



Briefing on the Agreement Reached at the Six-Party Talks in Beijing

Secretary Condoleezza Rice
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SECRETARY RICE: Good morning. Is it morning? Good morning, yes. The six-party agreement reached in Beijing is an important initial step toward the goals of a denuclearized Korean Peninsula and a more stable and secure Northeast Asia. This breakthrough step was the result of patient, creative and tough diplomacy. This is a multilateral agreement. All of the major players in the region now share a stake in its outcome as well as a demand for results and accountability. All six parties are the guarantors of this agreement and there is great interest in the rest of the region to see that it is fully implemented.



The goal is the complete verifiable and irreversible denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula. This is a good beginning to that effort. In the next 60 days, we expect North Korea to shut down and seal the Yongbyon nuclear facility for the purpose of abandonment. The IAEA will return to the country to conduct all necessary monitoring and verification. The DPRK will also discuss a list of all programs including the plutonium extracted from fuel rods. These programs will also be abandoned.

The DPRK has committed to a follow-on phase to include provision of a complete declaration of all nuclear programs and disablement of all existing nuclear facilities. The parties will provide emergency assistance to the DPRK of 50,000 tons of HFO, heavy fuel oil, in the first 60-day phase. And in the disablement phase, an additional amount of assistance equivalent to one million tons of HFO, that is less the 50,000 that's already -- would have already been delivered -- will be made available to the DPRK. That assistance takes the form of humanitarian, economic and energy assistance. This agreement is an initial implementing agreement of the joint statement of September 2005 which laid out the principals that should define the future of the Korean Peninsula.

It's important to see the outcome in a proper context. It is a part of a broad and comprehensive effort not only to denuclearize the Korean Peninsula, but also to advance a future of peace and prosperity in Northeast Asia. Our approach has always recognized that we must address these two goals together and that is what we are doing.

The patterns of cooperation that we are building between countries in the region should be a source of growing stability and trust in this dynamic part of the world. This is still the first quarter. There is still a lot of time to go on the clock. But the six parties have now taken a promising step in the right direction. In order to maintain momentum in this process and continue toward our eventual goal, we have also agreed that we expect to meet at the level of foreign ministers at the end of the 60-day implementation period. Now, I'm happy to take questions.

Anne.

QUESTION: Madame Secretary, how is this a better deal than the one the United States negotiated with North Korea in 1994, given that you've said before that they reneged or sidestepped on that agreement, what guarantees or what confidence do you have that the same thing won't happen again?

SECRETARY RICE: Well, first let me remind everyone that this is an implementing agreement of a larger agreement and so this is not the end of the story. This is an implementing agreement. But this implementing has the advantage, first and foremost, of being multilateral. It has as a part of it China, Japan, South Korea, Russia and the United States, all countries that have the right set of incentives and disincentives at hand not just to make a deal with North Korea but to make sure that one sticks.

Secondly, this agreement is in terms of the benefits to the North, I think upfront the 50,000 tons emergency assistance during the 60-day period in which the North Koreans are going to suspend their activities, is actually modest. When you look at a history of the agreed framework in which we were talking about 500,000 tons per year of heavy fuel oil in exchange for what was equivalently a freeze, so this first phase with 50,000 in emergency assistance.

Now, the larger assistance package relates to disablement, which to my mind is an important step forward because the disabling of these facilities is a sign that the North Koreans may, in fact, be ready to make a strategic choice. I will not take it as a complete sign until we've seen that disablement, but obviously disablement is an important step forward.

The other point that I would make is, of course, the energy and assistance needs here are being met through heavy fuel oil. The joint statement speaks to the question of light-water reactor which is said to be discussable only when the North Koreans have gotten back into good graces and fully dismantled. So this is a different agreement. It is an agreement that is also more comprehensive in scope and that it looks to the establishment of ultimately a mechanism for security and cooperation on the North Korean -- on the Korean Peninsula.

Finally, we do look forward to the establishment of these working groups within 60 days, working groups that will also begin to point toward the implement of the joint statement and that's about normalization of relations, working groups between Japan and the DPRK which I think is an extremely important working group given some Japanese concerns. So it's a very comprehensive agreement. The benefits to the North, I think really are in the phase that begins to get toward the true denuclearization rather than this first phase, which is an important phase in its own right to shut it down but to shut it down really for the establishment of working groups and for the emergency assistance.

QUESTION: Madame Secretary --

SECRETARY RICE: Yes, I'll come right back to you.

QUESTION: This might be seen as a message to Iran that bad behavior will be rewarded in terms of proliferation.

SECRETARY RICE: Why shouldn't it be seen as a message to Iran that the international community is able to bring together its resources, particularly when regionally affected states work together and that the strong diplomacy and the cohesiveness of the five parties in the six-party talks has finally achieved results. I think that would be the message. Let's remember that the North Korean program has been going on almost 30 years and so we had a lot of work to do to begin to move this in the right direction, but this is a coalition of states; the five parties plus the North Koreans, but particularly the five parties that have now been working painstakingly to convince the North that this is the appropriate path and they've gotten a lot of tools at their disposal, including a Security Council resolution. And so I think it's actually a good story of

international cooperation and of bringing together the right states to bring together the right set of incentives and disincentives.

QUESTION: Madame Secretary, why did you not seek as part of this initial agreement a commitment from the North Koreans not to conduct another nuclear test? And even though the agreement says that they will discuss other nuclear programs, including plutonium that they may have extracted, why did you not seek to get them -- or why is it acceptable to you that they would be able to retain such plutonium that they now have?

SECRETARY RICE: This is a first step and the first step is to discuss it, but there's a step in the follow-on phase which is the complete declaration, and I think that the joint statement covers the fact that the North is to declare and abandon, dismantle all of its nuclear programs. And everybody understands what all means. But this is an initial step to implementing.

In terms of the moratoria, those are covered in the joint statement.

Yes.

QUESTION: Madame Secretary, there appear to be two elements from the September 19 agreement that are unaddressed by at least this first phase of implementation that I wanted to ask you about in serial. First was what Ambassador Hill said. He said, "We don't have an agreement at this point even on the existence of this uranium program, but I certainly have made very clear repeatedly that we need to ensure that we know precisely the status of that."

The first question is about that uranium program, you don't even have an acknowledgement from them that it exists.

SECRETARY RICE: James, as I said, we are in the first quarter, not the fourth, and we are going to pursue the issue of the highly enriched uranium program. We've made that clear. And I will just call to your attention that the joint statement as well as this implementing agreement say all nuclear programs, and we mean all.

QUESTION: The other one that I wanted to ask, the other element is that in the joint statement from September 19, 2005, it states, and I quote, "The DPRK stated that it has the right to peaceful uses of nuclear energy. The other parties expressed their respect and agreed to discuss at an appropriate time the subject of the provision of a light-water reactor to the DPRK."

Is that still on the table?

SECRETARY RICE: The appropriate time -- I think if you look at the sequence in the joint statement, the sequence was very carefully addressed, which his that this is not an issue for today or even for several phases in the future. Because I think everyone understands that there is work for the DPRK to do in terms of its -- in terms of dismantling the existing programs and getting back into good graces. It's put that way very carefully and for a very important purpose. It is obvious that the light-water reactor is not a part of the early stages here.

Barbara.

QUESTION: Madame Secretary, what is the current U.S. assessment of the uranium enrichment program in North Korea? Did it ever get beyond R&D? And also, we've been told that the North Koreans expect that the issue of the Macao bank will be resolved shortly and that within 30 days they will see some of their funds released. Is that true?

SECRETARY RICE: Let me speak to the second of those first, Barbara. We have agreed that we will, in the separate working group that has been working on this issue that the Treasury Department heads, seek to resolve the issues concerning Banco Delta Asia. Now, remember that the case is against the bank for activities and so we do need to resolve that. Treasury is working to do that. We've been having good discussions with all of the parties involved in that and we'll look to what kind of remediation needs to take place to resolve our concerns. But that's a legal channel. We've been very clear that it has to be resolved within that channel. But we've said that in 30 days we would seek to resolve it. I think the Treasury will be speaking to these issues at another time.

In terms of the HEU program, Barbara, I can't go much beyond saying that we have concerns about the highly enriched uranium program. Jim Kelly, the then Assistant Secretary, presented these concerns to the North Koreans back in 2002, as you remember. We believe there was an acknowledgement of that. But we will just work through the evidence with them, but I can't go into it.

QUESTION: (Inaudible) qualify the status of it, whether it ever got beyond R&D?

SECRETARY RICE: No, no.

QUESTION: Madame Secretary, does this agreement represent a stepdown in any way by the U.S. Government that's vowed for years not to deal one-on-one with the North Koreans? This agreement does provide -- has a provision to do that. And secondly, are you concerned that the hardliners within the Administration may undermine your efforts, the State Department's efforts, to negotiate --

SECRETARY RICE: Well, I think these are the efforts of the United States Government, the last time I looked, the United States Government as one. I can assure you that we have talked about this inside the Administration and I can assure you that the President of the United States knows every detail of this agreement, so I don't expect that there's any question but that this is an agreement signed by the United States of America.

Now, as to its -- the bilateral elements of this, within the six-party framework we have always known that there are certain bilateral elements or bilateral issues that will have to be resolved. For instance, you will note that both Japan and the United States have bilateral working groups on political relations because we are not -- because we, the United States, doesn't have relations with North Korea. So obviously, since China and South Korea and Russia do, they don't need a bilateral working group to work on the normalization of political relations. So it's a natural part of this agreement. The Japanese have their own concerns that will be dealt with in their bilateral channel.

But this is a six-party agreement, and if on occasion we think that the diplomacy is advanced by having bilateral discussions with any of the parties in order to, within this context of the six-party agreement, then we will do that. And so Chris Hill has had bilateral discussions with the North Koreans, but he's also had bilateral discussions with the Japanese and the South Koreans and the Russians and with the Chinese. And so that will continue.

We have always insisted that any agreements have to be six-party agreements because, as I said earlier in answer to Anne's question, the key here is to have the right set of incentives and the right set of disincentives, because you want not just an agreement but you want the ability to enforce that agreement. And these are the states that have the closest interests being in the region, but also the right set of incentives and disincentives to make an agreement work.

QUESTION: Madame Secretary, the portion of the bilateral component of the agreement says that the United States will begin the process of removing North Korea from the state sponsor of terrorism list. Given that the state sponsor of terrorism list is supposed to be for countries that are sponsoring terrorism, what is -- what do you say to critics that say that this list is used as a political tool because North Korea has not been found to have any connection with terrorism for many years?

And if I might follow, what confidence do you have that North Korea isn't going to, once the agreement is started to be implemented, that it won't ask for more inducements or more incentives to continue going along with the disablement.

SECRETARY RICE: I don't -- I don't know if they'll ask, but I think it's pretty clear what is provided in terms of assistance, and it is a fixed amount for the period of disablement. It is a one-time rather than a kind of annual or yearly, which has been the case in prior agreements. And in that disablement phase this 1 million tons plus 50,000 is a combination of energy, economic and humanitarian assistance. That was always what was envisioned here but it's now a part of an agreement and we expect the North Koreans to live up to the agreement. So they know what they've signed on to and I assume they're going to live up to it.

In terms of the state sponsors list, this is an agreement to begin the review that removes countries from the state sponsors list. This is, I think, the right time to do that. We will see what the record shows on North Korea during this period of time, but we think it makes perfectly good sense to start that review and we'll look at the record.

QUESTION: Secretary Rice, John Bolton said yesterday that there's nothing in this agreement which the U.S. could not have gotten six years ago when President Bush stopped Colin Powell's initiative. Do you think there's any substance to his criticism?

SECRETARY RICE: No, I don't. I've already answered what was possible six years ago, without a coalition of states that had worked together over a period of time, to come to a common understanding of what needed to be done. I don't think you could argue that six years ago China, which -- and by the way, I want to thank the Chinese for their role -- that China was playing anything like the role that it is playing now as a key member of the six-party talks not just hosting those talks but really an active member. I don't think you could argue that at that time there was a coalition that was prepared to press the North Koreans in the way that this group of states has now been prepared to press the North Koreans. And frankly, six years ago, of course, we wanted to have a kind of large comprehensive agreement, but it got derailed by the unwillingness with the North to deal with a number of its programs. So, no, I don't think it was possible.

And I just want to, again, remind that we have here a suspension of their activities for -- within the period of 60 days, working groups, the emergency assistance. But then disablement I think is what everybody is going to be watching, because disablement -- it's certainly what we are going to be concerned for because disablement is a different kind of step than suspension. And so I just -- you know, I was there six years ago. I don't actually -- well, maybe John thought that at the time, but I just think he's wrong.

Yeah.

QUESTION: Madame Secretary, what didn't you get in this round that you wanted? And can you also give us a sense of your role in this overnight, what played out?

SECRETARY RICE: Yeah. Well, I think we did very well in this agreement, frankly. Obviously, the more momentum that we can maintain toward the complete denuclearization, toward the complete dismantlement, toward the complete accounting for the systems -- the better. But I will tell you that frankly this is the road that we started on when I was in Vietnam and had a session with Minister Li and then a session with then-national security adviser Song -- now Foreign Minister Song -- about exactly these elements. We worked with the Chinese -- obviously, we were all in Vietnam -- the Russians, the Chinese, the Japanese and others. We thought that these were important concrete steps that could be taken because everybody at that meeting, at APEC, who was not involved in the six-party talks, was sending a very strong message that they were concerned that the six-party talks were not getting anywhere and that people were perhaps losing confidence in them. And so at that meeting this notion of an early harvest really came into being. This is very much like that. And we worked on this. We had a number of meetings. As you remember, Chris Hill had meetings with all of his counterparts, including with the North Koreans and so this has been in the making for some time. And I'm very pleased that this has translated -- that early work has translated into this agreement.

I talked to Chris Hill many times yesterday, many times, but fortunately by the time I went to bed he thought he had a tentative agreement. And I called him at 4:15 this morning to make sure. It's all right -- I get up at 4:30 anyway, so --

Yes.

QUESTION: Madame Secretary, Parade magazine for the second year running has branded Kim Jong-Il as the world's second worst dictator. Now, they also are saying that with humanitarian-type clamp down and the regime in North Korea they have a disproportionate number of army troops. What do you see down the line to finish that, bring down the North Korean army and to right the relations between North and South?

SECRETARY RICE: Well, we're looking for a comprehensive approach to peace and security on the Korean Peninsula. I think if you look at the joint statement, it's got a number of issues about the UN declaration, universal rights. And we are concerned about human rights issues in North Korea. We've continued to be concerned about them.

I think it would be a very good thing if the North Korean people could have humanitarian assistance and economic assistance. I'll tell you, I worry about them. I worry about their fate. And we hope that through some of this that humanitarian assistance will be available to them and perhaps we can work toward greater transparency about some of this assistance as well.

Yes.

MR. MCCORMACK: We have time for one last one.

QUESTION: Madame Secretary, you made the case that this is different from the '94 framework agreement. But for six years this Administration has embraced the principle of not succumbing to blackmail from North Korea or any other state like that. In other words, effectively giving them rewards in exchange for their weapons program. How is this not a betrayal of that --

SECRETARY RICE: First of all, I don't think anybody ever said that there wouldn't be an agreement, some understanding that there would be dismantlement of programs and that there could be humanitarian assistance and economic assistance. In fact, that was the deal that Jim Kelly was going to put on the table in 2002 when we got derailed.

This is a reasonable way to go about the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula. It's a reasonable way to turn back a nuclear program in North Korea that began -- and I want to just emphasize, most people believe as much as 30 years ago maybe even more. So when you talk about what this Administration has done in six years just keep that in mind. We're talking about a program that's been (inaudible) and been on its way for 30 years.

We think that in this six-party context we're not only beginning to get at the issue of denuclearization which is so important to the Korean Peninsula but that we're building a set of relationships that can help to manage the issues on the Korean Peninsula, in fact, that can play a stabilizing role in the region as a whole. I would remind that when we had, you know, the difficult events of the summer with missile tests and then nuclear weapon's test, it was this group of states that was very early on able to get together and take action. And so I think this is a very good step forward. Yes, it has taken patient diplomacy to get to this point. It's going to take more patient diplomacy to get beyond this, but this is a very good start.

And I'd like to just close by congratulating Ambassador Hill and his counterparts on what I think was a long couple of nights, but a very good agreement.

Thank you.

QUESTION: Can I just follow on one thing in your statement? When you meet in March, will that be your first face to face with your North Korean counterpart in (inaudible) Beijing?

SECRETARY RICE: I think we're talking about after 60 days, so some time after 60 days, whatever that means -- maybe April or something like that. I don't know.

QUESTION: You don't know?

SECRETARY RICE: (Laughter.) No. But it would be my first -- if we do it and if there's enough progress on the 60 days, it would be my first meeting with North Korea.

Yes.

QUESTION: Madame Secretary you're going (inaudible) the Middle East --

SECRETARY RICE: In a State Department context.

QUESTION: -- what would you like to achieve?

MR. MCCORMACK: Thank you.

SECRETARY RICE: Thank you. We'll do the Middle East later.

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