



Remarks at G-8 Ministers Press Conference

Secretary Condoleezza Rice

Kyoto, Japan
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U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, Japanese Foreign Minister Masahiko Komura, German Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier and United Kingdom Foreign Secretary David Miliband

MODERATOR: (Via interpreter.) We shall now begin the joint press conference following the conclusion of the G-8 Foreign Ministers meeting a while ago. At the outset, the Chair of the G-8 Foreign Ministers meeting, this time Foreign Minister Masahiko Komura, will deliver his opening remarks and will then like to entertain questions from you and would like to conclude this press conference in about half an hour and will appreciate your kind cooperation.

Minister Komura, please.

FOREIGN MINISTER KOMURA: (Via interpreter.) Last evening, today, for two days we had this G-8 Foreign Ministers meeting in Kyoto. And with the cooperation of foreign ministers of the participating countries, we were able to engage in a candid exchange of views on major regional issues that the international community today faces. I would like to take this opportunity to express my gratitude to my colleagues who have very heartedly participated in that discussion.

Allow me at this time to share with you the major discussions and outcome of that meeting, as the Chair of the meeting.

First, we discussed North Korea and Iran from the perspective of nonproliferation and we had in-depth discussions as for DPRK. We agree that we need to vet -- verify in full the declaration on nuclear programs that DPRK submitted yesterday. Also, we all agree that it is important for us to continue to fully -- to advance the six-party talk and process, which is at a critical juncture, and that this process can continue to work with tenacity and towards the ultimate goal of realizing verifiable denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula.

With regard to the abduction issue, I received an expression of strong support from my colleague foreign ministers to Japan's position, which is to continue to seek a concrete option on the part of North Korea.

On Iran, we expressed our concern that Iran is continuing and expanding enrichment-related activities without complying with UN Security Council resolutions. And we, therefore, are of the same view that under the dual-track approach of the dialogue and pressures that the international community needs to continue to press Iran for further cooperation with the international community.

From the perspective of peace-building, in order to provide support to the efforts of the various countries around the world who are struggling to move from the path of dispute to peace, we had very substantive discussions on Afghanistan, the Middle East peace, and others.

On Afghanistan, we have been able to come up with a joint statement which can well be called a future comprehensive strategy of G-8. And in this, we have included a stance that we shall engage in improved security and reconstruction as the tandem (inaudible) on the part of G-8. With regard to support of the border area that is traveling between Afghanistan and Pakistan, a hotbed of terrorism, we, as G-8, were able to agree on establishing more than 150 projects and further step up our support. I believe that this is an important outcome.

On the Middle East peace process, we, members of G-8, agree that we shall provide our utmost support so that peace can be achieved between the Israelis and the Palestinians. And Japan shall host the ministerial-level meeting on Corridor for Peace and Prosperity Initiative in Tokyo next week and we shall also be engaged in other endeavors.

On Myanmar, we shall continue to ask for the Myanmar Government to cooperate with the international community more than ever, so that the relief from the international community will be delivered properly to the cyclone victims. On peace process, we would like to continue to press the Government of Myanmar so that the (inaudible) process will be advanced, including all the stakeholders, including Madame Aung San Suu Kyi. At the same time, should the Government of Myanmar come up with positive moves, we express in our statement that we shall provide -- we shall consider providing incentives.

On Zimbabwe, we all shared serious concerns about the situation. In spite of absence of proper conditions for elections due to organized violence, obstructions and intimidation by the Zimbabwe authorities, we are gravely concerned that the government is still trying to go ahead today on the presidential runoff elections. We strongly seek the Government of Zimbabwe to fully cooperate with the international community, including the UN and AU, and that they reflect the will of the people of Zimbabwe and resolve the crisis immediately and in a peaceful manner. For further details, please refer to the Chairman's statement.

The G-8 partners build on common values and sense of responsibility and we all carry a special responsibility on various challenges the international community faces. We were able to come up with a strong message on those challenges that I just mentioned and (inaudible) and were able to arrive at a concrete agreement on concrete actions and would like to continue the outcome of this meeting to the G-8 Hokkaido Toyako Summit that will be held next month.

Last but not least, I would like to take this opportunity to express my gratitude to the people of Kyoto for their very warm hospitality and welcome they extended to my colleague and G-8 Foreign Ministers.

MODERATOR: Thank you, Mr. Komura. Now the floor is open to your questions. Those of you with questions, please raise your hand.

QUESTION: (Via interpreter.) My question is directed to Mr. Komura and Secretary Rice of the United States and the question concerns DPRK. During the meeting today, I understand the importance of verification of a nuclear (inaudible) declaration was agreed. Now, in the six-party talks, how would the process of verification be carried out? I would like to invite the views of both Japan and the United States.

And in case DPRK does not respond to the process in good faith, then is there a possibility that the U.S. Administration will withdraw the notification about the delisting of the DPRK from the terrorist supporting country list?

And about the abduction, the matter of greatest concern to Japan, how would the U.S. and Japan cooperate and take specific measures to promote the process in the abduction issue?

SECRETARY RICE: What Minister Komura said and what my colleagues at the table today all emphasized, which is the importance of the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula, the full accounting for and, ultimately, dismantlement of all North Korean nuclear programs. And we talked about the importance of verification of the declaration that has been submitted, and verification throughout this entire process. I want to just emphasize that we are in the – we're ending the second phase, but there are many other steps still to be taken in order to achieve what we all wish to see, which is a denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula.

There have been verification principles that the parties have been talking about. We will then move on to a verification protocol that is to have concrete and very systematic ways to verify the accuracy of the declaration. To give you an example, the North Koreans have already made available thousands of pages of documentation concerning the Yongbyon reactor and what was produced there. But we also need access to the reactor core. We need access to the waste pool so that we can indeed verify the number that we expect that the North Koreans have given us concerning how much plutonium has been made. That's just an example of the kind of verification that we expect. We also have serious questions about highly enriched uranium programs in North Korea as well as proliferation activities. So there is a long road ahead.

The President made the announcement yesterday that, in fact, the United States – that he has notified the Congress of our intention to delist North Korea from the terrorism list and to remove the Trading With The Enemies Act sanctions list. I might note that the DPRK remains, from the point of view of the United States, under multiple sanctions regimes; that is, Security Council resolutions, human rights, proliferation. And so there are very many sanctions still in place concerning North Korea.

We know that North Korea has a record of not always living up to its obligations, and so we are going to monitor very carefully, yes, in this 45-day period, but also well beyond that. And the parties to the six-party talks obviously have the capacity to bring about further consequences should the North not live up to its obligations.

My colleagues reassured, or assured the Japanese Government today of the concern that we all have for the abducted citizens of Japan and our determination to see that resolved in an early and positive way. The United States, in particular -- we have been in very close contact with Japan -- and the United States, in particular, has communicated to North Korea that the abduction issue is not just an issue for Japan; it is also an issue for the United States. It is a serious human rights issue. The United States will continue to monitor North Korean seriousness about this matter, and we will stay in very close contact with our Japanese colleagues. We expect this issue to be resolved positively because it is an issue that is of great concern to the United States.

FOREIGN MINISTER KOMURA: (Via interpreter.) As Secretary Rice mentioned just now, Japan and the United States -- well, the U.S. has used the word "game" -- and we're not engaged in a game of, you know, trusting or not trusting the DPRK. The game is how firmly we verify the declaration. That's the sort of expression used by the United States. We agree with that.

As Secretary Rice said, the record of plutonium production – the document has already been submitted, so we will compare the declaration with that information. And if that report is not sufficient, there are numerous ways to verify. And U.S. and Japan and the other six-party members, excluding DPRK, will work on a firm and appropriate verification. Now, there still remain cards, such as UN sanctions, in the hands of the United States, and also, Japan still retains several cards. So we will use these effectively and shall strive to advance denuclearization and abduction issues, as well other pending issues, between Japan and North Korea.

Before anything else, we need to maintain close coordination between Japan and the United States. And we need to also keep our partnership with the other members of the six-party talks, excluding DPRK. In the meeting this time here in Kyoto, I received very strong support from all the participants (inaudible) Japan's policy in addressing both denuclearization and abduction, and I was most encouraged by that. So on both the denuclearization and abduction and on other pending issues between Japan and DPRK, we should like to do all our best to resolve these matters.

MODERATOR: (Via interpreter.) The next question from the foreign press.

QUESTION: I have a question for Dr. Rice and Mr. Miliband about Zimbabwe. What is your reaction to the fact that the one-sided election has gone ahead today? And what steps, apart from sanctions, do you see as possibly resolving the situation?

FOREIGN SECRETARY MILIBAND: I think the first thing to say is that we had a very good discussion amongst all of the ministers. And none of us believe that the "election" today represents the sort of contest that can bring credit to any country. In my view, there is no legitimacy for the government claiming election on the basis of today's events, because this was an election which was one-sided in every aspect, one-sided in the brutality of the regime, one-sided in the publicity given to one side, one-sided in the electoral organization. So it's very clear on the part of the United Kingdom that there is no legitimacy for the Government of Zimbabwe under Robert Mugabe. The only people with any shred of democratic legitimacy are those who won the March the 29th first round.

A second very important point, which I think is recognized by all the countries at this G-8 summit, the crisis in Zimbabwe, what Nelson Mandela has called as a tragic failure of leadership in Zimbabwe is a problem for the whole of South Africa, not just a problem for Zimbabwe, most notably because of the refugees. And therefore, I think it's very significant that so many African leaders from Mozambique, from Botswana, from Tanzania, from Zambia should have spoken out so loudly and so clearly against the Mugabe regime. And so the second point is that political support and the withdrawal of political support is very significant. Thirdly, you're right that there EU -- European Union sanctions in respect of 132 people surrounding Mr. Mugabe. Those are travel and financial sanctions. And the European Union Council last Friday agreed to take those sanctions further and faster.

The final point I would make is that I think the fact that this is now the subject of a UN Security Council presidential statement is very significant, a unanimous agreement from all the countries on the Security Council that the crisis in Zimbabwe is an international issue that deserves attention. And the language of condemnation in the presidential statement is something that I think is very important in trying to take away the last shreds of legitimacy that exist for the Mugabe regime. And we look forward to taking further – taking forward that debate at the UN.

SECRETARY RICE: Let me just underscore the point about legitimacy, the sham election that is going on, apparently, in Zimbabwe as we speak with the opposition largely, if not in hiding, in protective custody of various people. With the opposition followers having been intimidated and beat up, this kind of sham cannot possibly produce a legitimate outcome and that is the view of the United States. And we discussed this in great detail at our meeting today.

I might just note the United States will hold the chair of the presidency of the Security Council until July 1st and we will consult with the other members of the Security Council and other interested states, including African states that have spoken out about this, to see what next steps we might need to take in the Council.

MODERATOR: (Via interpreter.) A question from the Japanese press.

QUESTION: My question is addressed to Minister Komura concerning the Japanese contribution to the Afghanistan reconstruction. The G-8 agreed on the comprehensive support to the border region in Afghanistan. Based on that, as a part of Japanese contribution to the areas of conflict, what is your view about the possibility of dispatching the Self-Defense Forces in the form of logistic support to either in Afghanistan? And not just on the – in Afghanistan, but are there any requests from other participating countries about the dispatch of Self-Defense Forces to various areas?

FOREIGN MINISTER KOMURA: (Via interpreter.) At the meeting this time, we did not receive any specific request for a dispatch of the Self-Defense Forces. Japan has, for counterterrorism and reconstruction and humanitarian assistance, we have taken these as (inaudible) for assistance to Afghanistan and also, we have committed \$2 billion for this and already \$1.24 billion have been disbursed. And we have also been providing refueling operating support in the Indian Ocean. We have, on top of that, been thinking as to what we really can do. Now, as you know, if we are to extend to Self-Defense Forces, we need to legislate anew. And because of a split parliament, under which the House of Councilors is controlled by the opposition, would it be possible to pass new laws, including that question, and others the government is considering (inaudible) concerned. So it is not that we have decided to send Self-Defense Forces, nor have we decided not to send Self-Defense Forces because it will be impossible to legislate in the parliament. We are broadly studying what can be done.

MODERATOR: Next question from the foreign press.

QUESTION: (Via interpreter.) (Inaudible) you haven't had a chance to look at the document of North Korea was handing out yesterday? And the second question to Mr. Steinmeier about Afghanistan (inaudible) now in Germany, it's not as if (inaudible) – it's not that popular in (inaudible) population (inaudible) Afghanistan. And the G-8 statement promises further strengthening of deployment in Afghanistan. And how do you reconcile that with the fact that opinion polls in Germany expressed dissatisfaction with the current situation?

SECRETARY RICE: The United States has – had made a pledge, a decision that when the North Koreans submitted this declaration, we would -- and when we could -- verify its accuracy, we would, in fact, take the step of removing North Korea from the terrorism list. I might note that by the statute, North Korea meets those criteria simply by a reading of the statute. The way that this works, however, is that in fact, there is a 45-day period before that becomes effective. And because we have already been doing some work at the technical expert level concerning matters of verification, matters of verification principles, beginning work on a verification protocol, I am not saying that there are difficulties that have yet emerged. But it is our intention to continue during this period to work to – we expect North Korea to cooperate. We expect to be able to complete the essential verification protocol. We expect to know how we will be able to verify the accuracy and the completeness of the declaration and that is work that is still before us. So this is an important 45-day period, but it is in the statute that the President notifies, and then there is a 45-day period before it becomes effective.

FOREIGN MINISTER STEINMEIER: (Via interpreter.) Could I react to the second question as follows? As German Foreign Minister – and I know I have the support of the whole German Government on this -- we are committed to further (inaudible) in Afghanistan, because that is necessary. Of course, I appreciate that there is some skepticism among the German population. There's been a discussion, as there's been in many other countries which are deploying in Afghanistan, among public opinion. And we do have to do some convincing here, which must start with reminding people why the international community is present in Afghanistan. And I think there are two reasons which we need to remind people of.

Firstly, this nation has been beleaguered for 30 years with civil war. And we have to help these people back onto their own feet. And secondly, because this is about our own security. We mustn't forget that the reason for our presence there is terrorist fundamentalism, which was also a threat to our Western world. And that was the reason why we had to commit militarily there, and the end being that Afghanistan will never again be the (inaudible) of terrorist activity in the world.

We know that there is a need for reconstruction. But we also know that this reconstruction will have to rely at the moment on military presence because the situation in many areas of Afghanistan is still too insecure to dispense with that. And because it's insecure, during the course of this year, we will be proposing to the German Bundestag, parliament, that the number of German troops in Afghanistan be increased by a thousand, from 3,500 to 4,500. A proposal which will be discussed in the public arena and which we will put to the German parliament and will be subject to their approval, but I'm confident that we will get a broad consensus in favor of this in the German Bundestag. Today -- and I would like to say, once again, that I'm particularly grateful to the Japanese chairmanship here -- today, we focus on the relationship between Afghanistan and Pakistan. And I'm really most grateful to Japan. It was an initiative taken here to try and intensify these contacts between those two countries. And a Japanese colleague mentioned to us today 160 proposals and projects, measures which are all designed to contribute to getting the two countries to talk to each other. And this goes from the provision of machines to scan documents at the borders, to scholarships for students and so on, among those 160 projects.

MODERATOR: (Via interpreter.) In the interest of time, we're going to entertain one last question from the Japanese press.

QUESTION: (Via interpreter.) My question directed to Secretary Rice concerning DPRK -- this deal between the United States and DPRK, the North Koreans' declaration and the U.S. delisting of North Korea. Now, this series of procedures -- there are some single views in Japan, that is, the term of office of Bush Administration is coming to a close and the U.S. is trying to make a diplomatic score in haste. And this may be a deal in haste, as the last part of the Administration. How would you respond to this kind of single view, Secretary Rice? And the next question: Last time when you were in Japan, Secretary Rice, that was immediately after the New York Philharmonic performance in Pyongyang. And I asked the question, if you have any plan of playing piano in Pyongyang and your answer was you wish to stay in Washington, D.C. for the time being. Now, Secretary Rice, do you have any plan of visiting to Pyongyang at the moment? If so, then what will be the timing of the visit -- under what terms and conditions would you be making a visit to Pyongyang?

SECRETARY RICE: (Inaudible) plans to visit Pyongyang nor to the play the piano in Pyongyang.

Let me underscore, though, the deal in terms of the denuclearization declaration is a six-party framework deal. It is not a deal between the United States and North Korea. All of the obligations that are made are made to the six parties and all of the expectations are six-party expectations. There are, within the six parties, some elements that have a bilateral character. So, for instance, the Japan-DPRK discussions have to take place concerning abduction between the DPRK and Japan, although I think it would be fair to say that the United States has been very active in encouraging, particularly, the DPRK to engage in those discussions and to do so seriously. The United States has certain bilateral elements of its relationship that are also a part of the six-party deal, and therefore, the delisting was a part of that.

As to the timing of this, we have been at this since September of 2005 with the DPRK. That's when the overall Framework Agreement for denuclearization was signed in Beijing. The six-party talks were actually begun before that. And then you have the deal in September 2005. We had been -- in February 2007, the first implementing deal concerning the first phase that was the freezing, the shut-down of the reactor and several steps, and the steps to go forward towards the disabling of the reactor and verification measures concerning the programs and the declaration. And now, we will go to a third phase.

So this has been going on a very long time. And it is befitting the nature of this problem, the DPRK programs began decades ago -- the nuclear program. And we've been through a lot of ups and downs. We went through the 2006 period in which the DPRK tested missiles and then tested a nuclear device. And the advantage of the six-party framework was then very evident. I was in Japan not long after that test. I was in South Korea not long after that test. And the five parties were able to come together almost immediately, propose a UN Security Council resolution which was passed in record time when the DPRK conducted that nuclear test.

So all that I can say is you are -- the President is the President until January 20th of 2009. And we are going to continue to work urgently to resolve the problems in international politics, to try and contribute to the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula, and perhaps to get the DPRK out of the plutonium-making business. It's something that we think is worth doing. But we've been at this for quite a long time with our partners, with Japan, with South Korea, with Russia and with China. And what was very good today was the expression by other members of the G-8 that they consider this not just a six-party problem, but in fact, something that the entire international community must contribute to.

MODERATOR: (Via interpreter.) Thank you very much. We have gone over time. And we'd like to bring the joint press conference to a close. Thank you very much for your participation.

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