

**Testimony of Ambassador-designate Sung Kim**  
**Nominee for United States Ambassador to the Republic of Korea**  
**Senate Foreign Relations Committee**  
**July 21, 2011**

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee, I am honored to appear before you as President Obama's nominee to serve as Ambassador to the Republic of Korea (ROK). I am deeply grateful for the confidence that the President and Secretary Clinton have shown in me and if confirmed, I look forward to working closely with this Committee to strengthen our alliance and very special partnership with the Republic of Korea.

Many people are responsible for me being here today. Throughout my public service, I have benefited greatly from distinguished mentors, generous colleagues and smart and dedicated subordinates. I am grateful that many of them are here with me today. Most importantly, I want to express my special gratitude and appreciation to my family -- my wife Jae and our two daughters Erin and Erica. Diplomatic service is a special privilege, but it is not always easy for the family. I am extremely grateful for their patience and support.

When my parents brought me to the United States some 35 years ago, they could not have imagined that I would have the opportunity to serve as the first Korean-American Ambassador to the Republic of Korea. But I do recall that from the very early days, my parents encouraged me to go into public service. They were so proud when I joined the Foreign Service and thrilled when I chose to focus on East Asia, especially Korea. Having dedicated much of my professional life to the U.S.-ROK partnership, my hope is that, if confirmed, I will be able to draw on my experience and expertise to expand and enhance the bond between our two countries.

In the space of a few decades, the Republic of Korea emerged from a half-century of occupation, division and war to join the top ranks of the world's free and prosperous nations. This stunning achievement is testimony to the talent, determination and sacrifices of several generations of Koreans. As a Korean-American, I deeply respect and appreciate what Koreans have been able to accomplish. Part of this amazing success story, of course, is due to the strong and constructive alliance and partnership between our two countries.

Last year marked the 60th anniversary of the start of the Korean War. As we reflect on our shared history of sacrifice and success, and as we examine the regional and global opportunities and challenges, we are convinced that it is more important than ever to continue to strengthen and nurture our two countries' partnership.

As President Obama said recently, "our alliance has never been stronger than it is today." But it can be even better. We are working on a number of initiatives to make it stronger and more balanced, with the ROK military assuming more responsibility for South Korean defense, including wartime operational control in 2015. We are also realigning our basing arrangements to ensure that we are best able to meet the challenges of the 21st century. We want a smaller footprint that creates less of an impact on ROK civilians, but which provides the robust deterrent necessary to maintain peace on the Peninsula. I was personally involved in many of these initiatives during earlier assignments, and, if confirmed, I will work closely with the new U.S. Forces Korea Commander General Thurman to ensure smooth implementation.

Our economic relationship with Korea is one of the world's most important. Korea is a trillion dollar economy and our seventh largest trading partner. The U.S.- Korea Free Trade Agreement, pending passage by Congress and Korea's National Assembly, will provide significant economic and strategic benefits for both countries. For the United States, this agreement will create substantial export opportunities for U.S. goods and services and support tens of thousands of new export-related jobs in the United States. It will strengthen our economic partnership and lay an important foundation for the United States and Korea to work together closely to address regional and global economic challenges in the future. If confirmed, I will work closely with Korea and with Congress and other U.S. government agencies to ensure smooth implementation of the agreement so that both countries can seize the important benefits the agreement is to provide.

Another central part of the U.S.-ROK partnership is our cooperation on challenges posed by North Korea. Having focused on this much of the past few years, I hope to continue to contribute to our common efforts to achieve the verifiable denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula in a peaceful manner and better lives for the long-suffering people of North Korea. If confirmed, I look forward to coordinating closely on negotiating strategy as

well as efforts to deter provocative actions by North Korea.

Our two countries are also finding ways to cooperate and collaborate on a wide variety of issues not directly related to trade or Korean Peninsula security. We work together in such diverse areas as counter-piracy operations off the coast of Somalia, post-conflict and disaster stabilization efforts in places like Haiti, where a ROK company is developing an industrial complex that will bring tens of thousands of jobs to Haiti, and Afghanistan, where the ROK runs a Provincial Reconstruction Team working to train local Afghans and strengthen peace and civil society. We also cooperate on green growth efforts to promote environmentally sustainable economic growth. These are the kinds of activities that bring solutions to common challenges facing the global community and the types of initiatives I hope to advance, if I am confirmed.

I also look forward, if confirmed, to contributing to the already strong people-to-people ties between our two countries – in educational exchange, the arts and culture, sports, and in other fields. Last year, nearly 500,000 South Koreans took advantage of the Visa Waiver Program and traveled to the U.S. In total, nearly 900,000 South Korean tourists and business travelers visited the U.S. in 2010, a 38% increase over 2009. These record-breaking numbers make Korean tourists the seventh-largest tourist group to the United States. As a Korean-American, the importance of these everyday contacts between Koreans and Americans has special resonance for me.

Mr. Chairman and Members of the Committee, it would be the highest honor for me to serve our country as the U.S. Ambassador to the Republic of Korea. If confirmed, I will lead a complex, multi-agency diplomatic mission consisting of 575 employees, including staff at the U.S. Embassy in Seoul and the American Presence Post in Busan. I will do my very best to ensure that all members of that community and their families have the leadership, security, and support they need to get their jobs done.

Thank you for considering my nomination. I look forward to your questions.