

Welcoming Remarks by Mr. Jong-sik Heo, Vice Mayor, Incheon Metropolitan City

Distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen,

It is my great pleasure to welcome all of you who have travelled to Incheon to participate in the Incheon Meeting of the COAs organized by UNDESA in coordination with UNOSD. I am Jong-sik Heo, Vice Mayor of Incheon Metropolitan City.

Alongside three million citizens of Incheon, I would like to extend a warm welcome to Mr. Liu Zhenmin, Under-Secretary-General for the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs,

Mr. Peter Thomson, the UN Special Envoy for the Oceans,

Vice Minister Yangsoo Kim of the Ministry of Oceans and Fisheries of Korea, and all other distinguished guests to the City of Incheon.

I believe that many of you have had a chance to look at the sea around Incheon on your way to this conference, and I wonder how you felt.

The Yellow Sea is relatively shallow and calm. However, historically, for the past 7 decades, the sea was not always peaceful. Due to geopolitical and economic conditions, many conflicts and tensions were heightened across the Yellow Sea, for most of that time.

But as a result of concerted efforts, including on Incheon citizens' part, risk of conflicts and tensions in the sea around Incheon have been eased, and the possibility of cooperation for peace is ever-growing.

Distinguished guests!

The ocean is a repository of unlimited potentials and resources as the ocean is often regarded as the future of mankind.

Despite or, some would say, because of this, international conflicts and tensions over the oceans are rapidly on the rise.

I believe that one of the main objectives of establishing the COAs is to alleviate the ocean conflicts and promote mutual cooperation of the international community in support of achieving the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs.

Ladies and gentlemen, one Korean word for ocean, “바다” has originated from “받아들이다” meaning “to embrace” in English. As we use the analogy “a mind as wide as the ocean”, the ocean often symbolizes embracing and understanding everything.

Like the true meaning of Ocean, I hope that this meeting will deepen the embracing and understanding among all ocean stakeholders, expanding the potential for cooperation.

I think that embracing and understanding are core values of the sustainable development. To facilitate mutual understanding and cooperation among the COAs, the City of Incheon will also play an active role.

Also, Incheon will work more actively to realize its vision toward an ecologically sustainable marine city. We will join the international community’s efforts in pursuing a sustainable marine environment through active environment protection and conservation of the oceans and wetlands, and creating a marine-friendly urban environment.

Distinguished guests,

Incheon will continue to support the international community’s discussions on sustainable development, providing more venues for valuable discussions such as this meeting.

Additionally, I promise you again,

Incheon will more actively support various activities and upcoming programs of the UNOSD. Once again, I give a big applause to COAs meeting and wish all the best to all of you.

I hope a sustainable future for our planet will be achieved very soon.

Thank you.