



Evening Walk-Through Remarks at Six-Party Talks

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ASSISTANT SECRETARY HILL: Hi.

QUESTION: Anything good out of today's meeting?

ASSISTANT SECRETARY HILL: Well, I'd say there were three very good meetings. I first talked to the DPRK delegation this morning and through lunch. Then I had a lengthy discussion with the Chair of the Six Parties, that is, with Deputy Minister Wu Dawei. Then I just had dinner and talked to the Japanese delegation, in particular with Saiki-san. Ambassador Saiki is beginning his own round of discussions.

So I would say the main issue was to try to talk about the sequencing and events ahead. I thought, in particular, my discussion with the North Koreans was very much focused on the need for verification and to fully cooperate in a verification regime. So I think we had a very good discussion on that, a very positive discussion on the issue of verification, which is so central to this process. As we've said before, we all have some obligations and discussed what those obligations are. I don't want to get into too many specifics, but I think it's something we can move forward on the basis of a common understanding.

QUESTION: Can't you say you have made a conclusion on the declaration issue today?

ASSISTANT SECRETARY HILL: Again, we're going to be having some technical meetings in the next couple of weeks or so. I think things are moving ahead, but I'm not in position really to talk about timetable. I thought what was important for us was the understanding on the need for a verification regime.

QUESTION: So could we not see the declaration soon?

ASSISTANT SECRETARY HILL: Well, again, it depends on what you mean by soon. We're certainly moving ahead, but I'm not prepared at this point to announce any timetable at this time.

QUESTION: Can you tell me a little bit more about this technical meeting? What it's about, and who is going to be involved?

ASSISTANT SECRETARY HILL: Well, again, there are issues we need to work out, and some of them involve what role the denuclearization working group might play. Also, we're talking about the need for an energy working group. So I think those sorts of working groups will probably come into play in the near future.

QUESTION: So this everything will come after this (inaudible)?

ASSISTANT SECRETARY HILL: I would say not before.

QUESTION: What about the timing of the Six-Party Talks?

ASSISTANT SECRETARY HILL: I had a good discussion with Mr. Wu Dawei on that subject. He's going to be talking to the others as well. I think he'll be meeting with Saiki-san in the morning. And I think, in fact, as we speak he's meeting with the DPRK delegation. So I think we'll figure out when to have a Six-Party head of delegation meeting.

QUESTION: Is the hold-up more about --

ASSISTANT SECRETARY HILL: There's no hold-up.

QUESTION: OK. Is the talking about the timetable more about what the DPRK needs to do, or what they want the United States to do for them?

ASSISTANT SECRETARY HILL: Well, I think we all have obligations, and we all need to make sure that as we go forward here everyone has a sense that they are getting something positive out of the process.

QUESTION: Ambassador, you said this morning you were looking for a definitive progress on the timeframe. Do you feel you were able to get the --

ASSISTANT SECRETARY HILL: I think we had a very good discussion on it, but I don't want to go into any details at this time.

QUESTION: Ambassador, it's already almost June. You've got a series of events -- the Olympics coming up, two political conventions in the U.S. How concerned are you that, in fact, you're sort of in a race against time, with the North Koreans dealing with a lame-duck administration?

ASSISTANT SECRETARY HILL: Well, I've felt for some time really that we are in a race against -- I mean, it's a difficult year, in that we've had some delays, and we've certainly had to try to make more progress. And that's why we did spend time today discussing timeline. But I'm just not in a position to announce anything. I need to get back to Washington. I need to fully brief Secretary Rice on where we stand on this. Where we'll be by the end of the year, I think it's difficult to say at this time. We're certainly committed to trying to complete the denuclearization process. But, obviously, completing everything by the end of the year will be a challenge, and we need to see if it's going to be possible.

QUESTION: Is there a risk that it's all going to go down the drain?

ASSISTANT SECRETARY HILL: No, I think the Six-Party process has proved to be a pretty effective mechanism. I know sometimes things move a little more slowly than people would like. But I think it is a mechanism that is beginning to help develop this sense of community of neighborhood here in northeast Asia. So I am pretty encouraged by it, and I'm pretty encouraged that it is something that will find itself on the landscape in northeast Asia in the future. I think we have the right process here.

The issue here is, can this process get the progress that we expect. Again, we had a series of meetings today, good understanding of some of the crucial elements. And one of those is the verification element. So we have to see if we can get this done.

QUESTION: You didn't finish your sentence today. It was a race against what?

ASSISTANT SECRETARY HILL: No I didn't finish that sentence because I didn't want to finish that sentence. I had another way of describing it. I knew you were just too excited about that sentence. It was going to be your lead. (Laughter)

QUESTION: Have you made progress on the abduction issue with the North Koreans?

ASSISTANT SECRETARY HILL: We certainly addressed the issue of DPRK-Japan relations. I made very clear the importance that we attach to progress in that. I think it is a message the DPRK understands, and we certainly expect to see progress there. But beyond that, I don't want to get into too many more specifics.

QUESTION: You have talked about that extensively in your meeting today?

ASSISTANT SECRETARY HILL: The issue, as it always does, was -- I did raise this issue, yes.

QUESTION: And they have what --

ASSISTANT SECRETARY HILL: Again, I always avoid telling you what their reaction was. But I did raise the issue, and there is certainly, I would say, an understanding of the importance that the United States attaches to that issue.

QUESTION: When you explained that to Ambassador Saiki, what was his reaction?

ASSISTANT SECRETARY HILL: You have to ask Saiki-san. He's not so hard to reach for you.

QUESTION: Did you talk about specific actions about the abduction issue?

ASSISTANT SECRETARY HILL: Again, I talked about what I talked about -- which is the importance we attach to an improved DPRK-Japan relationship, the importance of Japan to the DPRK, and the need to make progress on that relationship and the fact that abductions are part of that process.

Okay?

QUESTION: Any change in their reaction?

ASSISTANT SECRETARY HILL: I have got to go.

QUESTION: Are you meeting with them again tomorrow?

ASSISTANT SECRETARY HILL: Not to my knowledge, no. This is it. I'm going to catch a plane and go to Moscow. See you later.

QUESTION: Have a good trip.

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