

**BILATERAL VISIT TO THE REPUBLIC OF KOREA BY
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6-7 SEPTEMBER 2012**

YEAR OF FRIENDSHIP RECEPTION REMARKS

Distinguished representatives of the Korean Government and agencies

Distinguished Members of the National Assembly

Members of the New Zealand expatriate community

Valued friends in Korea

Ladies and Gentlemen

It is my great pleasure to be with you this evening. I convey warm greetings from the government and people of New Zealand.

This is a moment of celebration.

We are celebrating the strong bonds of friendship that were first forged on the battlefields of the Korean War. New Zealand stood together with Korea then. We stand with you today.

We are celebrating fifty years of formal diplomatic ties and warm relations.

We are celebrating the excellent health of the bilateral relationship – founded on these political, security and defence links, but also based on shared goals, interests and objectives in regional and global settings.

And we take great inspiration from the deepened engagement between our two countries in recent years in such areas as government interactions, economics and trade, education, tourism, film, culture, and science and technology.

The ties continue to grow. Just last month, during his visit to New Zealand, Foreign Minister Kim and I signed a bilateral agreement allowing for close cooperation between New Zealand and Korea on issues relating to Antarctica.

New Zealand values its important relationship with Korea. Korea is our fifth largest trading partner, second largest source for international students, and seventh largest market for tourists.

We also celebrate our incredible people-to-people links. Today, nearly 1 per cent of New Zealanders identify themselves as of Korean descent.

At a time when golfing prodigy Lydia Ko has made LPGA history in Canada, I want to acknowledge the significant contribution Korean New Zealanders are making in all areas of New Zealand life.

And not just Koreans in New Zealand; earlier this year, Chairman Chi Kap-Chong received the award of honorary Officer of the New Zealand Order of Merit ((ONZM) – for his services to New Zealand-Korean relations. Very few non-New Zealanders receive this award.

We are honoured to have Chairman Chi with us this evening. I wish to warmly acknowledge his enormous contribution towards ensuring that New Zealand veterans and the role New Zealand played in the Korean War are remembered.

I also want to acknowledge the great kiwi community living here in Korea.

This has been a terrific Year of Friendship already with the holding of many activities and events.

In Korea, Korean people have been able to enjoy New Zealand theatre, music and dance. There have also been sporting and academic exchanges.

In New Zealand, the Korean Embassy has kindly organised opportunities for New Zealanders to enjoy traditional Korean music and dance. Many young kiwis are keenly anticipating the K-Pop wave hitting our shores.

Let us all enjoy the remaining months of this Year of Friendship.

And as we celebrate the last 50 years, let us also build the friendship for the next 50 years. There are areas where our relationship can grow even more – in trade for example.

Korea and New Zealand are committed to complete a Free Trade Agreement. Let's get the deal done, for the benefit of both our countries. And let's look for other areas – like cooperation on environment issues and in research and development.

Enjoy this evening. Enjoy the remainder of this great Year of Friendship.

I conclude by proposing this toast to our two countries: **To friendship and the future. Cheers!**
