

Ex-Canadian PM hopes S. Korea, Japan find satisfactory way to solve sex slavery issue

SEOUL, Oct. 30 (Yonhap) -- A former Canadian prime minister voiced hope Friday that South Korea and Japan can find a "satisfactory" way to resolve the issue of Tokyo's wartime sexual slavery, the main source of diplomatic tension between the countries.

Kim Campbell made the remarks as President Park Geun-hye and her Japanese counterpart, Shinzo Abe, will hold their first summit next Monday amid persistent historic rows over Japan's sexual enslavement of Korean women during World War II.

Campbell said she believes that the issue is still "painful" to Korean victims, adding that war is no longer an excuse to abuse women's human rights.

"I hope that there can be reconciliation and understanding that will be satisfactory (and) that will enable the leaders to move ahead," Campbell said in an interview with Yonhap News Agency in Seoul.



Former Canadian Prime Minister Kim Campbell speaks during an interview with Yonhap News Agency in Seoul on Oct. 30, 2015. Campbell voiced hope that South Korea and Japan can find a "satisfactory" way to resolve the issue of Tokyo's wartime sexual slavery, the main source of diplomatic tension between the countries. (Yonhap)

Campbell, who served as the first female prime minister in Canada in 1993, was in Seoul to attend a forum on global peace Thursday.

Since taking office in early 2013, Park has shunned a summit with Abe, citing Japan's refusal to apologize for Tokyo's wartime wrongdoings. It is not clear how sincerely Abe will deal with the issue at the bilateral summit.

The issue warrants urgency as the number of former South Korean sex slaves has dropped to 47, with their average age standing at nearly 90.

Campbell expressed hope that Seoul and Tokyo could find some "formula" to go beyond the issue so that the two nations can move toward a future-oriented relationship.

Touching on inter-Korean ties, Campbell said she was touched by the commitment by South Koreans to seek better ties with North Korea.

South and North Korea reached a landmark deal on Aug. 25 to defuse military tension and make efforts to promote inter-Korean exchanges.

Campbell said the North's signing of the deal itself is seen as a small sign of hope for better relations between South and North Korea.

On the North's human rights issue, Campbell also said she admires South Koreans' willingness to search for ways to persuade Pyongyang to improve its human rights record.

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