



Fourth Round of Six-Party Talks: Early Afternoon Transit to St. Regis

Christopher R. Hill, Assistant Secretary for East Asian and Pacific Affairs

Beijing, China
August 7, 2005

A/S HILL: I think you heard that the Chinese government today announced that the talks would be put into recess, and this means that they will reconvene toward the end of August. I thought we made a lot of progress. As you know, the Six Party Talks were inexplicably delayed for 13 months, and so during the last 13 days I think we were able to achieve a lot of consensus on some issues, but ultimately we were not able to finish the job and not able to bridge remaining gaps.

I think, on the positive side, it was clear the D.P.R.K. understands it does need to get rid of its nuclear weapons, but the problem – in the last few days, it began to emerge that the problem with reaching an agreement was not just the issue of their desire to retain the right to develop commercial or so-called peaceful energy, but also they began to insist on a light water reactor, and indeed wanted to have their desire for a light water reactor included in the agreement. This was an issue on which the D.P.R.K. delegation parted company with the rest of the delegations. So, in these last couple of days it was decided that probably the best thing to do would be to put the talks into recess, and give the D.P.R.K. delegation a chance to go back to Pyongyang, to sit down, to talk to the authorities there, to go through the various issues.

This is a very generous package for the D.P.R.K. This package would virtually solve their energy problems. It would address many of their economic problems. It would address many of their issues in international normalization with the international community, including bilateral normalizations as well as beginning a process of rejoining international organizations. It's a very generous package. So, I think to those of us the issue of getting rid of nuclear weapons should be an obvious one, should be an easy one, but this is a country that has been engaged in nuclear weapons programs for some 20 or 30 years, so it obviously a difficult decision.

I hope they will use this recess time wisely, go back and think hard and long about what to do, and come back in this same month of August ready to make that decision to do away with its weapons and to reach agreement with the rest of us on the text of this agreement. In short, we still have a lot of work to do, but I think there's progress there. And, I think there is a real logic to try to reach this agreement, a logic for everybody, and so I'm still very hopeful that we can ultimately arrive at it. So, I think you can now all go home. [Laughter]

QUESTION: It sounds like the onus is completely on North Korea to make a change or come to the table with something new. Does America not feel that it has any wiggle room?

A/S HILL: Well, at this point the issue came down to North Korea, the D.P.R.K., wanting not only to preserve their right to have use of nuclear energy, but also specifically to have a right to light water reactors. And, light water reactors are simply not on the table. So, I'm not sure what wiggle room we would have in that regard. I think the Chinese draft that was circulated a few days ago is an excellent basis for reaching an agreement. We can certainly work with it. All the other delegations can work with it. The D.P.R.K. has said they will also work with it. So, I think sometimes these are big decisions, and one shouldn't underestimate the fact that they've been at these programs for some 20 or 30 years. It's not easy to give those up in the course of a 13-day negotiation. So, I hope they go back and take some time to think about it and come back and maybe we can take care of the – finish the job.

QUESTION: Mr. Hill would the U.S. be willing to consider to allow North Korea to have the option down the road to exercise that?

A/S HILL: Look, our position on this issue is quite clear and I think what we really need to focus everyone on is denuclearization. That is, we need to get these terrible weapons [sound of cell phone ringing] taken off the board, to get these weapons, and these cell phones, [quiet laughter] out of here. So, to be talking about theoretical uses of nuclear weapons – of nuclear energy, excuse me, of nuclear energy – once the D.P.R.K. eventually returns to the NPT – questions like that – I think it is much better to focus on the task at hand, which is to rid the Korean peninsula of nuclear weapons. These are weapons that – the only weapons that – nuclear weapons – that threaten North Korea's future, are its own nuclear weapons, and so for their benefit and for everyone else's I hope we can get this agreement and begin the process to bring that country – which has so many problems – to bring that country back into the international system.

QUESTION: At the next session do you talk of [inaudible] or do you think it is the wrong time to try to go beyond that?

A/S HILL: I think this agreement is – we're going to focus on the so-called fourth draft – I guess that's an unlucky number in Chinese terms [laughter] – but we're going to focus on that fourth draft. We really do believe it's the basis for an agreement on principles, and as I've said before we have to have very clear principles, so we know what the principles are, we know clearly where we are going. And what you're suggesting is that perhaps we can get to that agreement on principles and move on forward. And what I would encourage is that if we *can* get this agreement by the end of August, quickly thereafter, in September, we would move to the next stage. We do have in mind the next round of talks- the so-called fifth round of the Six Party Talks. We would anticipate starting very early fall, as early as September we would think, but we have to get through these principles.

Anyone who's been in negotiation, when you spend 12, 13 sleepless nights, you really want to get to an agreement and then move on to the next stage. But, this is a pretty significant deal for North Korea to think about, and so it is quite appropriate that they take some time, go back to their capital, explain to people in their capital that, for example, the light water reactor is simply not on the table. I think their delegation here in the Diaoyutai understood that – in the Chinese guesthouse understand that – but perhaps people in Pyongyang need to hear that directly. So, I don't think we should be surprised that we need a little time to go back to capitals. And again, the Chinese are going to be quite insistent on getting us all back together by the end of the month to finish this job.

QUESTION: Mr. Secretary are you basically saying that you can go into a fifth round as early as September? You come back and you get an agreement and you go straight into the talks?

A/S HILL: Well, there's 30 days in September [laughter], and if we get going at the end of August, then I do not anticipate another thirteen-day – thirteen-day marathon – I was going to say something else [laughter] – thirteen-day marathon. I would hope that based on that, we could move rather quickly, within weeks, not months, to negotiate it, to put it all together in an actual agreement which has implementation clauses, which deals with the

complex subjects of verification. We have enough clarity from this round, from the Chinese draft, that we know what essentially is agreed and what essentially remains in brackets, to use the jargon of international agreements, that we know what we need to begin to think about. So, we know, for example, that we are going to have to think about verification regimes, and we have an idea of what precise questions need to be asked and what answers need to be achieved. I think we can begin the prep work very early on. So, I don't think it's unrealistic to talk about the fifth round happened as early as September.

QUESTION: If North Korea didn't change their position would you consider other options, such as...?

A/S HILL: I think there are always other options. I said before that the only options we really don't have it to forget about this problem. We have to solve this problem, so there are always other options, but I think, again, not to be too repetitive, I think we have made some progress here and I think we can continue on this option.

QUESTION: Mr. Hill, Mr. Kim just said that he is willing to engage in bilateral contacts with the United States [inaudible] during these three weeks...

A/S HILL: Which Mr. Kim? There are a lot of those? [Laughter]

QUESTION: The chief negotiator Kim.

A/S HILL: I see. Yeah.

QUESTION: And he also said the key will persuading the United States to allow North Korea to use peaceful nuclear power.

A/S HILL: Is that a question or are you trying to inform me of something? [laughter]

QUESTION: Just wondering what your response is to those two points.

A/S HILL: Well, I think our position on the latter point is well known, this issue of nuclear power and the light water reactors that they raised. With regard to the contacts, sure, we'll continue to be in contact and we'll continue to share our views. We want to get this done, and we're not going to let issues of protocol and contacts get in the way. We're going to work aggressively to take care of this problem. I think diplomacy does have an aggressive side to it, and I think we're going to work on this. Whether we can get through some of the issues you mention on peaceful use of nuclear energy, well, that's obviously going to be a challenge. But I would caution you not to think that that is the only challenge. There are some basic issues we need to get through.

QUESTION: Mr. Hill, comparing with the case of Iran and India, with its serious violation of [inaudible] party [inaudible] treaty and potential violation of the treaty, some critics pointing out the inconsistency of the policy of the United States with non-proliferation policy. Could you explain...

A/S HILL: Well, you obviously have a much better global strategic sense than I do. I'm just trying to struggle through this draft agreement. I'm just sort of slogging my way through one word at a time, one paragraph at a time. I think we can get there. I think it's an agreement – it's language that will work. I think I'll leave it to people like yourself to determine whether it's consistent with what we are doing with India or Iran, but I do believe it can work for everybody, including for our policy, so I'm not too concerned about that.

QUESTION: Also is it the right understanding that the fourth draft is still standing? That...

A/S HILL: Yes, the fourth draft is the basis on which we are continuing to work, and as I said there is a lot of consensus on the fourth draft. The issue – frankly the D.P.R.K. would like to put in light water reactors in the fourth draft, and no one else wants to do that, including the R.O.K., which has a rather significant energy proposal which would meet North Korea's energy needs through conventional means. It's on the basis of that proposal that the Republic of Korea has said that it really is not interested in providing light water reactors, because it has solved the problem – that is, the problem of supplying energy – by other means. Now, if the D.P.R.K. is interested in light water reactors not because of energy, or not because of electricity or need for electricity, but rather for something else, well we'd better know what that is.

QUESTION: [Inaudible] you said that you will continue to be in contact with the North Koreans. Do you plan you contact them during the recess?

A/S HILL: I told the North Korean delegate, head of delegation, Kim Gye Gwan, that I am prepared to be in touch with him, I'm prepared to work on this issue. We are still in the framework of the Six-Party Talks. There is no question about it. We don't have any specific plans, but we really want to solve this. I really want to figure out how we can get to solving this so that when we meet again on the week the 29th of August, we will not have to spend thirteen days at it, but more like thirteen hours, or thirteen minutes. [laughter] But what we can't do is spend another thirteen months doing nothing.

QUESTION: Over the next 3 weeks, will you go back to Washington to consider other topics to convince the North Koreans to agree, or do you think that the Chinese have something else that they can do?

A/S HILL: Well, I had a good discussion with the Chinese, and I think we really see eye to eye on this and we really have the same interests on this. I would say our relationship with China is better as a result of the Six-Party process. This is one of the common areas, and I would hope that China will do all it can – and we are certainly doing all we can – to try to wrap up this issue and move on to the next issue. Thank you very much.

QUESTION: Are you leaving tonight, sir?

A/S HILL: I'm leaving tonight. Absolutely.

QUESTION: Are you going to Seoul?

QUESTION: What time?

A/S HILL: I don't know what time. No, actually, I'm going to Washington, D.C. I got to get to work tomorrow. [laughter]

QUESTION: Will you be meeting with President Bush? Will you be briefing Pres. Bush right away?

A/S HILL: I think he's in Texas, isn't he? Thank you all very much.

QUESTION: Sir, may I ask you just one more question?

A/S HILL: Yeah, yeah.

QUESTION: After 13 days of talk, what is your position about bringing this to the UN Security Counsel?

A/S HILL: Look, we're on this track. That's always an option. I think everyone reserves that option. That's everyone's right to do that, but we are working through the Six-Party process. We deal with that. We made some headway here and we've just got to keep at it. And as I've said as long as we feel there's progress in this process we'll stick with it. And if there isn't, you know, we'll look at some other options. Thank you very much.

QUESTION: Do you feel stronger about this, than before?

A/S HILL: I feel stronger? Well, I've been a believer in the Six-process for a while. I think it's the best way to go. Certainly these thirteen days have not diminished my belief that the Six-Party process is the right approach. But, we have to see if it gets us there. Thanks very much.

Released on August 8, 2005



Published by the U.S. Department of State Website at <http://www.state.gov> maintained by the Bureau of Public Affairs.