

Seoul Hosts the 8th Seoul Defense Dialogue for Building Peace Together

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The ROK Ministry of National Defense (MND) will hold the 2019 Seoul Defense Dialogue (SDD), a vice-ministerial level multilateral security consultative body, in Seoul from September 4 to 6. This year marks the 8th SDD, which first launched in 2012 as a vice-ministerial level multilateral security consultative body to contribute to multilateral security cooperation in the Asia-Pacific region and establishment of peace on the Korean peninsula. The dialogue serves as a platform to promote mutual trust and discuss countermeasures against various security threats and pending issues achievable through international cooperation, thereby playing an important role in peace and stability in the Asia-Pacific region.

The SDD originally had 17 participating countries (15 countries, two international organizations) in its inaugural year, but its participation has expanded to 50 countries from not only the Asia-Pacific region, but also Europe, the Middle East and Africa. The 2019 SDD will be held under the main theme of “Building Peace Together: Challenges and Visions” and will consist of four plenary sessions and three special sessions. Prior to the plenary sessions, Minister of National Defense Jeong Kyeong-doo will give an opening address, Prime Minister Lee Nak-yeon will give opening remarks and Indian Defense Minister Rajnath Singh will give his keynote speech.

In the first plenary session, Moon Chung-in, Special Advisor on Unification, Diplomacy and National Security Affairs to the President, will present a motion on “Peace Process on the Korean Peninsula and International Cooperation,” to which the Vice Defense Minister Park Jae-min, government officials from major countries such as the United States, China, Japan and Russia, and civilian security experts will participate in the discussions.

In the subsequent plenary sessions, renowned security experts from the ROK and abroad will participate in discussions on international cooperation on key global security issues and agendas: the second plenary session will focus on strategic balance in Northeast Asia, the third session on international peacekeeping activities and the fourth session on cyber security.

In addition, for a lively discussion on various agendas, special sessions will be held to cover international cooperation issues of security in the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) region and peace and recovery projects in the Middle East. In particular, the third special session will focus on the outcomes and direction of future development of arms control on the Korean Peninsula. During this session, the implementation status of the September 19 Comprehensive Military Agreement will be evaluated and afterwards, Lee Sang-cheol, former first deputy director of the National Security Office, and Daniël Prins, Chief of the Conventional Arms Branch, Office for Disarmament Affairs at United Nations, will lead the discussions on easing military tensions on the Korean Peninsula.

◆ 2019 SDD Agenda

Session		Topic
Plenary Session	1	Peace Process on the Korean Peninsula and International Cooperation
	2	Peace in Northeast Asia: Challenges and Visions
	3	International Peacekeeping Activities and Humanitarian Assistance
	4	National Strategy and Crisis Management in Cyberspace
Special Session	1	ASEAN: Regional Security and Balance
	2	International Cooperation for Peace and Recovery in the Middle East
	3	Direction of Arms Control for Establishment of Permanent Peace on the Korean Peninsula

Moreover, mini-multilateral vice-ministerial level talks will be held with Central Asia, ASEAN, and Visegrád Group member countries to promote practical defense cooperation and expand the horizon of defense diplomacy through discussions on mutual interests. Particularly, representatives from five Central Asian countries—including Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan—will be invited to participate in the “ROK-Central Asia Defense Vice-Ministerial Talks” to assess the results of the first meeting held last year, discuss ways to enhance ties between ROK and Eurasia, and seek ways to realize security cooperation between ROK and Central Asia.

Simultaneously, the SDD will host the “ROK-ASEAN Defense Vice-Ministerial Talks,” which was established in 2017 to strengthen cooperation with ASEAN, a core player in implementing the New Southern Policy. This year marks the 30th anniversary since the ROK was accorded a full Dialogue Partner status by ASEAN, and a commemorative ROK-ASEAN special summit is to be held in Busan later this year. At SDD, both sides will share the assessment of their 30 years of cooperation and discuss their vision for future defense cooperation. Furthermore, through the “ROK-Visegrád Group Talks,” Poland, Hungary, the Czech Republic and Slovakia will discuss regional security conditions and mutual defense cooperation plans with the ROK. In addition, bilateral talks with 20 other countries participating in the SDD will be held to discuss mutual interests in security issues, defense cooperation and other issues.

On the other hand, the Cyber Working Group Conference, a working-level consultative body first launched in 2014, will also be held this year to discuss and develop cyber security issues. This year, more than 20 countries will participate to share relevant policies of each country on the two topics of “Trends in International Cyber security Norms and Military Implications” and “Measures to Strengthen National Cyber Security Capabilities and Policies on Cyber Education and Manpower Training.” Through this, participants will seek to define roles of the military in changing international norms and forecast paths to future development.

The ROK MND will do its best to help the SDD continue to grow as a practical platform for security discussions and a global security dialogue. Its growth will contribute to building trust in the Asia-Pacific region and establishing peace on the Korean Peninsula as well as regional peace and stability. The MND hopes that this year’s SDD, which comes around the same time of the first anniversary of the Panmunjom Declaration and the September 19 Comprehensive Military Agreement, will showcase the progress and achievements of military tension-easing efforts of the past year and garner support and cooperation from the international community towards the permanent establishment of peace on the Korean Peninsula.