



Participants, from bottom row left: Handok Inc. Chairman Kim Young-Jin; German Ambassador Rolf Mafael; First Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs Cho Tae-yong; JTBC Chairman Hong Seok-hyun; Hartmut Koschyk, the German Bundestag's German-Korean parliamentary friendship group chairman; Ewha Womans University President Kim Sun-uk; German Bundestag Representative Johannes Selle; Korea Foundation President Yu Hyun-Seok; Korean Ambassador to Germany Kim Jae-shin; and Kim Young-hie, the editor at large of the JoongAng Ilbo. By: Kang Jung-Hyun

Expert forum addresses Korean reunification

BY SPECIAL REPORTING TEAM

About 70 experts and government officials gathered for the 13th Korea-Germany Forum in Seoul to speak on the German unification process and other bilateral cooperation issues.

"A project to provide support to restore North Korea's damaged cultural assets and historic sites will be a greatly helpful method to regain trust from Pyongyang," said Thomas Schäfer, the German ambassador to Pyongyang, during the forum held at the Ewha Womans University in Seodaemun District. "There were good results in the case of Germany when we carried out projects to restore historic sites in North Korea."

Korea and Germany each had a delegation of around 35 scholars, diplomats, government officials and other experts in the areas of politics, economy, culture and education.

The three-day forum, hosted by the Ewha Womans University, with the support of the Korea Foundation, Samsung Electronics, JoongAng Ilbo and JTBC, kicked off with a reception Wednesday at the Grand Hyatt Hotel and runs until today.

The forum included sessions on German-Korean relations, experience that led to German reunification in 1990, economic leadership and the creative economy, diplomacy after World War II, public diplomacy and media, and other bilateral issues. The annual forum was first held in 2002, following German President Johannes Rau's visit to Korea that year upon the invitation of President Kim Dae-jung.

"Trust is not built by itself. There needs to be effort to build it up," said Bernhard Seliger, the resident representative of the Seoul-based Hanns-Seidel Foundation Korea. "South Korea needs to analyze what is needed in

order to build trust and reach out a hand first [to North Korea]."

Dirk Hilbert, the first deputy mayor of Dresden, also provided his insight on inter-Korean relations, saying, "Speaking from the German perspective, the situation on the Korean Peninsula is seen to be continuously emotional and tense. For progress in North-South relations, perseverance, objectivity, commitment and determination is needed."

President Park Geun-hye is playing a leading role through the Dresden Declaration," he added, referring to Park's official visit in March to Germany, through which she made a speech in Dresden about her vision of the unification of the Korea.

The delegates also made proposals to enhance Korean and German cooperation and pointed out areas of mutual learning.

Hartmut Koschyk, chairman of the

German-Korean parliamentary friendship group of the German Bundestag or legislature, said there was a lot Germany could learn from Korea in terms of information technology.

"I was surprised when I learned that you could use Wifi for free on the subways here," he said.

Koschyk, who served as the chairman of the forum alongside Ewha Womans University President Kim Sun-uk, added: "In Germany, you have to wander from place to place in order to use Wifi."

Hong Seok-hyun, the chairman of the JoongAng Ilbo and JTBC, said there were three areas in which Korea could learn from Germany: "the promotion of small and middle companies that can become the 'hidden champions' of the global market, the building of a sustainable welfare state and the German unification experience."

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