

Speech Anglo-Korean Society Dinner

Foreign &
Commonwealth
Office

Delivered on:

23 November 2012

Published:

23 November 2012

Minister:

The Rt Hon **Hugo Swire MP**

Foreign Office Minister Hugo Swire has talked about the UK and the Republic of Korea's close cooperation on international security, climate change and prosperity. Originally given at House of Lords. This is a transcript of the speech, exactly as it was delivered.



CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

Thank you Warwick for that introduction. I would also like to thank Baroness Perry, who is the reason we are able to meet here in Parliament.

It is a great pleasure to speak to you this evening, so soon after my visit to South Korea. It was a real thrill to set foot in Korea for the first time, and to do so as we prepare to mark 130 years of diplomatic relations.

The bonds between our two countries are longstanding-something I was reminded of recently when I heard of the Korean War Veterans Association's campaign to commission a war memorial here in Britain, which I am sure everyone in this room would support.

Over the past few decades the Republic of Korea has transformed itself. You have become the world's twelfth-largest economy and a member of the G20; the first nation to transition from aid recipient to membership of the OECD Donors Assistance Committee.

You are an economic miracle, a thriving democracy and a growing voice for good in the world today.

It is these characteristics that make it so important for Britain to build a strategic partnership with Korea - one in which we work together, across the board, to achieve our common goals.

We are, of course, watching the build-up to the Presidential elections with interest. It seems it will be a close contest. But regardless of who wins on 19 December, we look forward to continuing our close relationship with the new Korean government.

In the next few minutes I want to explain what we have done over the past year to consolidate and build our strategic partnership, but also to consider what more we need to do.

A new chapter in relations

The last twelve months have seen an unprecedented stepping up of co-operation between the United Kingdom and Korea.

We have deployed more diplomatic staff in Seoul, and British Ministers are visiting more frequently.

The Deputy Prime Minister, Nick Clegg, visited Korea in March, with Jeremy Browne following two months later. The then-Defence Minister Peter Luff was in Seoul in June; Energy and Climate Change Minister Greg Barker in October; and Lord Howell, the Foreign Secretary's personal adviser on energy and resource security, just last week. Korea was the first Asian country that I visited as a Foreign and Commonwealth Office Minister.

And we have hosted several high-profile Korean visitors here in London, including Trade Minister Bark, Deputy Minister for Political Affairs Kim Kyounghyun, your Six Party Talks representative Lim Sung Nam, and senior politicians Sohn Hak-kyu and KIM Moon Soo.

These expanded contacts have helped us to drive forward our relationship like never before.

The Host-to-Host agreement we signed in March is increasing commercial co-operation ahead of the 2014 Asian Games in Incheon, the 2015 World Student Games in Gwangju, and the Pyeongchang Winter Olympics in 2018. British company Populous designed the main stadium for the Asian Games, and others such as Colt are plugged into the Incheon supply chain. The success of the London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games has left us well-placed to share our experience and to win contracts.

On defence, we announced in March that Korean Daewoo Ship and Maritime Engineering would build four new tankers for the Royal Navy, a deal worth £460 million. Shortly afterwards Korea announced that Rolls Royce would supply engines for the next generation of Korean frigates, worth \$120 million. We hope to continue to expand this relationship.

In June we launched our joint Youth Mobility Scheme, an initiative which in 2013 will enable up to 1000 young people from Korea to live and work in the UK for up to two years. It grants the same rights to British young people, an opportunity I sincerely hope many will take advantage of.

And during my visit, I met some new North Korean settlers benefitting from our 'English for the Future' programme, which is helping to develop the English language skills they need to compete in today's jobs market.

But I believe we can do more.

Scope to do more on security

Working together to tackle pressing international problems should be a high priority.

This month's inaugural UK-Korea Strategic Dialogue, which I was pleased to attend the opening of, provided an excellent vehicle to begin this. It was also very timely, as Korea prepares to take its seat on the UN Security Council next year.

Central to our discussions were Security Council priorities such as the Middle East Peace Process, Syria, Iran and, of course, North Korea - on which I believe Britain can offer a valuable insight, given our presence in Pyongyang. Over the next year, I will be taking a personal interest in ensuring that the UK

works closely with Korea to progress our common concerns.

However, to have a truly strategic relationship we need to look beyond these immediate priorities to the issues that will affect us in the longer-term.

Climate change is perhaps the most important of these. By spending two percent of GDP on green growth every year for the past four years; by putting in place domestically-binding emissions targets; and by becoming the first Asian country to pass emissions trading legislation, Korea is showing strong regional leadership

Add to this your winning bid to host the Green Climate Fund, and the successful launch of Global Green Growth Institute, and it is clear that you are not just regional leaders on climate change - you are global leaders. New Song Do will be an excellent location for the Green Climate Fund, and I am delighted that Britain will take on the role of Vice President of the Global Green Growth Institute Assembly.

But there are other issues to focus on too. I strongly believe that South Korea can be a powerful voice on human rights, for example - in its neighbourhood and beyond.

We have a shared commitment to international peacekeeping, having both contributed to efforts in Afghanistan, Lebanon, Haiti and the Horn of Africa. The Korean National Assembly's recent decision to deploy a contingent of military engineers to South Sudan is welcome. I hope that Korea will continue to expand its efforts in this area.

The UK and Korea are active international donors, so we have a shared interest in ensuring that aid is used effectively. Korea is uniquely placed, given its own experience of development, to play a key role in the dialogue between developing and donor countries to help us achieve this.

We should also work more closely on cyber security. It will not be easy to find an international consensus on rules of the road to guide future behaviour in cyberspace, and to combat the worst abuses of it. But the active engagement of countries like yours will help to take us a step closer. We are looking forward to the cyber conference in Korea next year.

Closer partners for prosperity

On the prosperity agenda, too, we have much to gain from closer co-operation.

I returned from Korea last month fascinated by the sheer dynamism of its economy. I am keen to make more British companies excited by the opportunities this dynamism creates - especially new exporters and SMEs.

With that in mind, I am pleased that next February, UK Trade and Investment will run a week-long series of events across Britain, 'Opportunity Korea', aiming to do just that. British companies are already coming on board and I am personally keen to play a part in ensuring its success.

Nevertheless, we need your help to spread the message that Korea is a place with opportunities worth exploring. I would encourage businesses here today with experience of Korea to get involved.

The EU-Korea Free Trade Agreement could also provide a significant boost to our commercial relationship. Of course, it needs to be implemented in a way that does not harm business, but if we get it right it could add £49 billion to EU Korea bilateral trade over the next 20 years.

A common understanding

As we work more together, our countries are also developing a greater common understanding. That is important because, like any relationship, you work best together when you know each other.

At the start of this year, our Embassy in Seoul commissioned a survey of Korean views of the UK. There were some hugely positive messages to come out of this - not least that participants between the ages of 18 and 30 identified Britain as their favourite overseas country. The enthusiasm for the UK - a genuine warmth I felt when I visited - was clear to see.

Unsurprisingly, the survey also brought out traditional themes. People identified Britain as a "nation of gentlemen" - with grand architecture, a Royal Family and dreary weather. English football's Premier League also made an appearance, as did Harry Potter.

However, the stereotype extended into slightly more unhelpful territory. That behind our castle walls, we Brits are technophobes lacking in creativity and ideas.

London 2012 started to challenge these perceptions, showing what today's Britain is really like: diverse, open, connected, creative, dynamic. I know that message was not lost on our Korean friends.

And shortly after the international spotlight had been fixed on the UK, it shifted quickly East - to Korea, to Seoul, and, ultimately, to Gangnam.

I am talking, of course, about K-pop sensation 'Psy', whose "Gangnam Style" has taken the world, and Britain, by storm.

People across the globe - from members of our Royal Family to the UN Secretary General - have been embracing the rapper's equestrian dance moves. You will be relieved to hear that I will not be inflicting my own rendition upon you this evening.

But being serious for a moment, I think that Psy's music has given the world, and people here in Britain, a glimpse of the dynamism and vibrancy of modern Korea. It has shown a nation of colour, creativity and confidence.

And so I would like to end today by saying that I see Psy's success as representing just one small fragment of today's Global Korea.

You are already a world leader in the business world, with companies like Hyundai, Kia, LG and Samsung, household names. As "Gangnam Style" has demonstrated, your music is global too.

But it should not stop there, and I don't think it will. With your membership of the G20, your forthcoming role on the UN Security Council and your leadership on issues like climate change - you are becoming a truly global nation in the political sphere.

As you look to the years ahead, I hope you will view Britain as one of your closest partners. I am sure that the Anglo-Korean Society will help to ensure that you do.