula. The most important role the United Nations is asked to play today is to come up with fundamental measures to stop the vicious cycle of increased provocations and heightened sanctions.

On many occasions, I have announced a new economic map for the Korean Peninsula and a new vision for the northern economy. I believe that genuine peace and prosperity in Northeast Asia will begin when the foundation for a Northeast Asian economic community is solidified on one side and multilateral security cooperation is materialized on the other.

Distinguished President, Secretary-General and delegates,

The Olympics had not been held for as many as 1,500 years until it was reintroduced in 1896. The force behind the revival of the Olympics was the thirst for peace. The history of the modern Olympics started with the overwhelming

emotion of the first Olympics held in Athens on the Balkan Peninsula, which was once the center of conflicts.

Five months from now, the Olympic Winter Games will be held in PyeongChang, the Republic of Korea. It is the first of a series of Olympics to be held in Northeast Asia: PyeongChang in 2018, Tokyo in 2020 and Beijing in 2022.

I aspire for these three Olympics to become an opportunity for promoting peace and economic cooperation in Northeast Asia where the remnants of the Cold War and hope for the future as well as confrontation and cooperation coexist. The Republic of Korea is ready to make every possible effort for that.

Please imagine for a moment: People from all around the world who love peace and sports will be gathered in PyeongChang, which is only 100 kilometers away from the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ), the symbol of division and confrontation on the Korean Peninsula. Heads of states and governments from all corners of the world will exchange greetings of friendship and harmony. My heart is filled with great joy when I imagine North Korean athletes marching into the stadium during the opening ceremony, a South-North Korean joint cheering squad enthusiastically welcoming them alongside the brightly smiling faces of people from all over the world. It is not an impossible dream. To turn this into a reality, I will make wholehearted endeavors until the end in cooperation with the IOC in order to welcome the North Koreans to the PyeongChang Winter Olympics.

I hope that PyeongChang will become another candle to be lit. Like the candles the Korean people held out in the face of the crisis of democracy, I believe that PyeongChang will become a candlelight that sheds light on peace when peace is threatened.

I hope that all of you and the United Nations will light your candles. I hope you will put your hearts and minds together to go hand in hand with peace.

Today, with that heartfelt-pledge, I invite the heads of state and government from around the world to come to PyeongChang. The steps you take, together, will become a march for peace.

I look forward to seeing you all in PyeongChang next year.

Thank you very much.