



Speech of Deputy Speaker of the Croatian Parliament Mr. Željko Reiner on the occasion of the 5th anniversary of the Croatian-Korean Business Club

Thursday, 29 August 2019

Your Excellency, Mr. Ambassador Kim,

Dear guests,

It is truly a pleasure to be with you here today. First of all, allow me to congratulate on the 5th anniversary of Croatian-Korean Business Club, on behalf of the Speaker and members of the Croatian Parliament and myself personally, particularly since I have been on all five anniversaries of this Club and have always supported its activities.

I am especially pleased that this mini jubilee is marked by two grand events: establishing the direct flight between Zagreb and Seoul last September and the opening of the Croatian Embassy in Korea at the end of last year. The Croatian-Korean business club since its founding has set goals to improve relations between our two countries, and establishing the direct airline was one of them. I congratulate you, and us all, on fulfilling this particular goal. I would also like to thank the Embassy of the Republic of Korea on their great help regarding this matter, especially former Ambassador Mr. Park. I am more than certain that his Excellency Mr. Kim will continue this excellent work.

The essence of Croatian-Korean Business Club is to support and preserve the existing business relationships between Croatia and Korea as well as to create new ones. These tasks will be much easier now when Croatia has a residential Ambassador in Seoul, Mr. Kušen. Business-to-business and people-to-people relations are much easier to achieve when the official diplomatic channels exist. There is another name which I would like to mention today: Honorary Consul of the Republic of Croatia in the Republic of Korea Mr. Yang In-Mo. Mr. Yang's experience, knowledge, connections and above all – willingness to facilitate and improve relations of our two countries is extremely commendable.

Economic relations between Croatia and the Republic of Korea are sound with huge potential for growth. We see possible further improvement in bilateral



economic cooperation in the field of investments, particularly in transportation, infrastructure and energetics areas. We are very satisfied that the Hyundai and Kia Motors recently invested 80 million euros in “Rimac Automobili”. This is an excellent example of how our technologies and businesses can work together.

Croatian Government is working hard to the improve the investment climate in Croatia and we hope that Korean investors will recognize these efforts. Our advantage is strategic position of Croatia in regard to Far East countries because of its geographic position as well as being a rather new member of the European Union. Therefore, Croatia can play a role of natural gates for introducing of Korean goods to the Central and Southeast European markets, but also to the whole EU. In this context the main point of entry might be Port of Rijeka which is deep in the European continent at the end of Adriatic sea and a starting point of very important EU transportation corridor 5b. Rijeka is also the port much closer to central and eastern European countries then north European ports such as Hamburg or Rotterdam.

Korean investors are more than welcome as strategic partners in development of other transport and infrastructure projects, such as ports of Zadar and Ploče and railroads, but also in the field of energy such as Liquid Natural Gas terminal on the island Krk, and shipbuilding and equipment for special purpose vessels such as, e.g. coast guard boats.

We also see great potential in the field of tourism, although there was a slight decrease in the number of Korean tourists in Croatia last year. I am certain that establishment of the direct airline between our two countries will soon increase those numbers. We are very pleased that Croatian Tourist Board will soon open an Office in Seoul, and that founder of the Croatian-Korean Business Club Mr. Zoran Horvat was appointed the director of the Office. This is truly a big honour for Mr. Horvat since we value and appreciate Korean tourists very much. His knowledge and experience will, I am certain, increase the number of Korean tourists again.



The thing I strongly support and always stress when discussing potentials of our overall cooperation is parliamentary diplomacy. I am particularly happy with the excellent cooperation between our two Parliaments, since I am convinced that today the role of parliamentary diplomacy is increasing. This type of diplomacy is more flexible and not as rigid as the "official diplomacy" of the executive branch of government. In all meetings I held with the highest representatives of the Korean Government, Parliament and business community during my visit in spring 2018, I underlined the importance of parliamentary, as well as trade and economic, cooperation between our countries. I would like to believe that frequent parliamentary visits also had an impact on our excellent relations.

Dear friends,

Last year was full of good news for Croatian-Korean cooperation. Although very geographically distant, we now feel like neighbours and I am sure that our relations will improve even further as the time passes by.

Thank you.