

Joint Statement between the Republic of Korea and the Federal Republic of Germany

The Republic of Korea and the Federal Republic of Germany remain firmly united as close friends and strategic partners, determined to protect and advance their common values and interests. Building on a long history of more than 140 years of diplomatic relations, the President of the Republic of Korea, Mr Lee Jae Myung, and the Federal Chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany, Mr Friedrich Merz, met in Seoul on 29 October 2026 at a time of increased strategic convergence and mutual solidarity.

Considering that the increase in global risks and challenges as well as shared opportunities necessitates concerted action, both sides agree to significantly intensify their bilateral and multilateral cooperation, thereby raising the level of their bilateral relationship to an Enhanced Strategic Partnership.

With geopolitical shifts binding security and economic strategies ever closer together, both sides point to the Asia-Pacific Conference of German Business (APK) in Seoul as a cornerstone of bilateral and regional engagement. The decision to host the conference in the Republic of Korea reflects the country's geopolitical weight, technological edge and role as a trusted anchor for German industries in the Indo-Pacific.

Deepening political and security cooperation

Both sides are committed to deepening their relations in the area of security and defence by pursuing regular military exchanges, training cooperation and strengthening information exchanges. To this end, they will continue to hold bilateral Security Policy Staff Talks between their respective defence ministries on security policy and defence industry cooperation. They further reiterate their commitment to the conclusion of a bilateral agreement on the protection of classified military information. As partners with strong respective defence industrial capacities, both sides encourage their defence industries to explore mutually beneficial areas for further cooperation.

Both sides reiterate their commitment to regular high-level exchanges and contacts in bilateral and multilateral fora, including the ROK-Germany Foreign Ministerial Strategic Dialogue and the European and Indo-Pacific Partners (EIPP) framework. They acknowledge the important role of the respective parliamentary friendship groups and welcome the frequent contacts among members of the National Assembly and Bundestag. They express their intention to formalise the reciprocal exchange of foreign ministry officials.

Both sides share the determination to counter hybrid threats and disinformation. They are committed to further expanding the dialogue on cybersecurity and deepening the exchange regarding the risks and opportunities presented by artificial intelligence and digital platforms. This includes, in particular, cooperating through their respective AISI Institutes – namely the Korea AI Safety Institute and the AI Safety and Security Institute Deutschland. In addition, both sides will collaborate on the development and use of AI, ranging from applications to the development of Frontier AI.

They underline the importance of the Security and Defence Partnership between the European Union and the Republic of Korea as a framework for enhanced cooperation on security issues, as well as their support for the partnership programmes between NATO and its partners in the Indo-Pacific.

Recognising that security and prosperity in Europe and the Indo-Pacific are increasingly intertwined, both sides share a common determination to contribute to stability, security and prosperity in their respective regions and beyond. They remain opposed to coercion or destabilising action, including foreign interference. Both sides reaffirm their support for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of all states.

Strengthening economic, scientific and technological cooperation

Both sides value their strong economic and trade cooperation as a cornerstone of their relationship.

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They welcome the recent cross-investments that further strengthen their prosperity and the competitiveness of their enterprises, and stress the importance of ensuring the continued full implementation of the Free Trade Agreement between the European Union and the Republic of Korea. Both sides reaffirm their commitment to open, free and fair trade and a rules-based trading system, underscoring the need to ensure transparency, predictability and non-discriminatory treatment in bilateral trade and investment relations. Both sides welcome the signing of the Protocol Amending the Korea-Germany Double Taxation Avoidance Agreement, which implements the treaty-related measures of the OECD-G20 project on base erosion and profit shifting (BEPS).

Both sides welcome the Joint Declaration of Intent on a Framework for an Economic and High-tech Partnership concluded between the Ministry of Trade, Industry and Resources (MOTIR) and the Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Energy (BMWE), which will further strengthen bilateral cooperation in the fields of trade, industry, future technologies and innovation, including the automotive sector, batteries, industrial AI, smart manufacturing, advanced energy systems and robotics. Acting as trusted partners with complementary strengths in the semiconductor industry, they intend to deepen bilateral cooperation through a semiconductor ecosystem partnership, to be concluded in the near future. Both sides strive for a sustainable transformation of their key industries and are committed to leveraging their complementary strengths to secure technological leadership. Both sides are committed to coordinating their efforts to increase the resilience of critical supply chains and to promote a green, digital industry. They reaffirm their commitment to further strengthening and modernising the Energy Partnership between Germany and the Republic of Korea in light of the evolving energy landscape and shared decarbonisation goals as well as international commitments.

Both sides reaffirm their commitment to further strengthening their cooperation on digital affairs. Building on existing formats such as the Germany-Korea Digital Dialogue, they will deepen practical cooperation in key areas of digital transformation and artificial intelligence (AI). They welcome the launch of the Joint AI Working Group on AI transparency to exchange views on AI regulation, transparency requirements and the development of practical guidance. Both sides also explore closer cooperation on the use of artificial intelligence in public administration, through bilateral programmes.

As leading research and innovation nations, both sides stress the critical importance of defending science and information integrity and its foundation for multilateral decision making. They value their scientific and research cooperation and are committed to further strengthening their exchange. With complementary scientific and technological strengths, they have significant potential to further deepen bilateral cooperation and foster joint innovation, particularly in semiconductors and advanced microelectronics, industrial and physical AI and AI robotics, AI and supercomputing, space technologies, advanced energy systems, quantum technologies and biotechnology and synthetic biology. Furthermore, they intend to explore new avenues for cooperation in the peaceful use of outer space. Both sides welcome the Republic of Korea's participation in Horizon Europe. To reflect the updated priorities and renew their shared commitment, they intend to conclude an agreement between the Federal Ministry of Research, Technology and Space (BMFTR) and the Ministry of Science and ICT (MSIT).

Protecting the global rules-based order through strengthened cooperation in multilateral institutions

Both sides share a deep commitment to universal human rights, a rules-based international order, free trade, ambitious climate action, environmental protection and freedom of navigation and safe overflight in accordance with international law. They remain steadfast in their resolve to protect and strengthen the multilateral system based on international law with the UN Charter at its core, including international courts. Both sides will jointly promote democracy, the rule of law, global education and gender equality to support open, inclusive and resilient societies.

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Both sides agree that, in a period of global upheaval, a renewed and refocused UN is key to stabilising the international order, and that, to this end, structural reforms on all levels and in all areas of work must continue to make the system more efficient and effective, accountable and impactful.

Both sides will strive to cooperate in the WTO and beyond, bilaterally and with like-minded partners, to uphold, strengthen and reform the open and rules-based multilateral trading order, including through new concerted efforts to promote rules-based trade, support the continued successful implementation of the EU-Korea Free Trade Agreement, and work towards better interlinkage of existing trade agreements to better reflect the realities of interconnected production and supply chains. In the face of the global climate crisis as well as the biodiversity and pollution crisis, they reaffirm their commitment to the Paris Agreement, the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework and other Multilateral Environmental Agreements and strive for ambitious climate action and the timely and full implementation of international commitments to protect and restore biodiversity and ecosystems and the end of plastic pollution. They further pledge to coordinate their efforts to ensure global food security and to build resilient agricultural systems.

Both sides stand together in their commitment to upholding UNCLOS. Disruption of sea lanes, including the Strait of Hormuz and the Bab-al-Mandab Strait, whether by force, threat or the introduction of unlawful tolls or conditions for transit, threatens security and prosperity of all, especially the world's most vulnerable, and is unacceptable.

Reaffirming their strong commitment to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, both sides acknowledge their intention to pursue closer cooperation and coordination to enhance the effectiveness and impact of their respective development cooperation efforts, including through bilateral consultations, and to commence considerations for a framework beyond 2030.

Fostering cultural cooperation and deepening people-to-people exchanges

Both sides recognise the long tradition and importance of people-to-people exchanges between both sides, including the contribution that Korean miners and nurses and their descendants made to Germany's and the Republic of Korea's economy from the 1960s onwards. Both sides reiterate their commitment to work closely together in the fields of education and culture.

They acknowledge the work of the German-Korean and Korean-German Societies, as well as the Korea-Germany Forum, in fostering mutual understanding, and emphasise the importance of respective German and Korean language training, including through departments of Korean Studies and German Studies at their respective universities. They are committed to supporting the allocation of adequate resources to offering Korean and German language training in their respective public schools. They commend the cultural and educational work of the Korean Cultural Centre in Germany and the German Goethe-Institut in Korea, as well as the work of the German School Seoul International and the Korean schools in Germany, all of which serve as a place for mutual exchange, especially for young people. They further value the Working Holiday Programme Agreement and recognise the importance of promoting youth exchange as a whole. In this context, Germany welcomes the decision of the Republic of Korea to validate the status of the German Academic Exchange Service's office in Seoul as an officially registered Information Centre.

Both sides recognise the important cooperation established between the National Library of Korea and the Berlin State Library, especially in the field of documentation and data, contributing to the preservation of culture.

Both sides value their exchange on the shared experience of national division and underscore their willingness to further develop this dialogue in the framework of the Korea-Germany Advisory Committee in light of the situation on the Korean Peninsula.