

THE REPUBLIC OF KOREA'S
ASSISTANCE TO AFGHANISTAN**HON. DAN BURTON**

OF INDIANA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Friday, May 13, 2011

Mr. BURTON of Indiana. Mr. Speaker, as co-Chair of the Congressional Caucus on Korea, I rise today to commend the Republic of Korea's pledge of an additional \$500 million over 5 years in aid to Afghanistan. It is unfortunate that this tremendous contribution was not heralded by the international media because Seoul's commitment to aiding in the development and reconstruction in the war-torn nation is remarkable in several ways and deserves our recognition and gratitude.

This latest \$500 million is in addition to the \$180 million Seoul has already contributed to Afghanistan. And, currently, there are about 90 South Korean aid workers and police serving in Afghanistan secured by more than 200 Korean troops. This increased level of assistance will go a long way in supporting existing programs run by Korea's Provincial Reconstruction Team in the northern province of Parwan. Korea's Provincial Reconstruction Team will be able to enhance their work in the areas of education, health and medical service, rural development, improved governance and police training.

Korea has been and continues to be one of the most reliable partners we have in Afghanistan. For example, from 2002 to 2007, Korea deployed military medics and engineers in Afghanistan; provided medical service to 260,000 people; and helped build the U.S. Bagram Air Field.

What impresses me the most about Korea's fortitude and role in the international community is its tremendous progress over the last half century. Not so long ago South Korea was a recipient, rather than a donor, of Official Development Assistance, ODA. According to the Congressional Research Service, U.S. economic assistance to South Korea totaled \$3.8 billion from 1945 to 1971. However, by the mid-1970s U.S. assistance began to shrink to zero. In 2009, South Korea became the first major recipient of Official Development Assistance to become a major donor of ODA. In just two years, 2008 and 2009, South Korea contributed economic aid of \$1.7 billion to other countries, including Afghanistan.

Through sound economic policies, a strong commitment to free enterprise, and a turn from autocratic to democratic governance, South Korea has become one of the world's fastest-growing, most resilient economies with an equally resilient and stable civil society.

In 1980, the Republic of Korea's gross domestic product, GDP, per capita was \$2,300, about one-third of nearby economies such as Singapore, Hong Kong, and Japan. Since then, South Korea has advanced into a devel-

oped economy that had a GDP per capita of \$30,000 in 2010, almost thirteen times the figure thirty years earlier. The country's overall GDP increased from \$88 billion to \$1,460 billion in the same period.

Today, South Korea's economy ranks fifteenth in the world by nominal GDP and twelfth by purchasing power parity. It is one of the G-20 major economies and it is a member of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development. As of 2010, South Korea was the sixth largest exporter and tenth largest importer in the world. Korea is the United States' seventh-largest trading partner, with a pending free trade agreement that will bring multiple benefits to both of our countries in terms of increased trade and investment. We must pass the pending U.S.-Korea Free Trade Agreement KORUS FTA as soon as possible.

The conflict in Afghanistan is as controversial in Korea as it is in the United States, which makes the Republic of Korea's pledge of an additional \$500 million (over 5 years) in aid to Afghanistan all the more significant. It sends a signal to the world that Korea is a dedicated partner in peace and an ally that the U.S. can count on.

Mr. Speaker, I hope my colleagues will join me today in saluting the Republic of Korea and people of Korea for their continued partnership in helping to rebuild the economy and society of Afghanistan.