

# *Keynote Speech*

at the 17th International Seminar on the Naming of Seas

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Good morning,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,  
Distinguished participants,

First of all, let me express my warm welcome to all of you to **the 17th International Seminar on Sea Names** co-hosted by the Society for East Sea and the Northeast Asian History Foundation. It is a great honour and privilege for me to address this august forum. Launched in 1995, this international seminar has been held annually, traveling through such major cities of the world as The Hague(2010), Sydney(2009), Tunis(2008), Vienna(2007), Seoul(2006) etc.

The seminar was initially motivated to provide a place for discussion on the naming issue of the sea body between Korea and Japan. Afterwards, it has broadened its scope to be a general forum to discuss principles and practices of naming geographical features, and issues of international standardization and documentation. It has significantly contributed to deepening research and understanding in

international standardization of naming geographical features and established itself as an important and authoritative forum in the field. The results of the seminar are regularly reported to the United Nations Group of Experts on Geographical Names (UNGEGN).

Northeast Asian History Foundation, which is co-hosting this Seminar together with the Society for East Sea, was founded in 2006 as a think-tank to undertake academic and policy researches on historical issues in the Northeast Asian region. Its primary mission is to explore ways, from academic view, to enhance harmonious and shared views among neighboring countries on historical issues in the region. It aims at forming a common basis on which neighboring countries can overcome any possible conflict which might arise from divergent historical interpretation and consolidate the ground for working together for peace and prosperity in the region. As part of its mission, the Foundation has been making efforts to enhance the international community's understanding of the issues surrounding the geographic names as well.

The Society for East Sea, on its part, was founded as a non-profit organization in 1994 with the aim of restoring the name 'East Sea' in the international community. Since Korean Government officially raised the naming issue over the East Sea area at the United Nations in 1992, the Society for East Sea has conducted a profound survey and research on the name 'East Sea' and has been making continuous efforts to

disseminate it throughout the world.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

‘East Sea’ is not merely a name to call a certain sea area but a name which has been enshrined in the heart of the Korean people as their spiritual home for the past 2000 years. What is meant for the Korean people by the name ‘East Sea’ is well manifested in the Korean national anthem which begins with the following line: "until the wave of East Sea dries out and Mount Baekdu is worn out, Heaven will protect our land forever... " That's why Koreans are so sensitive to the long-outstanding issue of naming the sea area in question. Furthermore, the name ‘Sea of Japan’ reminds Koreans of the past suffering when they were deprived of their own name by the Japanese authority during the Japanese colonial occupation in the first half of the 20th century. Koreans were forced to abandon their Korean names to adopt and use Japanese name.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Distinguished scholars and experts,

I dare say that the name ‘Sea of Japan’ is the legacy of the Japanese colonial occupation. As you are well aware, the IHO (International Hydrographic Organization) published its 1st edition of S-23 in 1929, 2nd edition in 1937 and 3rd edition in 1953. Korea could not have its voice heard in those days because of the Japanese occupation of Korea

from 1910 to 1945 and because of the Korean War which lasted from 1950 to 1953.

The international community, including Korea, has been awaiting an updated edition of the S-23 to be published by the International Hydrographic Organization, which is already long overdue. The naming dispute between Korea and Japan over the sea area has been one of the most important factors at least during the last decade to delay the publication of new editions.

Since the vote on the final draft of the 4th edition of the S-23 was interrupted in September 2002, the Korean government has made every possible effort to seek a mutually agreeable solution through bilateral talks with Japan. In spite of several rounds of bilateral consultations between Korea and Japan, Japan's pronounced position of no flexibility throughout the meetings has impeded the constructive progress of the talks. In light of the uncompromising attitude of Japan, the only option, for the moment, is to use both names 'East Sea' and 'Sea of Japan' concurrently.

Indeed, the concurrent use pending an agreement on a common name is in line with the long-established practice in the hydrographic community as well as with the IHO Technical Resolution A.4.2.6 and UNCSGN Resolution III/20. They endorse the principle of simultaneous use of different names for a shared geographic feature when the countries

concerned do not agree on a common name.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Geographical names are an expression of perceptions of a place and a means of communication about the place. Since geographical names are part of the lives of the people who use them, it is common practice to give the highest priority to the names used by the local people when deciding on a name for international use.

We are not insisting on the sole use of 'East Sea' for the Japanese territorial sea or EEZ. In the same way, Korea cannot accept its territorial sea or EEZ being referred to as 'Sea of Japan'. Also, Korea does not ignore the name 'Sea of Japan', which is used by 130 million Japanese people. Korea simply seeks Japan's respect and acknowledgement of the name which has been used for 2,000 years and is still being used by 75 million South and North Korean people. Wouldn't it be so sorrowful if our beautiful coast should be called 'Sea of Japan' and our offshore islands should float on the surface of the Sea of Japan?

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am pleased to note that the international community is increasingly aware of the cause of the Korean people. In this respect, I would like to extend my sincere gratitude to the Society for East Sea for its contributions, among other

things, to enhancing the understanding of the historical origins and background of the 2,000 year-old name 'East Sea' in the international community. To bring forward the date for the name 'East Sea' to be widely accepted in the international community, your continued interest and cooperation is very essential.

Before closing, let me convey my sincere thanks to President Park Nohyoung and all the members of the Society for East Sea for their contribution and dedication for the successful preparation and organization of the Seminar.

I hope that this seminar will be a productive and meaningful occasion with thought-provoking presentations and lively discussions among renowned scholars and experts. I hope you will also enjoy the magnificent and picturesque scenery during your stay here in Vancouver.

Thank you. //the end//