

SPECIAL MESSAGE

by **H.E. Kim Jae-shin**

*Ambassador of the Republic of Korea
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Former House Speaker Jose de Venecia, Jr., Vice President Maria Luz Vilches, Vice President Fr. Jose Cruz, the Ateneo de Manila University community, Col. Vilorio and PEFTOK veterans, esteemed speakers and panelists, distinguished guests:

Magandang umaga po sa inyong lahat.

I would've said something more in Tagalog, but it's very difficult. I can only say, "Ako po si Ambassador Kim ng Korea sa Pilipinas."

First of all, I'd like to congratulate you all for holding this 3rd Ateneo Korean Studies Conference. I was privileged to attend last year's conference, and I appreciate being a part of it again today. I'm also honored to be in the company of former House Speaker Jose de Venecia, Jr., who is today's keynote speaker. As you may know, Speaker De Venecia has long been involved in improving Philippine-Korean relations. He has made various efforts to improve the relationship between our two countries. Particularly, he has shown a lot of interest and concern about South-North relations and wanted to play a role to improve our inter-Korean relations. So, today, we have a very good chance to hear his in-depth or inspiring views on South-North relations and the unification of Korea.

Ladies, and gentlemen, I must commend the Ateneo for having initiated a Korean Studies Program and sustaining it for the past few years. It helps raise students' awareness of many things about Korea.

The theme of today's event is significant in the sense that it examines the past in order to have a clearer understanding of the present. It is a subject matter that is close to the heart of every Korean. As you know, when the Korean War broke out 66 years ago, the Philippines was the first Asian country to send its troops to Korea as part of the UN Command.

It would be meaningful to listen to PEFTOK veterans about their experience in the Korean War. The Korea of today would not be the same without their assistance. It has arisen from the ashes of war and, through perseverance and the help of other nations like the Philippines, has become a developed nation.

This is one of the implications of the Korean War: out of the destruction it brought about, a friendship between the Philippines and Korea was born. In continuing partnership and support between our two nations, I see a brilliant future ahead of us in all areas of cooperation.

Finally, I'd like to thank the Ateneo School of Social Sciences, under the leadership of Dean Fernando Aldaba, and the Korean Studies Program for this opportunity to participate in today's conference.

Maraming salamat po. Gamsahamnida.