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Opening Ceremony

Speech by **Kwan-Yong Park**,

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- I. Introduction – Thanks to Hosts
- II. Role of the NEAEF in the Region
- III. Korea-Russia Economic Cooperation
 - a. Construction, trading companies, land development
- IV. Hope for the Forum's Success and Prosperity of the Region
- V. Best Wishes to the YLP

First of all, on behalf of the Korean delegation, I would like to express my deep gratitude to our hosts, the government of Khabarovsk Krai, and to the Northeast Asia Economic Forum for gathering us here in the beautiful city of Khabarovsk. Today we begin the 15th Northeast Asia Economic Forum in the pursuit of bringing peace and prosperity to Northeast Asia through promotion of regional economic cooperation. This is the 15th meeting of the Forum, but only the second meeting held in Russia, and for this reason I am very excited about our meeting here in Khabarovsk and the work we can do to further integrate the Russian Far East into the greater regional economy and improve cooperation in the greater region.

At this fifteenth meeting of the Northeast Asia Economic Forum we will focus on energy, transportation, finance, and tourism in Northeast Asia. Each of these issues is vital to the future economic prosperity and peace in the region and will be keys in determining the success of establishing a stable, closely connected Northeast Asia economy that will continue to prosper and grow in the face of the challenges posed by today's ever-changing world economy. By gathering experts from each of nations in the region to discuss these issues, we will identify the opportunities that exist for greater collaboration and take the first steps toward creating a truly regional economy.

As a representative of the Korean delegation, I am also especially excited about this meeting in Khabarovsk, because, for both the private and public sector of the Republic of Korea, the Russian Far East is an important region with vast potential for economic partnership. In the past decade, Korea-Russia cooperation in the areas of construction, trade, and land development has grown rapidly. Yet there are still many areas of opportunity yet to be explored. It is my hope that in the next two days we can spread light on such opportunities and increase Korea-Russia economic exchange in trade and investment.

The acceleration of economic cooperation in Northeast Asia is essential to the global and regional economy. It is also essential for each of the countries represented here today. Let us work together to contribute to the economic cooperation in this region and to the prosperity of Northeast Asia, by deepening our understanding of each other and sharing our ideas.

I also understand that this year's meeting also marks the beginning of the Northeast Asia Economic Forum's Young Leaders Training and Research Program. I would like to congratulate Dr. Lee-Jay Cho on organizing such a wonderful program, and I would also like to congratulate the Young Leaders themselves for having such a great opportunity to learn about the region from their seminar speakers and from one another. There is no doubt in my mind that each of these Young Leaders will benefit greatly from their experiences here in Khabarovsk. I urge you to take advantage of this opportunity and maintain the close relationships you make here in Khabarovsk with your colleagues throughout your careers.

Again, I want to thank the Khabarovsk Krai government for hosting the 15th Forum, and I would like to express my wishes for a successful meeting.