

Economic Delegation from DPRK, March 19 – April 3, 2011

Ten economic officials and two diplomats from the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) paid a historic two week educational visit to the United States March 19-April 3, 2011. The University of California Institute on Global Conflict and Cooperation (IGCC) Director Susan Shirk organized the visit with the objective of improving North Korean understanding of the American economic system and American understanding of the North Korean economic system. The study visit was hosted by IGCC, the Pacific Century Institute, and the Asia Society, and also received support from the Carnegie Corporation, the MacArthur Foundation, and the Open Society Institute.

The bi-coastal tour began in Los Angeles on March 19 where the DPRK economic officials were welcomed by the Pacific Century Institute. The group was introduced to retail and tourism in the U.S. with a visit to Home Depot and Universal Studios. At the Port of Long Beach and the Mountain Meadow Mushroom Farm, the officials learned about the foreign trade infrastructure and the economics of the food business.

An intensive program of class lectures followed at the University of California, San Diego, March 21-27. Faculty of the Graduate School of International Relations and Pacific Studies taught classes on the American economy, government regulation, banking and monetary policy, state and local government, the role of the CEO and corporate strategy, and economic growth in the Asia-Pacific region. The delegation visited UCSD's Sustainability Resource Center and a Sempra Energy power plant. They talked with high-technology entrepreneurs Qualcomm founder Irwin Jacobs and Life Technologies CEO Greg Lucier when they visited their firms. The economic officials learned about the sustainable seafood business at the Catalina Seafood Company. The officials also were enthusiastically welcomed to dinner at the homes of four UCSD faculty and community members and their families.

The group travelled to New York City, March 27-30, where it was hosted by Orville Schell, director of the Center on U.S.-China Relations of the Asia Society. Nobel Prize winning economist Dr. Joseph Stiglitz and UN Assistant Secretary-General Dr. Ajay Chhibber spoke about economic development and multilateral economic cooperation. Lectures on business and tax law by NYU law professors were followed by site visits to the Citigroup Bank and Bloomberg News.

The group's final stop was San Francisco, March 30-April 3, where it was introduced to the Northern California regional economy through lectures and site visits. A day in Silicon Valley, including visits to Google and Stanford University and meetings with Korean American entrepreneurs and finance and legal experts, highlighted the ingredients that combine to produce an innovation economy. At a large scale family rice farm in Davis, the officials learned about responsible land and water resource management in an agricultural business.

IGCC and its non-governmental organization partners hope that this visit will be the first in a series of activities that enhance mutual learning on economic matters between the U.S. and the DPRK.