

Remarks made
by
H.E. Mr. Meles Zenawi,
Prime Minister of the Federal Democratic
Republic of Ethiopia
at the
CHOONG CHEONG FORUM

Seoul - November 11, 2010

Your Excellencies,

I am very pleased to be here with you today and to share with you my thoughts on the theme of the discussion of our forum. Allow me to specify the theme a little more and focus on Korea-Africa cooperation.

50 years ago, in 1960 a large number of African states became independent ushering in the era of independence in the continent. In the same year South Korea was facing serious economic and social challenges. In economic terms it was poorer than many of the newly independent states. Indeed some observers including a US Congressional delegation that visited South Korea at the time had come to a premature conclusion that the country was more or less a basket case.

50 years later we can now see that South Korea is an advanced country with cutting edge technology, a dynamic economy, a stable democracy and a visible example of the rags to riches story of the most successful development experience in the 20th Century. Indeed countless books have been written about the miracle of South Korea, and a whole theory of developmental states has been crafted on the basis of that experience. Unfortunately many of the African countries who had higher per capita incomes than South Korea in 1960 have failed to live up to the expectations of the day and many observers are saying about these countries what they said of South Korea in 1960 that they are basket cases.

Korea's current status as a dynamic and advanced economy and its defiance of received wisdom that it was a hopeless case through its most successful development experience must constitute one pillar of South Korea-Africa cooperation. Korea must based on its experience, declare that no nation is necessarily a basket case so long as that nation can garner the political will not only to survive but also to thrive. Korea must share its development experience with African countries, so that Africans can select and adapt what is useful to them. In so doing it must, at the same time, reject economic dogmas that are imposed on African countries from outside the continent as it rejected these dogmas when some tried to impose it on itself. Korea's voice in favor of each country charting its development course independently, and to protect each country's right to select and adapt lessons of development independently has a unique force because of its unique history and experience. Such advocacy on behalf of and in support of African development must therefore constitute one of the distinguishing characteristics of South Korea-Africa cooperation.

South Korea has received significant external economic assistance from the end of the Second World War to the late sixties. It has made excellent use of such assistance in the latter period to quickly outgrow the need for such assistance. In the earlier years, however, the impact of development assistance on Korea was not as positive as it was in the latter years. South Korea thus knows better than almost anyone else what type of external assistance works and what does not work. It knows better than almost everyone else how to make good use of such assistance. South Korea is now rich enough to provide development assistance of various types. It must do so on the basis of the lessons of its own successful experience. It must provide the type of assistance that can overtime obviate the need for such assistance. It must raise its voice to reform and improve the global development aid industry with the view to making it really helpful to African

countries and should lead by example. I believe this can and ought to constitute the second distinguishing characteristics of South Korea-Africa cooperation.

The current global environment cannot but substantially influence South Korea-Africa cooperation. It is an environment where new centers of economic dynamism such as Korea have emerged in Asia with massive savings that used to flow to the older centers of economic power but are no longer needed there. It is also an environment where Africa's natural resources are in greater demand than ever but where lack of adequate savings is constraining Africa's development. There is thus obvious complementarity between Asia in general and Korea in particular and Africa that can be the basis of a mutually beneficial partnership. Africa needs Korean investments in infrastructure, manufacturing and the development of natural resources. Korea needs African market, natural resources to continue its extra-ordinary growth. This can and ought to be a third distinguishing characteristic of our cooperation.

Your Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen.

I am very pleased to note that South Korea has already started doing all of the things that I have suggested today. South Korea's sponsorship of the development of poorer countries in the context of the G-20 is a case in point. Thanks to South Korea, among others, the G-20 has for the first time taken up the issues of growth and development in least developed countries. South Korea has taken a leading role in charting a new and progressive agenda for growth and development. South Korea has put its money where its mouth is and is assisting many African states in a manner that is consistent with the framework that is expected to be endorsed by the G-20 in its Seoul Summit. We Africans can thus say thank you to South Korea for its support and cooperation and encourage it to stay the course in spite of obstacles that will inevitable emerge.

We Ethiopians have longer and deeper cooperation with South Korea than most other Africans. Ethiopia was one of the nations that sent its troops under the auspices of the United Nations to assist South Korea in its hour of need. South Korea has provided substantial assistance to Ethiopia's development and South Korean companies are beginning to enter the Ethiopian market in a very significant manner. We thus have the basis to forge a partnership that can be a model for South Korea-Africa cooperation. We are eager to build on what we have achieved so far and to contribute to the further development of South Korea-Africa cooperation. I am convinced that such cooperation will be one of the defining features of the 21st Century.

I wish to thank you all for your kind attention.