

Biography of H.E. Mr. Han Seung-soo President of the 56th Session of the General Assembly

Dr. Han Seung-soo is a Member of the Republic of Korea's National Assembly, to which he was first elected in 1988. Dr. Han has served in many areas of public life including, most recently, as Minister of Foreign Affairs and Trade from March 2001 to February 2002. From 1996 to 1997, he was Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance and Economy and served as Chief of Staff to the President from 1994 to 1995. He held the post of Minister of Trade and Industry from 1988 to 1990. In 1993 and 1994, Dr. Han represented the Republic of Korea as its Ambassador to the United States, and he is a former Chairman of the Council of the Republic of Korea Group of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU).

Throughout his tenure as Minister of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Dr. Han played the leading role in furthering his government's policy of peace and reconciliation ("Sunshine Policy") on the Korean Peninsula. It was during this period that the Swedish Prime Minister, in his capacity as President of the EU, made his groundbreaking visit to Seoul and Pyongyang in May 2001. Dr. Han also contributed to addressing the challenge of international terrorism in various ways such as participating in the Tokyo Conference on Reconstruction Assistance to Afghanistan held in January 2002.

As Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance and Economy, Dr. Han was the Republic of Korea's chief economic policy maker. He was the principal minister who oversaw the negotiations for the accession of the Republic of Korea to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) in 1996. Foreseeing the important role that venture businesses would play in the country's economy in the twenty-first century, he initiated and actively promoted the legislation of the incentive stock option system and the technology-based KOSDAQ stock market.

During his tenure as Chief of Staff to the President, Dr. Han assisted the President in effectively carrying out reform programmes in all fields of national policy. It was during this time that local elections took place in the country, restoring local autonomy for the first time in 35 years. It was also during this period that the first offer of economic assistance, on a humanitarian basis, was made to the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) in the form of rice.

Throughout his tenure as Ambassador of the Republic of Korea to the United States, Dr. Han was heavily involved in the resolution of DPRK nuclear issues, including the so-called nuclear crisis of the spring of 1993.

As Minister of Trade and Industry, he was instrumental in the Super 301 negotiations with the United States that helped launch the Republic of Korea on a path towards a new trading

relationship with the United States and other countries. In 1989, he was one of the initiators of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC), a forum now held annually among Asia Pacific countries to discuss ways to promote economic cooperation in the region. He initiated the Taejon International Exposition in 1993, which was the first Expo to be held in a country not yet fully industrialized. He founded the Korea Academy of Industrial Technology (KAITEC) in 1989, aimed at expanding the technological basis of small and medium-sized business enterprises.

From 1987 to 1988, Dr. Han served as the first Chairman of the Korea Trade Commission and worked as a member of the Commission on Tax Reform, the Commission on Bank Reform and the Commission on Tariff Reform, all set up by the Ministry of Finance during the 1980s. He served as President of the Korea International Economic Association from 1983 to 1984. Before joining the Government, he served as adviser to several public and private sector organizations, including the Bank of Korea (where he later served as Chairman of the Monetary Board when he held the post of Finance Minister), the Korea Export-Import Bank, the Korea Industrial Bank, the Korea Chamber of Commerce and Industry, the Federation of Korea Industries and the Korea International Trade Association. He also worked as a consultant to the World Bank and the United Nations Economic Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP). He was seconded by the World Bank to serve as Financial Adviser to the Government of Jordan from 1974 to 1976.

Before his election to the National Assembly from his home town of Chunchon in Kangwon Province in 1988, Dr. Han had a long and distinguished academic career. He was Professor of Economics at Seoul National University from 1970 to 1988. He taught economics at the University of York from 1965 to 1968, and at the Department of Applied Economics, University of Cambridge, and Emmanuel College, Cambridge, from 1968 to 1970. He was a Senior Fulbright Scholar at the Department of Economics, Harvard University, from 1985 to 1986, and a visiting Professor at the Faculty of Liberal Arts and Sciences, University of Tokyo, from 1986 to 1987.

Educated at Yonsei University and Seoul National University, he obtained his doctorate in economics from the University of York, United Kingdom, in 1968 and was also awarded an Honorary Doctor of the University in 1997. He is a laureate of the sixth European Communities Prize, which he was awarded in 1971 for his doctoral thesis, "The Growth and Function of the European Budget".

He is currently a Distinguished Visiting Professor at the Graduate School of International Studies at Yonsei University in Seoul and Honorary Professor at the University of York, United Kingdom. He serves as President of the Korea-Britain Society, President of the Korea-UK Forum for the Future, and President of the Alumni Association of the Graduate School of Public Administration of Seoul National University. He is a member of several professional associations, including the Royal Economic Society, the Korean Economic Association, the International Institute of Public Finance, the Seoul Forum for International Affairs, the Korean Council on Foreign Relations, the Korean Society for Future Studies, the Korea Association of Public Administration and the Bretton Woods Club.

His publications include “The Health of Nations” (Seoul Computer Press, 1985), “Britain and the Common Market” (Cambridge University Press, 1971) (co-authored), “Taxes in Britain and the EEC: The Problem of Harmonization” (PPE and Chatham House, 1968) (co-authored) and “The Growth and Function of the European Budget” (Yusong Publishing Co., 1971). In addition to these publications, he has written many professional articles and press commentaries in both Korean and English.

Dr. Han has been decorated with the Order of Public Service Merit (First Class, Blue Stripes), Order of Industrial Merit (Bronze Tower) and Order of National Security Merit (Cheonsu Medal). He was also the first recipient of the Columbia Law School/Parker School Award for Distinguished International Service in 1997.

His hobbies include mountain hiking, playing the game of baduk and collecting autobiographies and biographies.

Dr. Han is married and has two children.