Global Sustainability and Peace and the Role of Ewha Womans University

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Dr. Bae-Yong Lee is currently the president of the world's largest women's university, Ewha Womans University, established in 1886 in Seoul, Korea. President Lee received her B.A. (1969) and M.A. (1971) at the College of Liberal Arts, Ewha Womans University, in the field of History. After her studies at Ewha Womans University, she received her Ph.D. in Literature at Sogang University. Since 1985, President Lee has served on the faculty of the Department of History, and has held various positions including the Dean of College of Liberal Arts, the Director of the School of Continuing Education, and the Director of the Korean Women's Institute. In August 2006, Ewha Womans University announced the appointment of Dr. Bae-Yong Lee as its thirteenth president.

Since taking office, President Lee has launched "Initiative Ewha," a new vision for the university, and is boldly pushing ahead with the "Global Ewha 2010 Project" to raise Ewha to the level of a prestigious world-class university equipped for the best in research and education. Among the agendas of this project, the establishment of a global campus network has had major impact in Korea's academia with its goal of expanding Ewha's network of higher knowledge across the world through active exchange with prestigious universities in the U.S., Europe and Asia. Ewha's recent efforts in globalization has placed the school at 4th place
among Korean universities in the 2009 QS Asian University ranking, carried out in association with The Chosun Ilbo, Korea's largest newspaper. In this evaluation, Ewha was rated among the top schools in indicators related to internationalization and research quality.

President Bae-Yong Lee is a renowned scholar in the field of Korean History and has held various positions including the President of the Association for the Study of Korean History of Thoughts (2003-2004), and the President of the Korea Women's Historical Studies Association (2004-2006). President Lee has broaden the horizon of the Joseon Dynasty's Modernization with publications such as, "A Study on the Mining Industry in Korea During the Japanese Occupation," Ilchokak, 1989, and "History of Korean Social Thought," Jisik Sanup Publications, 1996 (joint authorship). Through her writings such as "How Did Korean Women Live?" Chungnyunsa, 1999 (joint authorship), and "Women in Korean History," Eojini, 2005, President Lee is recognized for having exposed the history and stories of Korean women to the public research arena at a time when the topics were hidden and shunned within the Korean society. An English translation of "Women in Korean History" was published in 2008, making it the first scholarly book on the history of Korean women available in English.

In addition to her endeavors as Ewha's president and academic, Dr. Lee is also actively involved in various other administrative roles and public service. Most recently, she was appointed the Chairperson of the Korean Council for University Education (KCUE), a role that puts her at the forefront of policy-making in Korea's higher education as liaison between the government and the schools. She has served as the President of the Korean Council for Presidents of Private Universities (KSPPU), and Vice-Chairperson of the KCUE and also on President-elect Lee Myung-bak's Advisory Committee. She is currently a member of the Presidential Committee on Social Cohesion, the Cultural Heritage Administration's Historic Sites Division Committee, Advisory Committee of The Constitutional Court, the Committee for the Establishment of the Museum of the Republic of Korea and the Unification Advisory Council.

As a leading scholar in the field of Korean studies, Dr. Lee lectures widely at universities around the world.
Foreword:

Honorable President Judy Genshaft, Director Christian Wells, Members of the faculty, Students, And ladies and gentlemen,

Let me first express my deepest appreciation to all of you. It is a great honor and pleasure to receive the President’s Global Leadership Award, and I would like to thank President Genshaft and the School of Global Sustainability for giving me this prestigious award.

This award holds particular meaning for me, because it comes from the University of South Florida which is the sister school of Ewha Womans University, and because this is an award that recognizes global leadership – the most important quality that I have been constantly emphasizing to our students at Ewha. When events and relationships tie people together like this, we call it ‘in-yeon’ in Korea. I am thankful for this award, and that USF and Ewha have this ‘in-yeon’ that binds us together.

I also offer sincere congratulations on the opening of the international School of Global Sustainability at USF. Sustainability is value that is at the heart of the global community and I wish you the best of success in the future as you take leadership on this issue. And I hope that the program continues to grow and expand to include undergraduate and doctoral courses as well.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Sustainability has emerged as the most urgent global issue in the 21st century. Sustainability aims at restoring balance in the human, social, economic and ecological world. Key challenges include overcoming
disparities that polarize classes, regions, and nations; seeking ways of development that benefits both man and nature; and finally, pursuing greater world peace through such efforts.

Sustainability came to the forefront as early as 2000, when the UN Millennium Summit identified it a key task requiring global cooperation. At this Summit, the representatives of 191 nations, including heads of state of 147, adopted the Millennium Declaration, and with it, the Millennium Development Goals, or MDGs, which set specific targets and actions to achieve sustainability.

The MDGs, are ambitious goals aimed at freeing the larger part of the world from extreme hunger, poverty, illiteracy and disease, and consists of eight goals. These are:

First, to eradicate extreme poverty and hunger,
Second, to achieve universal primary education,
Third, to promote gender equality and empower women,
Fourth, to reduce child mortality,
Fifth, improve maternal health,
Sixth, combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases,
Seventh, ensure environment sustainability,
Eighth, to develop a global partnership for development.

The MDGs hold great significance, as they present quantifiable targets to be achieved collectively by the international community, and because the goals provide a direction for future development cooperation.

With five years left until the 2015 deadline, MDG results vary depending on region and subject. For example, deaths from AIDS have decreased
significantly, and the mortality rate for malaria and measles has been greatly reduced as well.

It appears, however, unlikely that the absolute poverty level in the sub-Saharan region will be reduced to half by 2015. And one-quarter \((1/4)\) of children in developing countries are still underweight. Meanwhile, in the area of gender equality and women’s empowerment, only 53 out of 171 nations have achieved gender equality in terms of enrollment rates for primary and middle schools. In developing countries, one-half \((1/2)\) of the population is exposed to unsanitary living conditions, one-third \((1/3)\) of the urban population reside in slums, and increasing CO2 emission levels are yet to be addressed.

At the same time, the level of ODA from developed countries continues to decline due to the financial crisis, while the 2005 G8 Glen Eagles Plan which will expand assistance to Africa has yet to be implemented. We also face new challenges, including recent increases in the frequency and intensity of natural disasters resulting from climate change, and the worsening poverty situation due to surging food prices.

Unless we succeed in addressing poverty, climate change and other environmental issues through sustainable development, we will not be able to achieve the peace we desire for the 21st century – the peace based on justice, balance, and reconciliation.

Distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen,

‘Peace’ in the 20th century simply meant a ‘passive’ state of non-war. Such peace can be achieved by an international balance of power. In reality, however, the balance cannot be achieved by all countries possessing equal
power. Instead, peace is usually achieved by the overwhelming force of a few powerful nations. The bipolar system pillared by the United States and former Soviet Union in the mid-20th century was such a case.

But peace sustained by hegemonic nations' military force and strategic arrangements is losing relevance in the current age where countries are armed with nuclear weapons. While large-scale conventional wars may be avoided, the risk of nuclear war is constantly present due to the inherent paradox of nuclear strategies. Furthermore, globally dispersed local wars and terrorism still remain a threat to world peace.

And major underlying causes of war, such as extreme poverty, unsanitary conditions, political oppression, cultural alienation, and racial discrimination still persist. These are by themselves violence. They limit physical and moral freedom and undermine peace.

As we enter the 21st century, the idea of peace is no longer confined to a passive state, void of war. It is being expanded to mean an active state of peace and stability. Realizing a sustainable global society is a positive action that can bring about this kind of peace. This is why I as well as everyone here need to join in the global effort to achieve the MDGs and sustainable development.

The founding spirit of Ewha were the pursuit and reverence for the Truth in God, selfless love for greater Goodness, and Beauty of balance and harmony that comes from compassion for others.

These were the ideals that guided us since the school was founded in 1886. Our lofty goal has always been directed toward building a peaceful society based on the betterment of women's lives and gender equality. Over
the past 124 years, Ewha grew to become the largest women's university in the world and made a mark in the Korean and international society. In this process, we leveraged the feminine qualities to our advantage—qualities such as gentleness, meticulousness, imaginativeness, integrity, diversity, philanthropy, foresight, and the spirit of challenging the unknown. These qualities may be intangible, but they are true values and the force that propelled Ewha forward for the past 124 years. These are qualities that Ewha offers to the nation and the world.

After I took office as the President in 2006, Ewha Womans University I launched the 'Initiative Ewha' which aims at nurturing talents capable of exercising global leadership. These women will have the capacity to lead people of many nationalities, while never losing respect, sensitivity, and tolerance. These women will be creative, qualified professionals who have multicultural understanding and knowledge. To this end, we have been focusing on well-rounded education, character building, broad-based international curricula, global networking with many schools, attracting foreign students, and transforming Ewha into an international hub for higher education.

Academically, we are engaged in a number of joint researches and authorships with eminent scholars from all over the world. These include: Mohammed Yunus, the 2006 Nobel Peace Prize Laureate, Robert H. Grubbs, the 2005 Nobel Laureate in Chemistry, George Smoot, the 2006 Nobel Laureate in Physics, J.M.G Le Clézio, the 2008 Nobel Laureate in Literature, Jane Goodall, Francis Fukuyama and other distinguished international scholars. The students at Ewha have the privilege of learning from these world-renowned scholars, and thanks to such efforts, Ewha Womans University was ranked 4th among Korean universities by the Asian College Rankings.
We are also expanding our campus footprint. Ewha will be building a new campus in Paju, a city situated north of Seoul. Paju is very close to the demilitarized zone that divides North and South Korea. Many historical legacies attesting to the tragic division remain in this region; such as the 'Bridge of Freedom' where 12,773 prisoners of war crossed South to freedom during the war; the Kyong-in railway that was disconnected by bombing; the 'Bridge of Death' named in memory of the US soldiers who were gunned down by North Korean troops; and the 'underground tunnel number three' dug by North Korean operatives to infiltrate across the demarcation line.

At the center of the campus is situated the former military base Camp Edwards, where the US engineer company was stationed since 1954. Ewha's Paju Campus will be recorded as the first case where a university moves into a former US military base site.

The new campus in Paju built on a site that represented war and division is symbolic for us. It is our way of preparing for the future when our country will be unified. It embodies Ewha's great hope for national unification and lasting peace in the world.

As the only divided nation still remaining on earth, it is impossible for Koreans to think of sustainability apart from national unification. Because, the nation is still technically at war, there will always be a possibility of another breakout of war on the peninsula. Division prevents us from fully utilizing our land, natural resources, and human resources. And they are still many families who remain separated. These are fundamental issues that cannot be resolved. North Korea's severe food shortage, dire state of public health and education, and the human rights issue all need to be addressed as humanitarian issues, because we are of the same nation. In fact, all these
problems resonate with the Millennium Development Goals.

The construction of the Paju Campus is also important, because it marks a transition for Ewha. On what used to be the training grounds for 'Korean female leaders' of the 20th Century, Ewha will now be cultivating of 'global women leaders,' 'peace leaders,' and 'unification leaders' of the 21st century. Our Paju campus will also help build the image of Ewha as a university that contributes to world peace through education and research.

The Paju campus will be housing the Ewha Center for Global Peace, which will play a pivotal role in spreading the message of world peace once the construction of Paju campus is completed.

While peace between people and the end of war and hostility, are worthy aspirations, true peace can only be established when humans and nature, including plants and animals, can coexist in harmony, and when man and the ecosystem can simultaneously prosper. The 'Ewha Center for Global Peace' will have sub-units specializing in research on peace, unification, ecology, environment, or multiculturalism. Peace studies will concern issues regarding human security, poverty reduction, conflict resolution, peace education, and the establishment of an East Asia Peace Community. Unification studies will focus on research and education in North Korean politics, society, economy and culture; inter-Korean cooperation; reunification case studies; Korea’s reunification; and North Korean defectors. All of these plans are aimed to help ease tensions on the Korean peninsula by using our proximity to the DMZ to promote its peaceful use.

The 'Environment Research Center' will focus on "Green Leadership" education, change in the ecosystem, Green Growth, space and astronomy, biodiversity, water quality and resource, air pollution, development and
environment, and other environmental topics for research and education. We plan to take full the advantage of the nearby DMZ, which has been perfectly free of human activities for the past half century.

Finally, the 'Multiculturalism Research Center' will focus on the study of social integration; Korean language, history and cultural education; the multicultural experience; training multiculturalism experts; and providing counseling and legal support to multicultural families. Further down the road, the Paju campus will house IT, BT and NT research complexes, as well as health care, art and cultural facilities.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The 21st Century is an age of sustainability and an age for peace. History has repeatedly taught us that all the fruits of human labor are meaningless without peace. And peace can only take root when there is trust based on mutual respect, love, and honesty. Our University plans to further our efforts in research and education for sustainability and peace, and also to contribute more to society as a way of practicing Christian love. We will also work very hard so that the Ewha Center for Global Peace can make a true contribution to world peace.

As you can see, the Paju campus of Ewha Womans University and the School of Global Sustainability at USF share a common goal. I sincerely hope that the trust and cooperation between the two schools expand and develop in the coming years and that our 'in-yeon' continues to grow stronger.

Once again, I thank you for this award, and for your attention. May God bless all of you and grant continued success to the University of South Florida. Thank you.