



Remarks to the Media on Six-Party Talks

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ASSISTANT SECRETARY HILL: Well, good to see you all. I'm on my way to the airport. I'll be heading over to Seoul and then to Tokyo. Today was a good opportunity to review with the Chinese hosts of the Six-Party process where we are in the process. I think this was an important weekend. As you all know, the North Koreans went ahead and invited the IAEA to come to North Korea and to begin this process of shutting down the Yongbyon nuclear complex. This is an event we've been looking forward to for some time. As such, I think it's a very important first step.

It was made possible by a great deal of cooperation within the Six-Party process, especially with the Russian delegation who obviously worked very hard to ensure that the Banco Delta Asia transaction could be completed. So I think this weekend represents an important pivot away from banking matters that have held us up a long time back towards the subject that I think is most important, and that is denuclearization.

Obviously, this banking issue took a long time, longer than many of us wanted to see. But it's like a lot of things you want in life; sometimes it just takes longer than you would have hoped.

We are now pretty much getting prepared for the shutdown of the nuclear facility in Yongbyon. We will want to continue -- and to do with some haste -- to continue implementing the February agreement. Obviously, we have to figure out some ways to get back on our timeline. We believe that even though we are behind, certainly behind the timelines that we set out in February, we believe we have some possibilities of moving up to that time as we move to this next phase towards disabling of the nuclear facilities.

I've completed some very useful discussions with the Chinese -- that is, with Deputy Minister Wu Dawei. I'll be talking to my Russian counterpoint at some point in the next couple of days and also seeing my counterparts from the Republic of Korea and Japan.

So with those introductory comments, do you have any questions? Otherwise, I'll just head out to the airport.

QUESTION: When are the talks going to actually start?

ASSISTANT SECRETARY HILL: The first thing that's going to happen is the IAEA is going to come to the DPRK. There's going to be some discussions about the terms of reference and how the IAEA will do its job. We'll get on with some of the February obligations.

In terms of when we might have our next meeting of the six parties or whether we have a head of delegation or some sort meeting, I think that will be the product of consultations among all six parties. I've had a good discussion about that today with the Chinese, but I also want to talk about it with the rest of the participants. So I can't answer you except to say we'd like to get going very quickly and see if we can make up for some lost time.

QUESTION: You seem to believe there's some possibility for making up for lost time --

ASSISTANT SECRETARY HILL: I think the disablement phase, which we envision taking place in the latter part of this calendar year '07, can actually be done fairly quickly. I think one of the problems we confront is the fact that we envision considerable amounts of heavy fuel oil in this second phase, heavy fuel oil to the tune of 950,000 tons. We have to figure out how we can handle that and ensure that, as we do that, the North Koreans do their part. There are capacity issues on how much heavy fuel oil North Korea can receive per month. I think we need to work in our working group and see how we can make sure that that can be done quickly.

QUESTION: Ambassador Hill, can you tell us, since the original 60-day period has collapsed, how long is it going to take for this process of IAEA inspectors and the shutdown of the facilities? How long is it going to take in terms of days to get this process moving again?

ASSISTANT SECRETARY HILL: Well, again, it will require shutting down the facilities and sealing them. And then there has to be a process by which the IAEA is in place to monitor this. There has to be installation of television monitors, TV cameras, that sort of thing. These are a lot of technical questions that the IAEA working delegation that was invited to come needs to resolve. Our sense is that it will be down to a matter of weeks, not months but weeks. Probably not days, but weeks. It will take a little time, but I think we're not talking about months.

QUESTION: Were there any meetings of the working groups during this hiatus?

ASSISTANT SECRETARY HILL: We had several meetings of the working groups in March, and I must say they were not entirely satisfactory. I think one of the big problems was that we had difficulties getting through the banking issue. Again, it took us a long time, longer than many of us expected. And all of us have learned a lot about banking in the process, for what that's worth.

I think now we've made an important turn, and we're back onto the subject at hand, which is denuclearization.

QUESTION: Mr. Ambassador, have you had confirmation that the BDA money has reached its destination?

ASSISTANT SECRETARY HILL: I haven't heard that. I note the DPRK announcement on Saturday referred to its being in its final phase. As of Saturday, we were aware that it was in the Russian banking system. I suspect it will be in the DPRK bank account very soon, if it has not already done so. I thought it was important that the DPRK went ahead and invited the IAEA with the understanding that the matter has been resolved.

EMBASSY MODERATOR: We have time for about one more question.

QUESTION: Ambassador Hill, what gives you any confidence that the process now returns to a tight sequence of actions? And, in particular, what gives you confidence that North Korea is willing to meet all (inaudible) for disablement?

ASSISTANT SECRETARY HILL: I think all of the elements that you are talking about in the next phase were already envisioned in the February agreement. Secondly, disablement of the reactor -- there are a number of technical ways to do it. But from a technical point of view, it doesn't take long. I think a lot of the techniques involved in

disabling of graphite-moderated reactors are things that can be done in several days, a couple of weeks at the most. I think we have time to do that such that we can get through all of these actions, including these second-phase actions, I think we can do all of them within the calendar year.

Now if your question is, "What gives you confidence that there's a political will to get all this?" I think political will is something we're going to need. But from a technical point of view, I think all of it is quite doable.

What we need to do is be very active diplomatically and, frankly, imaginative diplomatically to get back on our timelines. I think we do have to pay a lot of attention to timelines.

QUESTION: When is the first tranche going to start?

ASSISTANT SECRETARY HILL: Of fuel oil?

QUESTION: Of fuel oil or economic aid.

ASSISTANT SECRETARY HILL: The South Koreans took on the first tranche of fuel oil, so I think you have to direct that first question to them. My understanding is that this week and perhaps today, in fact, they will have placed orders for the heavy fuel oil. You place as orders to a refinery and then you have to rent ships to deliver the stuff. My understanding is that process is getting underway this week, if not already today. My understanding is that you could begin to see the first of the 50,000 tons of fuel oil within a week or two. That may be optimistic, and again I want to emphasize that you should probably direct that question to the South Koreans, who have taken on this first tranche. That's what I understand it to be.

QUESTION: Is there anything else the North Koreans have to do in order to get that first tranche started?

ASSISTANT SECRETARY HILL: I think we can get their first tranche started, provided we continue to move ahead on this shutdown, which I think we're doing. There are some other obligations in the February agreement that we need to get moving on, such as having an in-depth discussion of the eventual list of nuclear programs that the DPRK will make, which is also pursuant to the February agreement.

QUESTION: Will that take place here?

ASSISTANT SECRETARY HILL: Don't know yet, but probably it would take place here in Beijing. I think we do need to get these working groups going. I think one thing that we should do in that context of these consultations is see whether we can strengthen the working group process. I felt that several delegations – I'd like to think that mine was one of them – brought some really good people who were technical experts in these matters, and I think we need to make sure that everybody is doing that.

All right. Thank you very much.

QUESTION: When will you be back?

ASSISTANT SECRETARY HILL: I don't know. Weeks, not months. Okay, see you later.

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