

Opening Remarks – Stephen Schmidt, ITS Chair
24th Biennial Conference of the International Telecommunications Society (ITS),
Seoul, Korea

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Introduction

- Good morning.

안녕하세요? 좋은 아침입니다!

- It is a great pleasure and an honour to welcome you to Seoul, Korea for the **24th Biennial Conference of the International Telecommunications Society (ITS)**!
- A very BIG thank you to everyone that made the effort to be here, in person!

Acknowledging ITS and Previous Conferences in Korea

- As we are gathered together in Seoul, it is timely to reflect on the history of ITS in Korea, with ITS conferences previously held here in 2004, 2018, and now in 2024.
- Each time we have come here, we have experienced a Korea in perpetual transformation (in terms of economy, technology, global impact, and more).
- But we also encountered another Korea, during each visit, one that is constant, enduring, unchanging and beautiful. 너무너무 아름다워요 . This we might call the Korean soul.
- This morning, I intend to celebrate both of these visions of Korea – change and constancy, transformation and tradition, technology and culture.
- I will speak about our host country, Korea, with a focus on ICT innovation, Hallyu 한류 (the K-Wave), and education. These topics will help illuminate key themes and areas of focus for the conference.

ICT Innovation

- The story of Korea’s post-war “economic miracle” is well-known, but bears repeating in the presence of a very international audience.
- From the post-war era, Korea rapidly evolved from a fundamentally agrarian society (in the mid-1960s) to a modern industrial power:
 - now the #13 economy in the world, ranked by GDP; and
 - a global leader in manufacturing, ICT and digital services, inter alia
- This transformation was driven by visionary government policies, starting in the 1960s.
- The transformation was also fundamentally enabled by the Korean people themselves – through *their sacrifices, their determination, their focus on the collective good* and, above all, *through their love for this great country*.
- Korea has been a leader in telecommunications, signalled by achievements that include
 - very early global leadership in broadband deployment;
 - commercial launch leadership across successive generations of mobile networks (CDMA, LTE, and 5G).
 - Now advancing as a global frontrunner in 6G.
- Reflecting on Korea’s impressive ICT innovations, against the backdrop of history, it quickly becomes apparent that there has not been just a single “Korean miracle” – but innumerable “miracles” spread across the centuries.
- Korea’s history of technological innovation reaches very far back in time:
 - **Cheomseongdae (첨성대/ Cheom-Seong-Dae)** – the “star-gazing tower”. It is the oldest existing astronomical observatory in Asia.
 - It was built in the 7th century, in Gyeongju, Korea.
 - **Cheomseongdae is technology** – it is a machine for seeing into space, from earth, and for mapping the stars for humankind.
 - A Naver Maps of the heavens, *but from 1300 years ago*.
- **Hangul by King Sejong (1442):**

- Hangul was purpose built, by the great King Sejong 세종, to promote literacy through ease of learning and ease of use.
- Hangul is a 100% made-in-Korea innovation. It does not rely on any previous written script
- Hangul is the world's newest/youngest alphabet.
- It has the distinction of being of the few alphabets on earth that is featural, meaning that there is a systematic visual relationship between the sound and the symbol.
- Hangul is a *communications technology – developed in the 15th century and still in use today.*
- Indeed, one could say that King Sejong's innovation is remarkable as a prefiguration of modern digital encoding techniques.

K-Wave (Hallyu 한류)

- The K-Wave, or Hallyu (한류), brings Korea's cultural heritage and innovative spirit to the global stage by:
 - blending traditional Korean elements with modern pop culture,
 - creating a unique aesthetic celebrated in food, music, dramas, film, and beauty standards.

It is instructive to think of the K-wave as progressing through phases:

- (1) Initially, the surge in popularity of Korean dramas and films in Japan and China laid the foundation for Hallyu 한류 regionally.
- (2) The emergence of K-pop icons BTS and Black Pink through platforms such YouTube and social media platforms marked the next phase, expanding Korea's cultural influence across Asia and into the Americas and Europe.

- (3) Now, the evolution continues as Korean creators actively target global markets, with platforms such as Netflix distributing hits like 'Squid Game' and 'Extraordinary Attorney Woo' worldwide.
- This dynamic has ushered in an inflection point for the K-Wave, characterized by:
 - Platform Competition: The competition is between U.S. giants like Google and Meta and Korean platforms like NAVER and Kakao, which innovate with localized content.
 - Value Capture: The struggle over profit from Korean content—whether by global platforms distributing internationally or local companies retaining benefits.
- Ultimately, The K-Wave significantly enhances Korea's digital economy and soft power, influencing global perceptions through cultural diplomacy and strengthening international economic ties.

Education

- It is significant that we are gathered together – not on a factory floor, or in a government building (all places driving Korean ICT success) – but in a university.
- Indeed, it is impossible to imagine the Korean miracle, in general, or Korea's ICT achievements in particular, without strong universities and without a strong national commitment to education.
- This great university– *Korea University* – traces its origins to 1905, to the final years of the Joseon Dynasty where it was founded as [보성 전문 학교] Boseong College.
- The motto of the college was 교 육 구 국 (教育救國): *Education saves the country*.
- I cannot think of a better description of the importance and centrality of Korean universities, to the Korean ICT miracle, than *Education saves the country*.
- Education has been a ladder out of poverty and privation and has raised up the entire country.

- Boseong College endured and overcame the many terrible hardships of the last century and eventually grew into the leading university we see here today.
- This university is Korea in miniature:
 - rooted in tradition and committed to transformation;
 - blessed with strong local roots and global vision and ambition;
 - having faced immense challenges and hardships,
 - but having overcome them to achieve even greater successes and glories.
- Korea is one of the most remarkable stories and remarkable countries on earth. The world needs more of all of the qualities that have made this country and this university great.

Thank you's

- I wish to express deep and sincere thanks on behalf of the ITS Board and all of us here to our esteemed conference organizers:

김교수님,

권교수님,

정교수님 도,

정말 정말 감사합니다!

- **Prof. Seongcheol Kim (성철김)** ITS Board member, Director of SSRC and CIS, Korea University;
- **Prof. Youngsun Kwon (영선권)** Head, Graduate School of Bio Innovation Management, KAIST; and
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- **Prof. Yoonhyuk Jung (윤혁정)**, President, Korea Media Management Association.

- Organizing a conference of this scale demands tremendous effort, and we are grateful to the international organizing committee, the local program committee, the dozens of volunteers supporting us, and our hosts organizations:
 - Korea University;
 - Korea Media Management Association; and
 - Graduate School of Bio Innovation Management, KAIST.

- My last thank you is to all of you:
 - A conference like this is a framework provided by organizers, sponsors, and host institutions;

 - But it is all of you—participants, paper writers, students—who bring this event to life with your energy, your ideas, and your smiles. Thank you for co-creating this conference with us.

- In closing, I hope everyone enjoys, immensely, over the next several days and I look forward to meeting as many of you as possible.