

Greetings from the Host

Yoshihisa Baba

President
Soka University

I would like to express my joy in holding the first Peace Forum today with Kyungnam University President Park Jae-kyu, who I respect, and researchers from Kyungnam University and Chinese Culture University.

I would also like to express my sincere gratitude to the people of Onna Village, where today's forum is being held, as well as the researchers and educators representing Okinawa and everyone else who have supported this forum in one way or another.

This Peace Forum is being held based on the agreement between the presidents of Soka University, Kyungnam University, and Chinese Culture University so as to conduct joint research aimed at promoting peace in Asia and around the world.

President Park Jae-kyu of Kyungnam University proposed this joint research. He visited Okinawa in March last year and toured the Training Center in Onna Village along with the old war sites. When he visited Mabuni Hill, he learned that the names of people from South Korea and North Korea that died in the war are separately engraved on the Cornerstone of Peace, and he felt very sad to know there is a "38th parallel" even at Peace Memorial Park, which equally commemorates all those killed during the war. Thus, he called for action to create peace, starting here in Okinawa.

President Park Jae-kyu has been dedicating himself to end the tragedy of the Korean Peninsula, where the country's division continues even 25 years after the end of the Cold War. Not only has he worked as Minister of Unification in South Korea, he has worked to train the younger generation at Kyungnam University. The Institute for Far Eastern Studies at the university is well known around the world as the top research institute for the situation on the

Korean Peninsula. It was the Chinese Culture University of Taiwan that connected Soka University, a university still short in history, to this world-famous research and educational institute.

Chinese Culture University was established by Dr. Chang Chi-yun, who has contributed as Minister of Education to the development of the education system in Taiwan. It is a prestigious university that houses the widest range of faculties and departments in Taiwan, and has fostered many worthy graduates. As its name suggests, the university has expanded its network of education and peace through “culture.” As part of these efforts, the university has hosted the Peace Ideals Research Forum with invited researchers coming from within and outside Taiwan. President Park came to know about Soka University through this forum and quickly developed a friendship with us.

Despite the existence of Kyungnam University and Chinese Culture University, universities that are contributing to the creation of peace in Asia through academic and educational exchanges based on the initiatives taken by President Park and President Lee, division and conflict still exist in the Asian region and around the world.

In this symposium, we will have discussions based on the themes of “passing down stories of war experiences” and “building peace across the sea.” Even in Okinawa, which is said to have particularly extensive peace education, the difficulty of “passing down experiences of war” has been pointed out. It is important to accurately record the historical facts and properly pass down the memories of war victims with the aim of creating peace, while accepting their pain, suffering, anger, and sorrow. I look forward to the results of the research on how this can be made possible.

On the other hand, there are heightened military tensions on the Korean Peninsula and in Northeast Asia, and the countries involved have mentioned the use of force. Fortunately, many people are carefully observing without being disturbed by such widely talked-about crises. In a time like this, we are required to creatively overcome the differences and confrontations, based on “culture of peace.” I hope the top-class researchers in each field who are gathered here today will discuss the possibility of a creative solution to these difficult issues.

Although today, various groups oppose each other around the world in the field of international politics, the Ryukyu Kingdom once prospered as a “bridge of nations” that connected Asian countries via the ocean. Lastly, hoping that this Peace Forum held today here in Okinawa, the place that connects the world, will be extended from our three universities to the universities and researchers in Okinawa and throughout Asia, I would like to end my words. Thank you.