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Secretary of State Madeleine K. Albright

Toast at Dinner hosted by the Secretary
Pyongyang, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, October 24, 2000
As released by the Office of the Spokesman
U.S. Department of State

SECRETARY ALBRIGHT: Chairman Kim Jong Il, Vice Marshal Jo, Foreign Minister Paek, First Vice Foreign Minister Kang, excellencies, ministers and colleagues, I have had the pleasure of hosting many dinners, but I never expected to play the role of hostess for such a gathering as this in Pyongyang. I thank you for coming and for the kind welcome you have shown to our delegation throughout the past two days.

This has been a very memorable visit. In such a short time, I have had a chance to see first-hand the beauty of your countryside, the charm and dancing skill of some of your youngest citizens, and the awesome acrobatic talent of your people.

Last night, our whole delegation marveled at the images of magnolia and "Kim Jongilia" flowers created by cards held up by your students. In fact, I am tempted to go out and touch the paintings to make sure the paintings are not cards.

I have also had a valuable opportunity to bring greetings to the Chairman from President Clinton and an extended chance to share thoughts with him about regional and bilateral issues.

I was gratified, as well, by the chance to meet President Kim and to renew my acquaintance with Vice Marshal Jo and Foreign Minister Paek.

These discussions cannot simply erase the differences that have arisen between our countries over the past decades. But our mutual willingness to talk, exchange visits, and get to know one another better is providing a platform for future progress.

As President Clinton has made clear, we want to work with you to remove the obstacles that have separated us in the past. We want to support you in your efforts with Seoul to overcome Cold War divisions, and in your upcoming talks with Japan. We are a peace-loving nation and desire to take steps with you that will ensure peace for generations to come.

Mr. Chairman, there are many dimensions to diplomacy, from intense discussions on security, to the establishment of diplomatic posts, to showing respect for cultural heritage, to the challenge of international athletic competition.

Sometimes, sports can serve as a mirror reflecting improvements in relations or as a springboard to further gains. For example, the world was delighted this past month to see Koreans from the

North and South march together in Sydney under one flag.

Mr. Chairman, in the same spirit that has taken hold since the North-South Summit earlier this year, I invite you all to join me in a toast to friendship between our peoples, and to a new era of opportunity and promise throughout the Land of the Morning Calm.

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