



Press Availability With South Korean Foreign Minister Ban Ki-Moon

Secretary Condoleezza Rice

Seoul, South Korea
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FOREIGN MINISTER BAN: How are you, everyone? First of all, I welcome wholeheartedly Secretary Rice's visit to Korea. This is the Secretary's second visit to Korea since she became the Secretary of State and it shows how strong and valuable our bilateral relationship is. In addition, Secretary Rice's visit to this region manifests the United States deep interest and active role in this region, including Korea.

First of all, I met with Secretary Rice this morning from 10 o'clock to 11:05, had an excellent discussion on issues such as the ROK-U.S. alliance, North Korean nuclear issue, the overall ROK-U.S. relationship and the Northeast Asia situation. Yesterday, Secretary Rice and I held an ROK-U.S. foreign ministers meeting over dinner for two hours and ten minutes. We had a very useful discussion on the ROK-U.S. alliance and the North Korean nuclear issue.

In particular, I am very happy that both Secretary Rice and I participated in the signing ceremony of the MOU for the relocation of the U.S. Embassy Chancery, which has been a pending issue for a long time, right before our meeting.

Based on the successful outcome of the ROK-U.S. summit that was held on June 10th, Secretary Rice and I agreed to continue to cooperate closely so that our strong alliance will further deepen and develop into a comprehensive and dynamic partnership in all areas. In addition, we also discussed holding a ROK-U.S. summit when President Bush visits Korea on the occasion of the Pusan APEC summit meeting in November.

On the North Korean nuclear issue, Secretary Rice and I welcomed North Korea's decision to return to the six-party talks as a positive step toward resolving the North Korean nuclear issue. We agreed that this is the fruition of constructive diplomatic efforts made by the ROK and the U.S. among other parties to the talks. Secretary Rice evaluated our important proposal as a creative proposal beneficial to resolving the North Korean nuclear issue. She also welcomed the progress made in inter-Korean dialogue and expressed her appreciation for our government's role in convincing North Korea to return to talks and to discuss its nuclear programs.

I expressed my appreciation for active U.S. efforts, such as recent contacts with North Korea, that convinced North Korea to return to the talks.

In addition, we share the view that while the resumption of the talks itself is significant, it is more important to make actual progress in the talks and we exchanged our ideas on the goals and the strategies for the forthcoming talks and agreed to carry out detailed consultations with respective heads of delegations to the six-party talks. We also expressed our appreciation for the efforts made by China as the host country of the six-party talks and hope that State Councilor Tang Jiaxuan's visit to North Korea will positively contribute to the successful holding of the six-party talks and eventual resolution of the North Korean nuclear issue.

Thank you.

SECRETARY RICE: Thank you very much, and I would like to thank you, Minister Ban, for the excellent (inaudible) here. Before turning to the discussion of these issues, I would like to just take one moment to take note of the tragedy today of the suicide bombing that has taken place in Israel. Mr. Abbas, the President of the Palestinian Authority, has said this is, of course, a crime against the aspirations of the Palestinian people. It is also, of course, a crime against the Israeli people. And it demonstrates that there will always be terrorists who are determined to try and frustrate the hopes of people everywhere for peace. And we are calling upon everyone to react strongly to these terrorists. We will be in touch with and have been in touch with the Palestinian Authority on this matter and, of course, wish to -- our greatest condolences to those whose lives have been lost as well as to victims (inaudible).

Thank you very much, Minister, for allowing me to say that.

Let me just turn to the very productive and friendly talks that we've had here in the Republic of Korea. We have no stronger friend than the Republic of Korea. We have an excellent (inaudible) but more importantly, we have an alliance that is based on common values and that come through every time we have an opportunity to talk.

We are very grateful to the people of the Republic of Korea for their support of democracy in the world, for the efforts that the Republic of Korea is making towards Iraq. We are also very optimistic that our joint efforts, to include the security situation on the Korean Peninsula, could indeed bear fruit, although, of course, there is still much more to be done. We agreed that the agreement of the North Koreans to come back to the talks is a very good step, but only a first step, and that we look forward to a strategic decision by the North Koreans to abandon their nuclear weapons program.

I did indeed say to the Minister that we have always been supportive of the inter-Korean dialogue and the efforts that are being made there. And, of course, the energy proposal that the South Korean Government has put forward is an elaboration of what we were briefed on when the Unification Minister was in Washington just very recently. It gives an opportunity for the North Koreans to address questions of their energy needs, something that had been anticipated in the June 2004 proposal that is still on the table.

I want to thank President Roh for the time that he spent with me this morning, the extensive time, to discuss the opportunities before us as well as the challenges. I think, all in all, it has been a very good discussion. I look forward to seeing Foreign Minister Ban in, hopefully, New York at the time of the United Nations General Assembly when we can continue our dialogue. And of course, President Bush very much looks forward to being here for the APEC summit (inaudible).

FOREIGN MINISTER BAN: Now we'll have questions from the press. First we'll have the Korean reporters.

QUESTION: (Via interpreter) Yes, my name is (inaudible) from YTN. I would like to ask questions for both Secretary Rice and Minister Ban. The first question goes to Secretary Rice.

With the resumption of the six-party talks, the international community's expectation is rising for the eventual resolution of the North Korean nuclear issue. The six-party talks is a useful framework to address the North Korean nuclear issue, but a meeting between high-level U.S. and North Korean officials would also provide a significant opportunity to resolve North Korean nuclear issue. Secretary Rice, I'd like to ask you if you have any intentions to visit Pyongyang to meet Chairman Kim Jong-il.

My next question goes to Minister Ban Ki-Moon. With the announcement of the energy proposal by the Korean Government yesterday, the Korean Government said that



if North Korea dismantles its nuclear program that the Korean Government will be willing to provide electricity through direct transmission. And with this announcement, the Korean Government also expressed hopes that as Korea is posing -- has an active stance as the main party in resolving the problem on the Korean Peninsula, the relevant parties would also do likewise.

I have two questions regarding this. First is, what does the Korean Government exactly mean and what does the Korean Government have in mind by saying that it hopes that all the other relevant parties would also show an active role, an active stance? The second question is, I remember that from the last six-party talks, the provision of HFO was a very controversial issue during the talks and I would like to know if the issue of HFO was also discussed with the U.S. side in consulting with the (inaudible) the energy proposal.

SECRETARY RICE: Well, first of all, no, I have no such plans. I think it's extremely important to remember that the North Korean nuclear program is not just a problem for the United States alone; it is a problem for South Korea, which, by the way, in 1991, signed an agreement with North Korea that this would be a non-nuclear Peninsula. And secondly, it's a problem for China, which has said that it believes that the Korean Peninsula must be non-nuclear; it is a problem for Japan; it is a problem for Russia; it is a problem for the international community. But the reason that we are in six-party talks is that a nuclear weapons program in North Korea is a threat to peace and security in the region and a threat to the very agreement for a non-nuclear Korean Peninsula that has been at the base of hope for future positive development here on the Korean Peninsula. So this is not a bilateral relationship with the North. That is why the six-party talks are the appropriate forum in which to resolve this issue.

FOREIGN MINISTER BAN: The Korean Government, in addressing the North Korean nuclear issue, has abided by three basic principles: the first is that a nuclear-armed North Korea is unacceptable; second is that a resolution should be implemented through peaceful and diplomatic means; and third is taking a leading role in the overall process. And with the energy proposal that we announced yesterday, we sought to make a breakthrough in the stalemate status of the six-party talks that has not been opened for the last year, for more than a year. And with this, we also discussed in length yesterday with Secretary Rice our energy proposal and, as I said in my opening remarks, the U.S. has commented that this energy proposal might be a very useful tool to resolve the North Korean nuclear issue.

And with this in mind, the Korean Government will further consult with all other related parties to the six-party talks on how to actually utilize our energy proposal and how to actually fit in our energy proposal in the whole six-party process. As you know very well, we will be attending a bilateral consultation between the U.S. and -- between Korea and the U.S. and also a trilateral consultation amongst Korea, U.S. and Japan. So these are basically the venues that we will be utilizing to further consult our energy proposal. And I hope that in the process of all these consultations we'll be able to have a friendly and full cooperation from the other parties related to the talks.

As for the HFO, which is short for Heavy Fuel Oil, I think that we will further discuss this issue with the U.S. and other relevant parties in the course of our consultations.

QUESTION: Madame Secretary, after four years of isolating North Korea and rejecting rewards before the North commits to denuclearization, the United States has now in place engagements and incentives including South Korea's huge energy package which was unveiled before Pyongyang even got to the table. What has precipitated this altered approach and how does it advance U.S. national interests that the United States Administration waited four years while the North Koreans expanded their nuclear arsenal?

SECRETARY RICE: Well, first of all, I have to reject the premise that somehow the United States has decided that the North Koreans will get all kinds of benefits before they'll come back to the table. I believe that what the South Korean Government has said is that if the North Koreans are prepared to dismantle their nuclear weapons programs, then there is an energy plan that can be pursued. And I think that is actually quite similar to what we said to the North Koreans in June of 2004, that the world would be prepared to look at their energy needs but that, in fact, they have to dismantle their nuclear weapons program.

Secondly, the North Koreans have indeed been out of these talks for one year. During that -- more than one year -- during that period of time, we know that they have made all kinds of claims and have tried to enhance their capability. All that that has gotten is a very strong singular voice from all of the other parties to the talks that they have got to return to the talks; that is the only way that they are going to achieve anything that they are seeking.

The key here is: Is the North prepared to dismantle its nuclear programs? And we're about to find that out. But let me just remind everybody that what is on the table is essentially what was on the table in June of 2004 and that is where the talks began -- where the talks will begin. I actually think it's quite interesting that the North has responded by saying that, yes, it is not only coming back to the talks but it hopes to make progress, and that indeed it does (inaudible) on the basis of understanding that this is about the denuclearization of the North Korea -- or the Korean Peninsula. So I think we have to be quite satisfied with the efforts of all of the parties to the six-party talks, the five in the six-party talks who have achieved now this common position to which the North will respond.

Let me just finally add that we have, of course, the United States has given food to North Korea, South Korea has given food to North Korea. We have always said that this is something that should be on a humanitarian basis and for no political purpose.

QUESTION: My name is (inaudible). I would like to direct a question to Secretary Rice. After several ups and downs, the six-party talks has finally resumed; however, there are both pessimistic and optimistic prospects on the talks. The reasons for being pessimistic are as follows: first, North Korea is trying to turn the talks into arms reduction talks; second, the U.S. has demanded North Korea to acknowledge its HEU program. According to recent press reports, there has been reports that North Korea will not raise the issue of turning the talks into arms reduction talks and the U.S. will not put forth the issue of HEU as a precondition for the talks. Are these reports true?

Second -- and I have another question -- that is, as for the Korean side, Korea has been of the position that all nuclear programs should be dismantled and that the HEU program should be resolved in the comprehensive process of freezing and inspections. What is the U.S. view on this Korean position?

SECRETARY RICE: Well, I think the view is that there should be no nuclear weapons programs, and that means plutonium, that means HEU. We've been very clear about that. We're going to be clear about it again. Reprocessing and enrichment (inaudible) is a part of a nuclear weapons program, particularly for a state that declares in discussions with the United States that it has a nuclear program. And so, you know, of course that's a part of the issue. It's always been. And on this I don't think there is any difference with others in the six-party talks because nuclear weapons programs mean nuclear weapons programs, period.

MODERATOR: Final question. James Rosen of Fox News.

QUESTION: Madame Secretary, South Koreans have said that you consider their proposals significant, creative, beneficial, but we have yet to hear from you exactly how you characterize the proposal. I gather that you've had some time to study it at this point. What is it about this proposal that you find so appealing?

And secondly, you and your aides keep saying that you're looking for a way to incorporate it into the six-party framework, but the fact that it has been advanced by a member of that alliance, doesn't that mean that it already is part of the six-party framework? And if not, how do you go about incorporating it? What are the challenges in doing that?

SECRETARY RICE: I think, James, it's very easy to have it be a part of the six-party discussions. (Inaudible) the North Koreans have always maintained that they have energy needs. In the June 2004 proposal, we recognize that the North Koreans have energy needs. And it's clear to anyone who looks at photographs of what North Korea looks like at night that they have energy needs. And so the issue is how those energy needs will be met, particularly in the face of significant proliferation concerns about nuclear energy in North Korea. That is what I think is very useful about the South Korean proposal and I think a considerable improvement on where we have ever been in terms of ways that we might address the energy needs of the North Koreans.

So we will discuss how best to use this (inaudible) for the six-party talks, but I think since we've always said we would try to address the energy needs of the North Koreans, there simply isn't any problem in having the South Koreans having had put forward what is a very creative idea of how to do this without proliferation risk.

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