



A Great People with New Dreams

President Lee Myung-bak
on the 63rd Anniversary of National Liberation and
the 60th Anniversary of the Founding of the Republic of Korea

A Great People, a History of Miracles

Fellow citizens, Korean compatriots residing overseas, patriots and veterans who dedicated themselves to the nation's independence and freedom, and distinguished guests from home and abroad,

Sixty years ago today, the establishment of the Government of the Republic of Korea was proclaimed on this very spot. That was a historic moment when the legacy of several thousand years of Korean history was passed on to the Republic of Korea from the Provisional Government and by the liberation of the nation.

A couple of years later, however, during the fratricidal war, the red flag of the North Korean Communists was hoisted right here. Even though the valiant members of our armed forces raised the Taegeukgi here again, the homeland was in complete ruins with millions of people having lost their lives.

A general who fought in the war viewed the ruins and remarked, "This country will not recover even in a hundred years." The Koreans, however, rose all over again. The size of the economy has grown 750 times since that time, and the per capita income has increased more than 300 times.

The development of Korea was not limited to economic growth alone. Having gone through the April 19 Student Revolution of 1960, the May 18 Democratization Movement in Gwangju in 1980 and the June 10 Democratic Struggle of 1987, human rights and democracy have taken deep root in the country. Korea hosted the Olympic Games and advanced into the semi-final round of the World Cup. The country even produced the Secretary-General of the United Nations. Hardships as well as twists and turns notwithstanding, Korea has continued to march forward.

I want to make it absolutely clear today. The 60 years since the founding of the Republic of Korea was a history of success. It was a history of progress. It was a history of miracles.

My great fellow Koreans,

Chapter by chapter, a history of miracles has been written by all the Korean people themselves. The masters of history are no other than the Korean people.

There were martyred patriots who sacrificed their lives for the independence of the country. There were countless unknown soldiers who fought in the Korean War and faced glorious and heroic deaths. Had it not been for their noble sacrifices, a free Republic of Korea would not have been possible.

Korean nurses and mineworkers had to leave the country to find jobs and toiled away in a foreign land far away from their home. Our sisters had to stay up numerous nights working at sewing machines to pay for the school tuitions of their brothers and sisters. Korean construction workers had to sweat profusely while doing back-numbing labor in the searing desert. Our parents worked their fingers to the bone in silence to educate their children. Had it not been for their endeavors, the miracle on the Han River would have never been possible.

Numerous students and citizens rose up against unjust dictatorial powers. The citizens took part in epoch-making elections casting invaluable votes. Had it not been for their courageous deeds, the Korean people would still have had a long way to go before achieving democratization.

The Korean people were united with one mind in the face of crisis. The more ordeals they suffered, the stronger they became. Ordinary citizens at the grass-roots level willingly offered their cherished gold ornaments to help the country tide over the financial crisis. Volunteer workers rushed to join forces in cleaning up the oil spill that washed ashore and completely covered the beaches of the Taean region. Had it not been for their voluntary help, today's Korea would not have been possible.

People often call a history of miracles a legend, but we all know well that those achievements are the actual products of our blood, sweat and tears.

My great fellow citizens,

I feel so proud of all of you indeed. Marking the 60th birthday of the Republic of Korea today, let us applaud our ancestors to show our gratitude. Let us applaud ourselves to show our pride and self-esteem. Let us applaud our descendants to encourage them.

I plan to build a museum of modern history in a bid to have our achievements go down in history and to ensure that those brilliant legacies are passed on. I will help turn the street from Gwanghwamun leading up to Sungnyemun into a representative symbol of the nation, thereby making it a new catalyst to raise our self-esteem and usher in a bright future.

Journey Toward Freedom

My proud fellow Koreans,

On the occasion of the 60th anniversary of the founding of the nation, I am once again resolutely determined that I will faithfully execute the duties of the President to promote freedom and welfare by solemnly upholding the provision of the Constitution that says, "The President shall have the responsibility and duty to safeguard the independence, territorial integrity, and continuity of the State and the Constitution."

New chapters of success in history will not be written by those who just sit idly by, but by those who actively engage in making things happen.

Freedom cannot be obtained for free. Over the past 60 years since the founding of the nation, we have stood tall and fought against all threats to safeguard the value of freedom.

We have fought against poverty to acquire economic freedom,

We have fought against oppression and dictatorship to acquire political freedom,

We have fought against discrimination to acquire social freedom, and

We have fought against prejudice to acquire cultural freedom.

Freedom is the air we breathe.

Our journey on the path to freedom is especially valuable as it gives shape to the universal values of all peoples. The freedom that we are pursuing should now become more encompassing and far-reaching.

Freedom can take root only in such values as autonomy, creativity, responsibility, trust, tolerance and cooperation. Freedom cannot blossom without happy families as well as warm and caring communities. Freedom cannot bear fruit without extensive opportunities for people to realize their full potential.

If the last six decades since the nation's founding have been spent achieving fundamental freedoms, the next 60 years should be dedicated to realizing freedom with responsibility. Only then will the founding of the Republic of Korea be completed.

Forging Another 60 Years

My fellow citizens,

Now, we are about to witness the advent of another 60 years. The era of freedom with responsibility will arrive. The door to the advancement we all aspire for will open wide.

We are all dreaming of an advanced nation standing tall in the international community where the happiness of each individual goes hand in hand with the progress of the nation and where material abundance strikes a balance with mental maturity. It will be a strong nation of an affluent people and a compassionate society. Such a nation will serve as a paragon for humankind and will be respected by other countries in the international community.

First and foremost, we have to reflect on what constitutes the very basics in order to build a top-notch, advanced nation. Without a substantial foundation, any drive to such goals would end up being a castle in the sand. Now is the time to make up for what we neglected or missed in the process of rapid, condensed economic growth.

The top priority will be placed on making sure that safety in our society is fully secured. The Republic now lags far behind advanced nations in terms of social safety. I will guarantee food safety without fail; I will relieve public anxiety. In addition, all possible measures will be mobilized to ensure that children and women are free of fear from violence and kidnappings.

Human security is no less significant than national security. Korea will be reborn as an advanced nation equipped with watertight safety in every corner of society, including daily life, industry and traffic.

It is also incumbent on us to promote trust in our society on a par with that of advanced nations. Among OECD nations, the Republic ranks the lowest in terms of trust between individuals, compliance with law and order, transparency in Government, ethical business management and industrial relations. The absence of trust in society deepens conflicts and makes integration less attainable. It leads to increases in the number of regulations and in transaction costs. In this regard, trust constitutes invaluable social and mental capital that cannot be exchanged for anything else.

The rule of law must also be guaranteed. To this end, laws and ordinances that are difficult to comply with will be revised. Laws and principles on which our society has agreed will be observed by all means. The Government will first make efforts to promote transparency. An environment where the leadership of the nation takes the initiative and sets a good example will be created. I will demonstrate in person that violations of the law by anyone, including myself, will not be tolerated. Amnesty was granted for the sake of a new start and national integration in commemoration of the 60th anniversary of the founding of the Republic. However, corruption and irregularities will no longer be tolerated during the remainder of my term in office.

Vision for Another 60 Years: Low Carbon, Green Growth

My fellow citizens,

Currently, the Korean economy is undergoing difficulties stemming from the energy crisis. The socio-economic divide and job shortages are putting an increasing burden on ordinary citizens. There is a growing sense of crisis that we might collapse. In order to weather through this crisis and jump over the threshold to advancement, more creative ideas and dauntless resolution are needed.

Now, we are witnessing changes in civilization. The world has gone through the stages of the agricultural, industrial and information revolutions. Now, it is entering the age of an environmental revolution. Leaving behind the era of wood, coal and oil, an age of new energy is now being opened.

For the Republic that does not produce even a single drop of oil, such changes are both a crisis and an opportunity as well. In retrospect, the Republic has exhibited great capacities in turning crises into opportunities. The Republic took the first oil shock as a springboard for its inroads into the overseas construction market and advancement of local industries. The second oil shock served as a catalyst for growth while pursuing stability and opening to the outside world. Now is the time for us to turn the recent surge in oil prices into an opportunity to transform economic fundamentals and create new growth engines.

Today, on the occasion of the 60th anniversary of the founding of the Republic of Korea, I want to put forward 'Low Carbon, Green Growth' as the core of the Republic's new vision. Green growth refers to sustainable growth which helps reduce greenhouse gas emission and environmental pollution. It is also a new national development paradigm that creates new growth engines and jobs with green technology and clean energy. Green technology puts together information and communications technology, biotechnology, nanotechnology and culture technology, and transcends them all. Green technology will create numerous decent jobs to tackle the problem of growth without job creation. The renewable energy industry will create several times more jobs than existing industries. In the information age, the gap between the haves and have-nots has widened. On the contrary, the gap will narrow down in the age of green growth.

Green growth will enable a Miracle on the Korean Peninsula to succeed the Miracle on the Han River. When the Republic first manufactured its own vehicles, the technology gap with the advanced countries amounted to at least 50 years. As far as semiconductors are concerned, it was more than 20 years behind. However, the Republic grew into a technology powerhouse, which ranks first in terms of producing semiconductors and ships, and fifth in automobiles. If we make up our minds before others and take action, we will be able to lead green growth and take the initiative in a new civilization. To do this, I will make sure that the country comes up with new green growth engines for the next generation to use for 10 to 20 years.

All-out Investment to Shift the Energy Paradigm

Fellow Koreans,

I am committed to ensuring energy security more than anything else with a view to laying the groundwork for green growth overcoming the energy crisis. The energy self-sufficiency rate is currently hovering around a mere 5 percent, but it will be increased to 18 percent during my term in office. The rate will eventually be raised to more than 50 percent by 2050, thus helping the country realize its ambition of becoming an energy independent nation, unfettering itself from the pain of energy shortages.

Exploration and research in the Arctic Ocean and Antarctic, which are thought to be a treasure trove of natural resources, will be actively conducted. By doing so, we will show the world that a spirit of adventure and creativity in pioneering uncharted territory runs in the Korean blood

The Government will make all-out investments to boost the use of new and renewable energy from the current 2 percent to more than 11 percent by 2030 and, ultimately, to more than 20 percent by 2050. R&D investments in green technology will be increased more than two times, thereby making Korea a leading powerhouse in the green technology market, which is expected to amount to 3 quadrillion won by 2020.

Every nook and cranny of the homeland, including Saemangeum, will be turned into a new world filled with flowers where solar, wind and tidal energy are fully utilized. The Government will carry out the Green Home Project so that one million homes will use new and renewable energy. New green energy technology for such things as pollution-free coal and light-emitting diodes will be developed.

In addition, great emphasis will be placed on nurturing eco-friendly and highly efficient green cars as one of the new growth engines. During my term in office, I will help empower Korea to emerge as one of the top four nations producing green cars in the world.

This year will be the beginning year for the country to move toward a low-carbon society in earnest based on a package of measures against climate change to be unveiled in September.

It is said that the Stone Age did not end for a lack of stone, and the oil age will end long before the world runs out of oil. Even if soaring oil prices drop in the years to come, now is the time for us to bid farewell to the era of excessive oil dependence

Admittedly, Korea has lagged behind in the carbon era, but the country should move a step ahead in the coming hydrogen era. The road ahead of us will be bumpy and will sometimes come to rivers with rapid currents and valleys that are deep and rough. There will also be difficult periods of suffering and undue inconveniences. If Korea makes an audacious and swift move just as it did to advance its information capabilities to make up for belated industrialization, the country will undoubtedly be reborn as a green power.

Enhancement of the Quality of Life and Welfare for the Underprivileged

My fellow citizens,

The aging population is posing yet another daunting challenge for us. The average life span of Koreans did not even reach 50 years in 1948. What mattered at that time was survival. Now, the average life expectancy in the country is surpassing 80 years. It is getting longer and longer. What really matters these days is not survival but the quality of life.

We need to formulate a new welfare model that will harmoniously combine work, education and leisure. A new job creation model should be devised to enable senior citizens to actively engage in economic activities. The centerpiece of national management will be placed on how to promote the happiness of individual members of society. To this end, the pace of the drive to achieve innovation in education, culture and welfare should be accelerated. I will certainly try to make people feel fortunate to have been born in the Republic of Korea and to live as Koreans.

The Government will remain committed to addressing the issue of an ageing society with fundamental countermeasures. On top of this, the Government will implement a great number of small but effective policies that will be of substantial help to ordinary people. By doing so, the Government will make sure that a small income does not constitute an obstacle in life.

The Government will ensure that poverty does not prevent students from learning. With the launch of the new Administration, students from the poorest families have already become eligible to receive full college scholarships. Those who are stricken with dementia and strokes will be taken care of by the state so that the Government will take the place of offspring who cannot afford to fulfill their filial duties. Through a five-year policy plan for people with disabilities, the Government will make sure that the physically challenged are able to live without inconvenience. The Government will take full responsibility for providing assistance for childcare so that families will not hesitate to have children and will be able to

bring them up well. Numerous cultural and sports facilities will be built in neighborhoods so that citizens may use them conveniently. Various regulations that cause inconvenience in daily lives will be removed immediately.

We will march forward step by step towards building a Korea in which human dignity is fully upheld, a Korea that is brimming with delights. Going beyond the era of success, we will usher in an era of happiness.

My fellow Koreans,

It is also especially important for Koreans to win respect in the international community. The value of Korea's national brand only accounts for approximately 30 percent of the nation's economic power, a proportion that is no more than a small fraction of that of the United States and Japan.

Korea is now one of the most advanced countries in the world in terms of manufacturing semiconductors. Nevertheless, the very first images that come to foreigners' minds are labor-management disputes and street rallies. In this context, if the nation wants to be labeled as an advanced country, it will be necessary to improve its image and reputation significantly.

To this end, I will establish a national brand committee under the Office of the President. During the remainder of my term in office, I will upgrade the value of the Korea's national brand so that it will be on a par with that of advanced countries. Now it is necessary for the nation to make friends with as many countries as possible in the global community. As part of these efforts, Korea will increase the amount of Official Development Assistance by a large margin and actively participate in U.N. peacekeeping operations. Based on valuable experiences we garnered in the course of development, Korea will work out a Global Korea Model to share with the world.

About 100,000 of the nation's young people will be sent to every nook and corner of the world, which will give them opportunities to work, learn and do volunteer service overseas. To help them play active roles in the global arena, the Government will establish a global network connecting them with 7 million Koreans living abroad.

One million foreign nationals reside in Korea. In this regard, the nation's immigration procedures and policies will be improved, thus facilitating the entry of the world's gifted into Korea for work and living. Though its territory is small, Korea will become a broad-minded nation.

Dream of a Unified Korea Advancing into the World

Fellow Koreans,

As we open another 60 years for the Republic, we have a new dream. That is that the 80 million Koreans living in the South and North will become one and forge ahead together in the international community. When the North joins in the flow of the global community, and consequently the two Koreas become one, the Korean people can step onto the center stage of the Eurasia-Pacific Age.

The countries on the Pacific Rim, including the United States, account for half of global production. Eurasia alone has more than half the world's total population, one third of global production and a half of international trade. The age of Eurasia and the Pacific is fully unfolding, indeed.

When the two Koreas become unified, the Korean Peninsula, which is now partially closed, will become a wide-open space. It promises to be the main gateway for prosperity linking the Eurasian continent to the Pacific Ocean by land, air and sea.

When that happens, a train leaving Busan with cargo will be able to travel the trans-continental railway all the way to Central Asia and Western Europe. Opening the age of the Pacific and the age of Eurasia simultaneously, a unified Korea will leap toward the center of the global community.

Fellow citizens of the Republic and compatriots in the North,

I want to share this dream with all the 80 million Koreans. There could be an alternative, but I do not want to go around the people in the North and leave them behind. I am not going to give up the dream of both Koreas living well together.

First and foremost for that to happen, permanent peace must be brought about. The nuclear weapons program, which is the source of distrust and conflict, has to be eliminated completely; it has to be replaced by programs and opportunities for mutual benefits and common prosperity. Last week, I met with U.S. President George W. Bush and expressed the hope that the North would become a responsible member of the global community as soon as possible and that Korea and the United States, along with the rest of the world, would be able to help the North actively through international financial organizations. Recently, there was a regrettable shooting death of a South Korean tourist at the Geumgangsan mountain resort. Despite that, I have expectations that Pyongyang will come forward for comprehensive dialogue and economic cooperation because now is the most opportune time for the North to make change.

In accordance with progress at the Six-Party Talks and through international cooperation, I intend to proactively carry out substantive economic cooperation programs with the North and ultimately materialize a Korean Peninsula economic community.

The future belongs to people with dreams. But just one dreamer is not good enough. When the 80 million Korean people dream the same dream, it will certainly be realized. Let us show our descendants how great the Korean people can be when they are united as one.

Fellow citizens,

Sixty-three years ago today, we achieved the independence of our homeland from oppressive Japanese imperialism. The main reason we lost our country was that we did not have enough strength to safeguard it ourselves.

To prevent such a tragic history from repeating itself, we should make our country rich and powerful with our own hands. By doing so, no country will dare covet our territory. Japan should face up to history and refrain from making the foolish mistake of repeating the unfortunate past again today.

A Great People with New Dreams

Fellow Koreans,

It is said that a rocket consumes 90 percent of its fuel during the launch. Once the rocket overcomes gravity and goes into orbit, it hardly needs fuel. The turning point could be likened to the watershed that distinguishes advanced nations and those that remain middle sized forever. If Korea can get past the critical point of US\$30,000 in per capita income, it should be able to open an era of US\$40,000 and US\$50,000 without too much difficulty. Now is a crucial time for Korea to soar into an advanced country. We cannot afford to miss this opportunity.

Fellow citizens,

Divided in frustration, we cannot accomplish our goals. We can only achieve the goal when we act with courage and harmony.

The world is now engaged in fierce competition for survival. We do not have time to lose mired in wasteful confrontation and conflict among ourselves. We have to turn our eyes to the world and to the future. Let us join forces to march toward the goal of becoming a leading, advanced nation.

By establishing a system of security, trust and rule of law, we will put a solid foundation in place to become an advanced nation. Our green growth strategy will enable us to be in the vanguard of the hydrogen era. The Government's policies that strike a chord with ordinary people in their everyday lives will allow us to pursue a happy life.

We all have to work together so that the children here will receive an education compatible with their aptitudes and qualifications. We have to help them grow into proud citizens of the world, planning the future of the global community.

We have to make certain that the freedom and prosperity our children will enjoy is greater and more rewarding than our generation had. Sixty years from now, our children should be able to tell their children that we provided this starting point for a new dream for the nation.

On this 60th birthday of the country, a history of miracles meets a new dream. The history of miracles will surely continue for another 60 years.

The legend of the Republic of Korea will continue,
The age of a great Korea will open,
The age of a unified Korea will open, and

The age of a great Korean people will open.

Let us all march forward together.

Thank you very much.¹

¹ http://www.dynamic-korea.com/news/view_issues.php?