



## **Founding Declaration of the Silk-road Universities Network (SUN)**

The land and maritime Silk Road are the cradle of three major civilizations, the great passageways along which humankind travelled and exchanged goods and knowledge from long ago. The Silk Road is a source of deep-seated pride for vast populations to this day, and holds a special place in many people's hearts as an important destination to meet others and experience a spectacular range of knowledge, history and culture.

Sadly, however, we are witnessing terrible murder and destruction in some regions along the Silk Road today. They have become the ground on which nations fight wars with each other, and where cultures and religions clash in dispute. If we allow these conflicts to continue they will escalate and darken the future of the Silk Road, diminishing this great source of pride into a place of shame and agony.

While it is generally the task of the leaders of nations and religions to resolve these issues, they are hindered by many limitations. They must represent the best interests of their nations and religious beliefs, and the conflict we see in these regions arise out a clash between such interests and religious beliefs. This is why intellectuals and universities, as the institutions and organizations realized by these intellectuals, can present an alternative and fundamental solution to these disputes.

If we are to transcend the current threats to the civilizational values represented by the Silk Road, caused by narrow-minded and exclusive nationalism, religious prejudice, then we must strive toward a genuine appreciation for individual differences and universal truths. This is where intellectuals can play an important role, as the very people tasked with thinking and acting based on these standards. And it is universities where these intellectuals are concentrated the most, and where future intellectuals are educated, trained and produced.

The history of the Silk Road teaches us a very important lesson. When all individual differences presiding along the Silk Road are recognized as deserving respect and blessing, and when these individual differences are exchanged upon the principle of fair trade, then mankind will be able to sustain its civilization in true peace and prosperity, but should such individual differences be recognized as a reason to discriminate or dominate, exploit others then peace cannot be maintained and dispute and war will follow, causing great pain and agony to mankind.

We sincerely appreciate the precious values and lessons provided by the Silk Road to human civilization, and at the same time we recognize the harsh realities it faces, toward which we share a grave sense of responsibility to resolve. In order to start our journey toward taking this responsibility and realizing our shared vision, we have gathered together in the City of Gyeongju, the Province of Gyeongsangbukdo, Republic of Korea from August 21 to 23, 2015. We all agree to establish the Silk-road Universities Network (SUN) and to do our best through SUN (1) to advance our education and research on the reality of the Silk Road areas and the values and meanings of the Silk Road as the legacies of human civilizations and the reality; (2) to promote cultural and athletic exchanges; (3) to do international volunteering activities jointly by students of SUN; and (4) to enable students of SUN to explore the land and maritime Silk Road. It is our belief that the sprit of Silk Road can be revitalized with these activities and that our education of young people with this spirit will end up with future leaders sharing with this vision and spirit all over the world. It is our sincere hope that more and more people will join us.

- Declared by all participants of SUN Inaugural General Assembly on August 23, 2015 in the City of Gyeongju, Province of Gyeongsangbukdo, Republic of Korea.