

Congratulatory Address

I would like to extend my sincere congratulations for the Global Forum on Modern Direct Democracy.

Korea's democratization movement from the 1960s-80s has been highly esteemed throughout the world. The nation has established a towering example for third-world democratization movements, because its democratic advancement was achieved through the people's tireless, unyielding struggle. The Koreans are highly proud of the fact that they have made such a great history. That pride is part of the driving force for the continuous development of Korean democracy.

The very process of the 1980 tragedy in Gwangju being formally named as the May 18 Democratization Movement is particularly meaningful. The Gwangju Uprising is regarded as a historic turning point in Korea's democratization, reunification, and social progression movements. During those turbulent 10 days, citizens fought the military's containment and extremely cruel oppression while maintaining a community of autonomy and sharing which was so orderly that no act of pillage occurred. The struggle remains a preeminent example of democratic development and a symbol of the people's resistance against tyranny worldwide. It can be said that the spirit of sharing, autonomy, and solidarity of Gwangju is associated with the spirit of direct democracy.

This forum, meant to share new models and experiences in direct participatory democracy, is particularly meaningful for Koreans who face the task of developing their democracy after democratization. In this regard, I am very pleased that the Global Forum on Modern Direct Democracy is taking place in Seoul.

I hope that the forum will offer an opportunity for all participants to have in-depth discussions, paving the way for a broad solidarity and sharing their passions and hopes with Koreans. I would like to express my gratitude to the Korea Democracy Foundation and the Initiative and Referendum Institute Europe which worked hard to prepare this precious opportunity. To all the participants striving for the development of democracy I wish success and good health.

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