



Six-Party Talks and China's Role as an Intermediary in the Process

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(As Delivered)

Thank you for inviting me to speak on the Six-Party Talks and China's role as an intermediary in the process.

I'll summarize where we are today in four points. **First**, it is the clear, consistent and firm policy of the President and the Secretary to achieve denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula through peaceful means, through the multilateral diplomacy of the Six-Party Talks. The D.P.R.K.'s nuclear programs are a multilateral threat; we seek a multilateral solution.

Second, we have long believed North Korea has the capability to produce nuclear weapons. The D.P.R.K.'s February 10 Foreign Ministry statement, that North Korea had "manufactured nuclear weapons," doesn't change our perception of North Korea's capability, but deepens our concern about the potential to transfer nuclear materials and technology and underscores the North's challenge to the global non-proliferation regime.

Third, China has played a constructive role throughout the Six-Party Talks and we are appreciative of China's efforts to create the conditions for a constructive multilateral discussion with the D.P.R.K.

We are at a critical juncture in the Talks, and it is all the more imperative that China, as Chairman of the Talks, use its influence and leverage to bring the D.P.R.K. back to the table and achieve our shared goal of a nuclear-free Korean Peninsula.

Fourth, the D.P.R.K. now has an historic opportunity to join the mainstream of its very prosperous region, to transform positively its relations with the international community, and to benefit from that transformation in terms of enhanced trade, aid and investment opportunities.

But North Korea must meet the concerns of the international community, and dismantle its nuclear programs, plutonium and uranium, in a manner that is complete, transparent and verifiable.

The Six-Party Talks and China's Role

I'll speak in more detail now about the Six-Party process and the role China has played.

After a round of trilateral discussions in April 2003 in Beijing, China hosted the first round of Six-Party Talks in August 2003. The other five parties all told North Korea very clearly in plenary session that they would not accept North Korea's possession of nuclear arms.

We held a second round of Six-Party Talks in February 2004. The parties agreed to regularize the talks, and to establish a working group to set issues up for resolution at the plenary meetings.

At that second round of talks, the R.O.K. offered fuel aid to the D.P.R.K., contingent on a comprehensive and verifiable halt of its nuclear programs as a first step toward complete nuclear dismantlement. Other non-U.S. parties subsequently expressed a willingness to do so as well. Two sessions of the Working Group, running two-to-three days each, were held after the second round of talks.

At the third round of talks, in June 2004, the United States tabled a comprehensive proposal. The R.O.K. and D.P.R.K. also tabled proposals. The United States met directly with all of the parties over the course of the talks, and held a two-and-a-half-hour discussion with the D.P.R.K. delegation.

Despite the agreement of all six parties at that time to resume talks by the end of September 2004, the D.P.R.K. has not yet agreed to return to the table to discuss our or even its own proposal.

Under our June proposal, we and the other parties would be prepared to take corresponding measures as the D.P.R.K. dismantled its nuclear programs within the framework of the Talks.

Our proposal provides for multilateral security assurances, and progress towards a new relationship with North Korea if it commits to and then follows through on completely dismantling its nuclear weapons and nuclear programs, including its uranium enrichment program, permanently and verifiably.

Other partners in the Six-Party process have indicated a willingness to provide energy assistance once North Korea commits to dismantlement.

President Bush and Secretary Rice have made clear we have no intention of invading or attacking North Korea.

Diplomatic contacts among the six parties are continuing. You may have seen that Christopher Hill, U.S. Ambassador to Korea and Representative for the Six Party Talks, traveled to Beijing for talks with the Chinese and subsequently, on February 24, held talks in Seoul with China's Vice Foreign Minister Wu Dawei as well as South Korean and Japanese officials. I've spent most of today with P.R.C. Ambassador for Korean Peninsula Affairs Ning Fukui.

The visit late last month to Pyongyang of Wang Jiarui, Chairman of the Chinese Communist Party International Department, and his meeting with Kim Chong Il, reflected the importance China places on moving the process forward. Regarding the press stories earlier this week characterizing China's position in the Six-Party Talks, the P.R.C. Foreign Ministry dismissed them, saying the "contents of the reports did not correspond with facts."

We met with the North Koreans in New York twice late last year, to reiterate we remain ready to resume the talks at an early date, without preconditions, and to ask them to return to the table. We expressed our willingness to respond at the table to any questions the D.P.R.K. might have, and indicated we have questions for the D.P.R.K. about its proposal. We underscored that we are not prepared to negotiate conditions for a return to the table.

We have also discussed with our North Korean counterparts the example of Libya, detailing the benefits Libya is now receiving for its transformed behavior.

North Korea's Opportunity

Against the backdrop of the Six-Party talks, the D.P.R.K. appears to be trying to undertake some measures in response to its disastrous economic situation. The door is open for the D.P.R.K., by addressing the concerns of the international community, to vastly improve the lives of its people, enhance its own security, move toward normalizing its relations with the United States and others, and raise its stature in the world.

The United States, working with our allies and others, remains committed to resolving the nuclear issue through peaceful diplomatic means. While we are not prepared to reward the D.P.R.K. for coming back into compliance with its international obligations, we have laid out the path to a peaceful resolution of the nuclear issue.

What is needed now is a strategic decision by Pyongyang to recognize that its nuclear programs make it less, not more, secure, and to decide to eliminate them permanently, thoroughly, and transparently, subject to effective verification. We are working together with the other parties to bring the D.P.R.K. to understand that it is in its own self-interest to make that decision.

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