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Institute for Security and Development Policy (ISDP) Korea Center

Purpose/Goals

In line with the overarching goal of contributing to sustainable and peaceful development on the Korean Peninsula, the Stockholm Korea Center seeks to:

Provide a platform for constructive dialogue and exchange between policy makers, think tanks, and research organizations for promoting information exchange and building mutual understanding, with a focus on regional security, peacebuilding, and denuclearization on the Korean Peninsula;

Contribute to examining how Korea and the Nordic region interrelate on issues of global security and sustainable development, in particular by fostering the Nordic-Korean transfer of knowledge and cooperation in areas of non-traditional security, including environment, gender, governance, and social development;

Promote greater awareness and a more balanced knowledge of contemporary Korean politics, society, and economy in the Nordic region.

Activities

Peace and Security

Sweden possesses a strong track record in global peace activities, including its efforts to promote peace and stability on the Korean Peninsula. Since the end of the Korean War, Sweden has played a leading role in the Neutral Nations Supervisory Commission (NNSC) in the Demilitarized Zone between the two Koreas. Furthermore, Sweden established the first embassy from a democratic country in Pyongyang in 1975, while diplo-

matic relations between Sweden and South Korea were established already in 1959. Concerning mediation diplomacy, former Swedish Prime Minister Göran Persson's visit to North Korea as a member of an EU delegation in May 2001 was followed immediately afterwards by a visit to South Korea. This visit not only helped ease tensions on the Korean Peninsula, but also opened the door for the EU to become more actively involved in matters concerning both North and South Korea. Sweden has accordingly been acknowledged as an important and trustworthy partner by both Koreas.

Over the past decade, leveraging its position as a Swedish think tank, ISDP has established functional networks with scholars, think tanks, and policy makers both in Seoul and Pyongyang. Since 2007, ISDP has had a partnership agreement with the Institute for Disarmament and Peace (IDP) – the think tank of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) foreign ministry. This has further allowed ISDP to gain useful on-the-ground contacts in North Korea, including the Ministry of Environment and Land Protection, the Ministry of External Economic Affairs, and the North Korean Institute of Social Science, among others. Moreover, in 2016 ISDP established a new partnership with the Korea National Peace Committee (KNPC) under the Korean Workers' Party. Meanwhile, ISDP has also forged strong cooperative partnerships with South Korean organizations, which include The Korean Institute for Defence Analysis (KIDA), The Korean Institute for National Unification (KINU), The Institute of Foreign Affairs and National Security (IFANS), as well as various government ministries, including the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Unification, the Ministry of Land, Infrastructure and Transport, the Ministry of Environment, and the Ministry of Justice.

Cooperation with both South and North Korean experts and policy makers is fundamental to ISDP's analytical work on the Korean Peninsula, its facilitation of dialogues, and hosting of visiting researchers. Accordingly, the Stockholm Korea Center, bolstered by Swedish diplomacy and efforts in promoting peace and stability on the Korean Peninsula, is well-positioned to bring policy makers and academics who are close to both governments to the table in order to provide a platform for debate and communication on important bilateral issues. Furthermore, with its established networks among prominent think tanks and research organizations in the United States, China, Japan, Russia, and the EU, the center is also able to bring other important stakeholders to the table. We believe that such expert dialogue channels help to better inform policy in each country and thus serve the overarching aim of contributing to a long-

term trust-building process on the Korean Peninsula.

Sustainable Development

South Korea faces not only serious external traditional security threats but also domestic challenges, which include an ageing population, social welfare, gender issues, economic democratization, climate change and environmental problems. In recent years, South Korea has become increasingly interested in the Nordic, and in particular, Swedish socio-economic development model. From innovation and welfare to political and environmental governance, there are many potential lessons which could be of great value to future domestic reforms in South Korea.

Furthermore, as economically and technologically advanced democratic societies, the Nordic region and South Korea possess large potential for deepening relations. In spite of this, mainly for historical and geographical reasons, exchanges between Nordic and South Korean researchers and policy makers have not reached their full potential. With the aim of strengthening cooperative relationships between South Korea and the Nordic region, the center serves as a platform for exchanging knowledge and information on issues of mutual concern, with particular focus on the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Expected Outcomes

In sum, as a hub for policy-oriented research and exchange, the center expects to contribute to the following outcomes:

Better-informed policymaking between North and South Korea, as well as other relevant stakeholders on the Korean Peninsula, and the identification and promotion of constructive steps to advance the peace and denuclearization process.

A deepening and expansion of information exchange, dialogue, and research cooperation between Nordic and Korean research and policy institutions on issues of mutual policy relevance, with particular emphasis on Nordic and European lessons applicable to supporting peaceful and sustainable development on the Korean Peninsula.

An increased awareness, interest, and informed understanding of contemporary Korean politics and society among a Nordic audience of analysts, policy officials, journalists, and academics.