

HSF Korea's Unification Efforts

HSF Korea supports the process of reconciliation on the Korean Peninsula. In South Korea, this includes regional development, which is especially focused on border regions, including the DMZ. In North Korea, HSF Korea attempts to contribute to peaceful development in the region. Through various activities, HSF Korea aims to promote international integration and cooperation with North Korea in the field of environment.

KOR-GER Related Events

GER-KOR Reunification Events with KIPCO

On April 26, the German-Korean virtual Unification Forum was held by the Korean Institute for Peace and Cooperation (KIPCO) and HSF Korea. Participants discussed “Perspectives on Korea’s Unification: Implications from the start of the Biden administration and the next Korean Presidential elections.” After this event, two additional GER-KOR Reunification Forums were held in May and December to seek opportunities for Korean reunification based on the case of unified Germany.

Dr. Thomas Schäfer’s Visit to KOR

In August, HSF Korea invited Dr. Thomas Schäfer to South Korea to co-host a session in the 2021 Korea Global Forum for Peace with K-Water. Dr. Schäfer formerly served as a German ambassador in Pyongyang, North Korea. While in South Korea, he met experts from various political institutions including the National Unification Advisory Council (NUAC), Ministry of Public Administration and Security, the United States and German Embassies, Ministry of Unification, and Goseong county. Throughout the meetings, Dr. Schäfer shared his analysis of the North Korean political system and possibilities to explore new approaches to North Korea under President Biden’s administration.

“SLUT UP” KOREA

On August 15, an unveiling ceremony for a Unification Monument was held at the Unification Village in Paju. This event was organized by the Korean Institute for Peace and Cooperation and supported by HSF Korea. Every year on National Liberation Day, the monument will serve as a constant reminder and beacon of hope for the unification of South and North Korea.



GER-KOR Junior Forum

Based on the GER-KOR Online Junior Forum of 2020, this year’s Junior Forum was successfully held in person in early November. The forum focused on political, cultural, and economic topics within the German and Korean context. Prior to the forum, a preparatory seminar for the participants took place, organized by Young-Soo Kim, Project Manager at HSF Korea. The young participants were able to prepare in a cordial atmosphere and proceeded successfully to give novel impetus to GER-KOR relations during the actual forum.

Beyond Loss of Hometown to Integration

In cooperation with the Institute for Peace Affairs (IPA), HSF Korea hosted a conference on displacement and integration from German and Korean perspectives. On the German side, Hartmut Koschyk, a former member of the Bundestag for the CDU/CSU parliamentary group, introduced the history of displaced persons and refugees in Germany and outlined related policies. Furthermore, Thomas Konhäuser, scientific director and managing director of the Cultural Foundation of German Displaced Persons, introduced alternative solutions for social conflict management and integration of displaced persons in Germany.

The Visit of the German Frigate “Bayern”

The German Frigate “Bayern” anchored in Busan from December 2 to 6. On this occasion, HSF Korea, together with other German political foundations and the German Embassy in Seoul, organized a roundtable discussion on the topic of “Geopolitics in the Indo-Pacific: Germany, Europe, and Korea.” Main topic of the discussion were the geopolitics of the Indo-Pacific, focusing on German, European, and Korean security and strategic partnerships in the region.



Peace Forums & Ecological Cooperation

Hooded Crane Symposium

On February 26, the Hooded Crane Symposium took place in Suncheon. The symposium emphasized the significance of the Suncheon Bay as an important crane habitat, and its value for the preservation of the species. HSF Korea contributed to the symposium with works on biodiversity, conservation, and diplomacy on the Korean Peninsula and in Northeast Asia. Dr. Bernhard Seliger, the representative of HSF Korea, was invited to give his remarks on crane habitats in North Korea. Dr. Seliger especially stressed the vulnerability of Hooded Cranes and emphasized the need for habitat preservation. To protect the species, HSF Korea cooperates with the Ministry of Land and Environment Protection of North Korea. The goal of this cooperation is to protect key habitats like the Mundok, Kumya, and Rason Migratory Bird Reserves.

Visits to Goseong

HSF Korea has been dedicated to promoting peace, democracy, and development on the Korean Peninsula for more than 30 years. HSF as a German political foundation supports and encourages environmental protection and the development of peace in the border areas such as Goseong County. In this regard, HSF Korea visited its partners in the county in March and August to exchange experiences from working in the inter-Korean border region. The talk centered around Korean reunification, environmental protection for biodiversity, and many more interesting topics relevant to the areas on both sides of the border.

Sustainable Development in the Border Areas

The ruins of the former Korean Workers' Party Office in Cheorwon remain as a reminder of the fact that the area once belonged to North Korea after the division of Korea in 1945 and only became official South Korean territory after the Korean Armistice Agreement. HSF Korea conducted field research in the area on April 1, 2021. One of the main objectives of HSF Korea is to solve the question of how people can benefit directly from reforestation and the conservation of wetlands. HSF Korea believes that sustainable agriculture methods can be part of improving the living conditions of the local population.

Coexistence of South-North Shared Rivers

Hosted by the Institute for Peace Affairs (IPA) and HSF Korea, the 34th Korean Unification Forum was successfully held on April 27. The forum focused on the topic of sustainable environmental cooperation within the Korean Peninsula and provided a platform to examine current conditions and problems of the South-North shared river debate. Youngsik Jo, Director of Water Resources Management Research & Planning Department of K-water, attended as a discussant. Throughout the event, experts agreed upon the point that both South and North Korea should open their doors for inter-Korean cooperation.

Pyeongchang Peace Forum

From February 7 to 9, the 2021 Pyeongchang Peace Forum took place. The main themes of the forum included the economy, sports, the DMZ Peace Zone, the UN SDGs, Public Diplomacy, and Gangwon 2024 (Special Theme). Dr. Bernhard Seliger and Dr. Hyunah Choi from HSF Korea participated in the forum as speakers and actively discussed the topic of "The Possibility of Eco-peace Tourism in the South & North Gangwon Province Through Bird-Watching".

Korea Global Forum for Peace

2021 marked the 30th anniversary of the Inter-Korean Basic Agreement and the admission of South and North Korea to the UN. The Korea Global Forum for Peace (KGFP), founded in 2010, aimed to renew the meaning and purpose of the Basic Agreement and offered a platform to discuss ideas for inter-Korean relations. Dr. Thomas Schäfer, the former German ambassador to Pyongyang, explained the difficulty of implementing humanitarian aid programs and addressed the ambiguities of the North Korean government's vision of goals. Dr. Bernhard Seliger and Mr. Felix Glenk from HSF Korea also participated in the discussion. All of their assessments were based on first-hand experiences from their interactions with North Korea.

Goyang Peace Forums

Two major peace forums were held in Goyang City in 2021: The 22nd Goyang Forum in April and the 2nd Goyang Peace Medical Forum in September. In April, the Goyang Research Institute held an event to discuss its vision of building a peacetime economy in the border area of the Northwestern region of Gyeonggi-do. Dr. Hyunah Choi from HSF Korea took part in the talks and highlighted the need for such an economic system and further addressed its benefits for environmental conservation. The event in September focused on health care cooperation as a means to reactivate peaceful inter-Korean communication. Dr. Bernhard Seliger from HSF Korea shared his experiences on medical cooperation with North Korean partners and presented various ideas for future German-North Korean medical cooperation: exchanging nurses and nursing students, building academic cooperation in terms of humanitarian support, and exchanges of medical expertise between North Korean and German hospitals.

International DMZ Peace Cooperation Forum

On October 28, the Korean Maritime Institute (KMI) hosted the 2021 DMZ Han River Estuary Peace Cooperation International Forum and KMI series publication ceremony. This event was supported by the Ministry of Unification and the Han River Estuary Joint Research Council. Dr. Hyunah Choi, senior researcher at HSF Korea, participated and contributed valuable input to the discussions during the event.



Dialogues and Politics

Dialogue is a Goal in Itself

On February 25, HSF Korea hosted an online webinar regarding the EU-North Korea relations. Dr. Bernhard Seliger, the representative of HSF Korea attended as a speaker and outlined why the EU should further engage with North Korea. He explained that the domestic situation in North Korea is severely difficult nowadays as the country has experienced multiple crises last year. Due to the Covid-19 situation, most foreign diplomats have left the country and nearly no international organizations are currently working in North Korea. The disruption of international collaboration has led to a lack of information about the prevailing domestic situation within the country. He further mentioned that the Covid-19 situation may provide grounds to bring North Korea back to the negotiation table. Dr. Seliger ended his speech by stating that maintaining dialogue is a goal in itself.

Facing Global Challenges as Partners – Korea and the EU

On March 19, the Korean Society of Contemporary European Studies and HSF Korea hosted a workshop with the title of "The Korean Peninsula and the Role of the European Union – North and South Korean Perspectives, focusing on the partnership between the Korean Peninsula and the European Union". Dr. Bernhard Seliger, the representative of HSF Korea, gave a short welcoming remark. He stated that the main objective of the strategic partnership between South Korea and the European Union is yet not clarified, even after ten years of cooperation. He thus expressed the need for both partners to set new goals for the successful cooperation in the future. The workshop was a great opportunity for experts to exchange their views on the different aspects of the strategic partnership between Korea and the European Union.

Partnered Organizations

Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs)

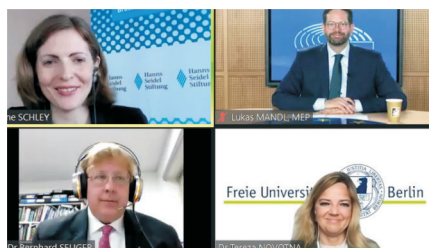
On April 20, HSF Korea met with the Seoul National University Asia Center (SNUAC) and signed the Agreement on Scholarly Exchange and Collaboration between the two organizations. On October 21, HSF Korea and the Korea Legislation Research Institute formalized an MOU, consequentially forming a close partnership. The two organizations agreed to cooperate on comparing environmental law between North and South Korea and to co-organize diverse educational and research programs such as seminars, workshops, and capacity building. Furthermore, on October 22, HSF Korea, the Seoul Metropolitan Council, and the University of Seoul declared to jointly support inter-Korean cooperation and the reconciliation of the two Koreas.

HSF Korea - PACSC Asia

Based upon its initial success and enthusiasm for the HSF Korea-PACSC Asia's Joint Problem-Solving Workshop in 2020, both organizations acknowledged the necessity to proceed with the workshop to promote more effective inter-Korean cooperation. In this regard, HSF Korea and PACSC Asia from George Mason University Korea (GMUK) jointly organized three major events. The events were held in April, August, and December. The first workshop in April took place at the GMUK campus, where practical measures for facilitating future peaceful democratization in North Korea, and procedures for sustainable, green, and environmentally friendly development on the Korean Peninsula were discussed. Felix Glenk, then North Korea project manager of HSF Korea, provided an overview of HSF Korea's work and outlined its aims and accomplished projects for the unification of the Korean peninsula. The second workshop was organized as an off-site, two-day workshop at Goseong, the northern border area between South and North Korea. The main topics discussed were the method of problem-solving, writing dynamic but tangible definitions of zones and cities of peace, and establishing quantifiable characteristics of them. In the End-of-Year Conference at GMUK, these topics were further explored, and specific issues were discussed with local NGOs and research organizations such as the Goyang, and Incheon Research Institutes.

Project Discussions in Songdo

HSF Korea is dedicated to contributing to the integration on the Korean Peninsula and Northeast Asia. This includes projects in areas such as the Demilitarized Zone in both South and North Korea. Also, HSF Korea contributes to projects on reforestation and wetland conservation in North Korean border areas with China and Russia. These efforts require elaborate coordination and planning to promote synergies with various international actors. On April 29, HSF Korea visited Songdo to conduct various meetings with long-standing partners such as the Green Climate Fund (GCF), the East Asian–Australasian Flyway Partnership (EAAFP), the Ramsar Regional Center – East Asia, and the North-East Asian Subregional Programme for Environmental Cooperation (NEASPEC) of the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP). During meetings HSF Korea and its partner organizations elaborate on past projects and future prospects of environmental diplomacy in the region.



Academics / Scholarship

WFUNA Peace Fellows Programme

In the 2021 Peace Fellows Programme hosted by the World Federation of United Nations Associations (WFUNA), Mr. Felix Glenk, formerly part of the HSF Korea office contributed to the event with a special lecture titled "Going North From the DMZ - Joint Ecosystems, Biodiversity and Global Engagement in North Korea". In the lecture, Mr. Glenk mainly talked about cooperating with North Korea through environmental conservation and sustainability and shared the experiences from collaborations of HSF Korea in and with North Korea. These activities and projects focused on fostering and promoting peace on the Korean Peninsula.



North Korean Scholarship Holders of HSF

In November, two North Korean scholarship holders visited the HSF headquarters in Munich and met Dr. Susanne Luther, Head of the Institute for International Cooperation, Mr. Alexander Ganepola, Project Coordinator for the locations Korea and Mongolia, and Mr. Felix Glenk, former Project Manager of HSF Korea and now the representative of the HSF Mongolia office. The two students from the Eberswalde University of Sustainable Development (HNEE) visited the forestry experimental garden Grafrath with the HSF staff and shared experiences and impressions of their time at HNEE with Dr. Jutta Möhringer, head of the Institute for the Promotion of Gifted Students at HSF. The HSF scholarship program is designed to provide both individual and long-term support. Thus, alumni are allowed to expand already existing contacts, conduct an international exchange of views, and carry out joint projects.



Global Border Studies

On March 18, the Chung-Ang University GSIS Leaders Forum and the Reconciliation and Coexistence in Contact Zones (RCCZ) research institution co-hosted a special seminar to celebrate the start of the new Global Border Studies graduate program at Chung-Ang University. The seminar discussed the future of border studies and inter-Korean relations. Dr. Bernhard Seliger from HSF Korea spoke about migratory birds and environmental conservation in the border region, highlighting that border studies should not merely focus on the DMZ but had to study the border region as a whole.



Lessons for Korea & Developments in North Korea

On June 9, Dr. Bernhard Seliger, the representative of HSF Korea, gave a lecture on '30 Years of German Unification-Lessons for Korea and Actual Developments in North Korea' to international students at Hallam University of Graduate Studies. Dr. Seliger emphasized that in Germany, the two-country policy created active exchanges which became the basis of reunification by recognizing East and West Germany as two separate countries. He also explained that North Korea is preparing for another 'Arduous March'. He also claimed that, while the impending famine in North Korea is a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, it also stems from the 'frontal breakthrough' strategy pursued by North Korea that aims to actively counter the current sanctions regime.

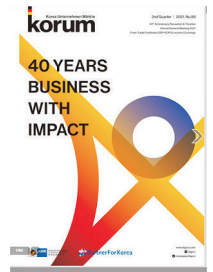


Contributions & Publications



North Korea - economy (almost) no financial sec but fintech innovations i informal economy

Written in April 2021, North Korea announced that it would hold an international conference and a symposium on the future of the Korean Peninsula. The conference took place, and at least one participant, a German expert on the Korean Peninsula, was invited to the event. The HSF Korea office is currently working on a project to support the young generation of the Korean Peninsula.



HSF Korea has contributed to and published several research articles on inter-Korean cooperative efforts for Korean Reunification, sustainable development, and the conservation of biodiversity in the border areas. Great institutions and journals including the Institute for Peace Affairs (IPA), the National Research Institute of Cultural Heritage, the KORUM magazine by the Korean-German Chamber of Commerce and Industry (KGCCI), the Review of North Korean Studies, the Korea Society of Forest Policy Journal, and many more have made these contributions possible.



If you are interested in further details on our efforts, projects, contributions as well as publications, please contact us at info@hss.or.kr or visit our website at <https://korea.hss.de/en/>.