

Remarks by H.E. Shin Kak-soo
Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs and Trade
Luncheon hosted in Honor of the Participants in the
UN Global Compact China-Japan-Korea Roundtable Conference
13 November 2009, Seoul

Mrs. Chen Ying (천 잉),

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Presidents of the UN Global Compact China, Japan, and Korea Networks,

Mr. Chey Tae-won (최태원), Board Member of the UN Global Compact,

Mr. Georg Kell(게오르크 켈), Executive Director of the UN Global Compact,

Distinguished Participants,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It gives me great honor and pleasure to speak at this truly meaningful gathering. I would like to extend the warmest of welcomes to all of you, and a special welcome to those from our close neighboring countries of China and Japan. I am very pleased to note that this is the first time for the China, Japan, and Korea Networks of the UN Global Compact to come together to share each others' experiences and insights.

(Global Compact in its 10th Year)

As the 10th anniversary of the UN Global Compact approaches, it is highly encouraging to see a thriving community of businesses with a growing commitment to social responsibility in East Asia.

Since the launch of the UN Global Compact in 2000, there have been remarkable advances in the collaboration between the United Nations and the private sector. With only 47 companies at its launch, the Global Compact now boasts a

considerable web of local networks across the world. Today, as the world's largest corporate citizenship initiative with over 7,000 corporate participants and stakeholders from over 130 countries, it has become a leading forum for businesses to voluntarily take part in fulfilling the vision of the United Nations, especially in the fields of human rights, anti-corruption, and the environment.

I firmly believe that the Global Compact is mutually beneficial to the UN and the private sector. By bringing the values of the United Nations to the activities of the private sector, it enables the UN to have a more direct impact on the daily lives of people. By the same token, it also helps the private sector, through strengthened partnership with the United Nations, to make a greater contribution to achieving sustainable prosperity and also to further enhance its public image.

(Climate Change and Water Issues)

This natural partnership has assumed even greater importance in the face of global challenges. In particular, as we look toward the Copenhagen Climate Change Conference next month, it is vital that businesses take an active role in addressing climate change, which is “the defining challenge of our time.”

Businesses have a key role to play in laying out the fabric of a low carbon economy and in promoting renewable energy. As demonstrated at the World Business Summit on Climate Change last May, businesses can also shape public opinion and influence policy makers. In this regard, I am pleased to note that the UN Global Compact has been at the forefront of these efforts, in particular through its “Caring for Climate” initiative.

When it comes to the issue of climate change, a crucial element is water, the most precious resource, vital for human life. As President Lee Myung-bak emphasized at this year's UN General Assembly, close to half of the world's population today suffers from water-related problems. Water resources management is now emerging as a top priority. And it is indeed encouraging to see that the UN Global Compact, through the “CEO Water Mandate,” is helping firms to pay greater attention to water sustainability policies and practices.

(Corporate Social Responsibility in Northeast Asia)

In the past, corporate social responsibility (CSR) was perceived as a Western initiative. Asian businesses were often viewed as taking little interest in this issue. Today, however, Northeast Asia is not only one of the most vibrant regions in the world economy, but is also becoming home to numerous businesses which are increasingly practicing and promoting corporate social responsibility. In the case of Korea, there has been a rapid increase in the number of investors, financial institutions and businesses joining in these efforts. Indeed, this is well illustrated by the fact that about 170 Korean companies have joined the UN Global Compact in a matter of few years.

(China-Japan-Korea Roundtable)

Ladies and Gentlemen,

With a keen interest in the evolving network of close cooperation among China, Japan and Korea, I wholeheartedly welcome this Roundtable Conference as the first of its kind. I am confident that this unprecedented gathering of CEOs and CSR experts from the three countries will prove to be yet another significant achievement in the UN Global Compact as it approaches its 10th anniversary.

I hope that the China-Japan-Korea Roundtable Conference launched today will generate valuable insights on how to best integrate the principles of the UN Global Compact into the business environments and with the values of our region.

Meeting regularly, this roundtable will contribute greatly to enhancing the values and practices of corporate social responsibility in Northeast Asia and beyond. It will also help the United Nations to fulfill its vision of a better world and better future. I wish all of you a pleasant stay in Korea and great success in all your endeavors. Thank you.

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