

**Remarks by H.E. Park Geun-hye  
President of the Republic of Korea  
At the Official Welcoming Ceremony  
January 20, 2014**

Your Excellency President Didier Burkhalter,  
Members of the Federal Council,  
Ladies and gentlemen,

I am delighted to be here in Bern, an enchanting city whose Old Town is designated as a UNESCO World Heritage Site. I am grateful for the warm hospitality accorded to me and my delegation.

What makes this visit unique is that it marks the first State Visit to the Swiss Confederation by a President of the Republic of Korea in all the 50 years since our two countries established diplomatic relations.

The relationship between the Republic of Korea and the Swiss Confederation has a very special beginning.

In June of 1953, a time when Korea was devastated by the War, some 100 members of the Swiss armed forces set foot on Korea as members of the Neutral Nations Supervisory Commission.

Our two countries have built on those early links and formally opened diplomatic relations in 1963. Over the subsequent five decades, we have seen our friendship and cooperation advance steadfastly.

I express my gratitude to the government and the people of Switzerland for their contributions to peace and stability on the Korean Peninsula throughout the last sixty years.

Korea and Switzerland may be far apart geographically, but they are bound together by a number of commonalities.

Despite the challenging topography of its mostly mountainous terrain, Switzerland has achieved great prosperity by cultivating excellence among its human resources and through endless creation and innovation.

Switzerland has among the highest number of Nobel laureates per capita in the world. It ranks number one in the world in terms of global competitiveness and on the global innovation index. All of these underscore the extraordinary potential of the Swiss people.

Similarly, the Republic of Korea lifted itself up from the unfavorable circumstances of having little natural resources to speak of and a country ravaged by war. But by pooling the strengths of its people and working tirelessly to develop its economy, Korea has emerged as the eighth largest trading nation in the world today.

Both countries are situated in the midst of great powers and have long prevailed over challenges from the outside.

Through its neutrality, Switzerland has epitomized a commitment to world peace. This is built upon the conviction that its security rests in its own hands and the impenetrable readiness maintained by the Swiss people.

Korea also has a long history of struggling to safeguard its independence amidst great powers. Today, the Republic of Korea continues to maintain a robust security posture in the face of ongoing provocations and threats from North Korea.

Going further, Korea is working to lay the foundations for peaceful unification.

Against the backdrop of these similar historical, industrializing experiences, I hope we can use this visit to mark the beginning of our journey together toward a new era.

Four of the seven members of the Swiss Federal Council have visited Korea in recent years, personally bearing witness to the need for and promise of greater cooperation between our two countries.

I am confident that my visit will create important momentum for taking the relationship between Korea and Switzerland to the next level across a wide range of areas including not only trade and investment, but also science and technology, vocational education, pharmaceutical and tourism sectors.

I convey once again my appreciation to the President and the Members of the Federal Council for the warm welcome. May this State Visit mark a precious landmark on our journey towards the next fifty years.

Thank you.