
SIX-PARTY TALKS

Initiated: 27 August 2003

Participants: China, Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK), Japan, Russian Federation, Republic of Korea (ROK), and the United States.

Background:

The goal of the Six-Party Talks is to identify a course of action to bring security and stability to the Korean Peninsula. The main issue that the talks address is the DPRK's nuclear weapons program. The Six-Party Talks began in 2003, shortly after the DPRK announced its intention to withdraw from the [Treaty on the Non-proliferation of Nuclear Weapons](#) (NPT). The United States requested the participation of China, Japan, South Korea, and Russia due to the DPRK's breaches of the bilateral Agreed Framework of 1994. Talks have taken place in Beijing, China.

Participants:

China: China, the DPRK's main trading partner, has provided Pyongyang with an enormous amount of humanitarian and energy assistance. Because of this relationship, China plays a vital role in acting as a mediator for the Six-Party Talks. China has an interest in preserving stability in the DPRK due to the large number of refugees it would receive if tensions rose. Regional stability is also needed to ensure China's continued economic growth.

DPRK: The leadership of the DPRK has made it clear that it believes its nuclear weapons program provides vital national security benefits. Energy production is also one of the primary concerns of the DPRK leadership. The DPRK economy is weak, and the nation has suffered multiple famines in recent years that have killed large numbers of its citizens. Within the Six-Party Talks, the leaders of the DPRK seek to gain security, energy, and economic benefits.

Japan: Japan believes that the DPRK's nuclear weapons program directly threatens its national security. Besides seeking the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula, Japan wishes to address other issues in the Six-Party Talks, such as the abduction of Japanese citizens by the DPRK government.

Russian Federation: Russia exerts less influence on the DPRK than China, as Russian trade with the DPRK has hit historic lows in recent years. Due to a shared border, Russia is also concerned about the flow of refugees that would occur in the event of a conflict. Russia wishes to see the DPRK's nuclear weapons program dismantled in order to prevent the proliferation of nuclear materials and technology to both state and non-state actors.

Republic of Korea: In 1953 the United States, China, and the DPRK reached an armistice that ended the fighting of the Korean War. This agreement was not signed by South Korean President Syngman Rhee; therefore, the two Koreas technically remain at war. South Korea is interested in seeing the DPRK dismantle its nuclear weapons program as it poses a direct security threat to peace and security on the Korean Peninsula. Due to a change in policy towards the DPRK that occurred in the late 1990's with the Sunshine Policy, which aimed at promoting reunification, another one of South Korea's main goals within the Six-Party Talks is to create a political atmosphere in which reunification of the two nations can be achieved.

United States: The United States wishes to see the DPRK nuclear weapons program dismantled in order to prevent the proliferation of nuclear technology and materials to both state and non-state actors. The United States is committed to defend South Korea in accordance with the Mutual Security Agreement signed in 1953. The United States has approximately 37,000 troops stationed in South Korea.

Developments:

For related information, see sections on [Joint Declaration of South and North Korea](#), [KEDO](#), and [IAEA](#)

2012: On 23 February, talks between the United States and North Korea resumed in Beijing. The DPRK agreed to halt their nuclear tests, long-range missile launches and enrichment activities at Yongbyon nuclear complex. In addition, they promised to allow IAEA inspectors to monitor the moratorium on uranium enrichment at the complex. In return, the United States pledged to resume

240,000 metric-tons of food aid. The agreement was known informally as the “Leap –day agreement.”

In commemoration of the late president Kim Il-Sung’s 100th birthday, North Korea launched the Kwangmyongsong-3 satellite on April 6, which failed to reach orbit. The United States and South Korea viewed the act as a test of missile technology and suspended food aid to the DPRK. The United States has since been meeting with other Six-Party members including ROK and Japan individually regarding a peaceful solution to the issue.

On May 3 during the first preparatory meeting for the 2015 NPT Review Conference in Vienna, the five permanent members of the UN Security Council issued a [joint statement](#) strongly urging the DPRK to “fulfill its commitments under the 2005 Joint Statement of the Six-Party Talks, and to fully comply with the obligations under UN Security Council Resolutions 1718 and 1874, including abandoning all its nuclear weapons and existing nuclear programs and immediately ceasing all related activities.”

On May 22, North Korea vowed to move ahead with its nuclear program and take “self-defense” measures to protect itself from U.S. hostility regarding its satellite launch in April. There is concern among the Six-Party members that a nuclear test could follow shortly, as it has in the case of past rocket/satellite launches. In response, U.S. Special Envoy Glyn Davies emphasized the need for sanctions against the DPRK during meetings with Chinese officials in Beijing. Despite statements by North Korea that it does not intend to test a nuclear device, satellite images indicate construction at rocket launch sites is progressing rapidly.

2011: Despite threats from North Korea, the United States and South Korea started their annual joint military exercises on February 28. The exercises, designed to test force preparedness for a conflict with North Korea, were described by both parties as “defensive in nature” but were viewed by the DPRK as acts of aggression. They will continue through 30 April.

On March 15, North Korea indicated to Russia its willingness to return to the Six-Party Talks if they were resumed unconditionally. Russia responded the next day indicating its readiness to restart the Six-Party Talks.

Also on March 15 the G8 Foreign Ministers condemned DPRK’s continued violation of UN Security Council Resolutions 1718 and 1874 following DPRK’s disclosure of uranium enrichment activities.

On 17 March, South Korea rejected North Korean proposals to return to the Six-Party Talks to discuss its uranium enrichment capabilities. The South Korean Foreign Minister Kim Sung-hwan said that the DPRK must show its commitment to disarmament not just in words but also in action, demanding disarmament steps taken by the DPRK before resuming negotiations.

On July 22, nuclear negotiators from South Korea and the DPRK met on the sidelines of the ASEAN Regional Forum in Bali. The meeting represented the first direct engagement between the two countries since 2008. After the meeting, both sides confirmed that they were prepared to undertake efforts to restart Six-Party Talks.

U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, who attended the ASEAN Regional Forum, declared that the United States was encouraged by the dialogue between the North and South, but that the DPRK must undergo a “change in behavior” before talks can be resumed. Clinton then met with Japanese Foreign Minister Takeaki Matsumoto and South Korean Foreign Minister Kim Sung-hwan. Following the meeting, they issued a trilateral statement declaring that talks between the two Koreas must be “a sustained process” and that Six-Party dialogue would not resume until the DPRK displayed a “sincere effort” to reconcile with South Korea. On the last day of the Bali forum, Clinton invited Kim Kye Gwan, North Korea’s vice foreign minister and former chief nuclear envoy, to New York for “exploratory” talks on the resumption of Six-Party dialogue.

On July 28 and 29, the U.S. Special Envoy to North Korea, Stephen Bosworth, met with North Korean First Vice Minister Kim Kye Gwan in New York to discuss the possibility of a resumption of Six-Party Talks. Following their meetings, Kim stated, “I am satisfied with talks this time,” and expressed North Korea’s intention to continue dialogue in the future. Kim specifically called for “more bilateral” talks to precede a resumption of Six-Party negotiations. On August 10, South Korea’s top security advisor, Chun Young-woo, arrived in the United States for three days of meetings with top U.S. officials to discuss recent developments surrounding the possible resumption of Six-Party Talks.

On August 24, Kim Jong-Il met with Russian President Dmitry Medvedev to discuss the possible resumption of Six-Party Talks. The North Korean leader declared that he would be willing to return to talks without preconditions and to negotiate a moratorium on the production and testing of nuclear weapons once the talks had resumed. Kim Jong-Il

and Medvedev also discussed a range of joint energy and infrastructure projects, and Russia pledged to provide the DPRK with 50,000 tons of wheat.

South Korea and the United States responded skeptically to Kim Jong-Il's statements, and both called for the DPRK to take meaningful, tangible steps toward denuclearization before Six-Party talks could resume.

On September 27, DPRK Deputy Foreign Minister Pak Kil Yon stated at the United Nations, that the DPRK was ready for an 'unconditional resumption' of Six-Party Talks. Pak Kil Yon also called for mechanisms that will make Security Council Resolutions related to peace and security (i.e. sanctions and use of force), subject to United Nations General Assembly approval.

On 19 December, North Korea announced that Kim Jong-Il died.

2010: On 11 January, DPRK Foreign Minister Paek Nam Sun stated that the formation of a peace treaty with the United States was a precondition for his country's return to the Six-Party Talks.

On 4 February, Kurt Campbell, U.S. Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs responded by announcing that United States would continue to hold the DPRK's return to the Six-Party Talks as an essential precondition to discussing a peace treaty or lifting any sanctions imposed by the United Nations.

On 26 March, a South Korean warship, the Cheonan, sank after coming into contact with a torpedo, killing 46 soldiers. In May, South Korea formally accused DPRK of launching a torpedo against its warship, but North Korea denied having any involvement in the explosion. South Korean officials stated they would not resume Six-Party Talks until the Cheonan incident was resolved and an official policy response from North Korea was given.

On 22 April, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov called for a reconvening of Six-Party Talks, after DPRK announced it would not eliminate its nuclear weapons program, but instead wanted to work with "other nuclear weapons states" in their nonproliferation efforts.

On 27 August, North Korea's Kim Jong-Il met with Chinese President Hu Jintao in an attempt by China to re-engage North Korea in Six-Party Talks. During the meeting Kim Jong-Il expressed hope for "the early resumption of the talks."

On November 8, IAEA Director General Yukiya Amano called on Six-Party countries to resume talks "at an appropriate time." However, South Korean military exercises near a disputed sea border prompted DPRK to shell South Korean Yeonpyeong Island on November 23. Artillery fire was exchanged amidst international fears of further attacks and military escalation.

On November 28, China called for emergency talks with the Six-Party nations in an attempt to ease tensions on the Korean peninsula and strengthen communication among the Six-Party members. Although China stated that emergency consultations do not mean a resumption of Six-Party Talks, the idea was negatively received by South Korea, Japan, and the United States who felt the timing was not right for talks and that DPRK needed to fulfill its disarmament obligations before Six-Party talks could resume.

In that same month, North Korea unveiled its secret 2,000 centrifuge uranium enrichment facility at the Yongbyon complex. North Korea stated that the facility would produce LEU for a light-water reactor under construction in the same complex. However, the plant can also be converted to produce HEU for nuclear weapons.

After returning from an unofficial visit to North Korea on December 20, New Mexico Governor Bill Richardson announced that DPRK agreed to allow IAEA inspectors into its enrichment facility to verify that it is not producing HEU. Both the United States and South Korea expressed skepticism about the offer, while China called on North Korea to follow through and accept an inspection.

In his annual New Years message, South Korea President Lee Myung-bak called for a revival of Six-Party Talks with North Korea in an attempt to ease tensions on the peninsula and reopen diplomatic channels.

2009: On April 5, 2009, the DPRK attempted to place a satellite into orbit with a 3-stage Taepodong-2 missile. The DPRK attempted unsuccessfully to launch the same missile in 2006. During the 2009 test, stage one of the missile fell into the Sea of Japan while the remaining stages along with the payload landed in the Pacific Ocean. This missile test was widely condemned by the international community and was recognized as a violation of United Nations Resolutions [1695](#) and [1718](#).

On 13 April, members of the United Nations Security Council unanimously adopted a presidential statement condemning the rocket launch as a

violation of United Nations Security Council Resolution [1718](#). The statement demanded that the DPRK not conduct any additional launches. It also established a committee to determine whether an adjustment of sanctions would be possible. This statement was drafted after the permanent members of the Security Council failed to agree on a new resolution that included sanctions.

In response to the Security Council statement, on April 14, the DPRK announced its withdrawal from the Six-Party Talks and its intention to restore the nuclear facilities that had been shut down under the disablement process. On the same day, the DPRK's state-run Korean Central News Agency reported: "The DPRK threatened to conduct a nuclear test and more ballistic missile tests if the United Nations Security Council does not apologize to the DPRK and withdraw its condemnation of Pyongyang's rocket launch earlier this month."

On May 25, the DPRK conducted an underground nuclear test about 70 kilometers northwest of Kimchaek, the site of the 2006 underground nuclear test. The international community, including all five permanent members of the United Nations Security Council, strongly condemned this act.

On June 12, the United Nations Security Council unanimously adopted Resolution [1874](#). This resolution imposed further economic and commercial sanctions on the DPRK and authorized UN Member States to interdict and search DPRK vessels for prohibited cargo. The resolution also called upon the DPRK to retract its announced withdrawal from the NPT and return to the Six-Party Talks.

In September, DPRK leader Kim Jong-II was quoted by China's Xinhua news agency as saying that he would be open to bilateral talks with the United States in order to resolve relevant issues.

In October, Chinese Prime Minister Wen Jiabao visited the DPRK and met with Kim Jong-II. Afterwards, the Prime Minister announced that the DPRK was ready to return to the Six-Party Talks. He also made it clear that DPRK participation in the talks would be dependant on whether progress was made in the bilateral negotiations with the United States. At the time of this announcement, the South Korean news agency Yonhap reported that the DPRK had nearly completed the restoration of its main nuclear facility in Yongbyon.

In December, U.S. special representative to North Korea Stephen Bosworth met with DPRK officials in Pyongyang. The talks did not produce any concrete commitments, though Bosworth reported that he had

reached a common understanding with his counterparts that the DPRK needed to reaffirm its 2005 commitment to abandon nuclear weapons in return for economic aid.

2008: In May 2008, the DPRK provided the United States with the documents that outlined its nuclear program. A month later they released a declaration of all nuclear activities to all members of the Six-Party Talks. The United States reported having found traces of highly enriched uranium on the documents, which was problematic since the DPRK denied having an active uranium enrichment program. The United States also felt that the DPRK documents were insufficient because they did not give an account of proliferation actions with other countries such as Libya and did not contain the exact number of nuclear weapons that the DPRK had produced.

While behind schedule, disablement of Yongbyon was reported to be nearing completion and the DPRK submitted its long-overdue nuclear declaration on June 26. The following day, in an effort to demonstrate its commitment to the denuclearization process, the DPRK destroyed the cooling tower of its 5 Mw(e) experimental reactor at Yongbyon. The Six-Party Talks resumed negotiations to map out a verification plan.

In October, the DPRK agreed to a number of verification measures, and the United States removed it from their list of State Sponsors of Terrorism.

In November, the DPRK prevented environmental samples from being taken from its main nuclear complex. These samples would have been used to verify the DPRK's account of past nuclear activities.

2007: On February 13, the DPRK agreed to an "[Action Plan](#)" based on the 2005 Statement of Principles. Under the deal, the DPRK would shut down its nuclear facilities at Yongbyon within 60 days in exchange for 50,000 tons of heavy-fuel aid. Separate bilateral talks with the United States and Japan would also begin in order to normalize relations. Furthermore, in accordance with the Action Plan's second phase, another 950,000 tons of heavy fuel oil would be delivered along with other humanitarian, economic, and energy aid if the DPRK disabled its nuclear weapons program entirely.

On 19 March, DPRK assets in Banco Delta Asia were released and on July 14, the IAEA confirmed the shutdown of Yongbyon nuclear facilities. In October 2007, the six parties agreed to a [Second-Phase Action Plan](#) which called for the DPRK to disable its key nuclear facilities at Yongbyon and

furthermore to submit a full declaration of its entire nuclear program by December 31, 2007.

2006: As a result of failed talks, North Korea tested seven missiles including several long-range missiles in July and announced plans to test a nuclear device.

On 9 October 2006, the DPRK tested its first nuclear device at 10:35am (local time) at Mount Mant'ap near P'unggye-ri, Kilchu-kun, North Hamgyong Province. The yield from the test appeared to be less than 1 kiloton; the DPRK reportedly was expecting at least a 4 kiloton yield, possibly indicating that the nuclear program still had a number of technical hurdles to overcome before it could deploy a usable warhead. In reaction to the test, the UN Security Council passed [Resolution 1718](#) placing sanctions on the DPRK.

With Beijing's behind the scenes negotiations, the DPRK returned to the Six-Party Talks in from November (phase 1) and December 2006 (phase 2) in which the parties reaffirm the September 19, 2005 Joint Statement. The talks would continue into a third phase in 2007.

2005: On 10 February, the DPRK announced that it had manufactured nuclear weapons and was suspending talks for an indefinite period.

In April, the ROK claimed the North has shut down its reactor to extract fissile material for nuclear weapons. On May 1, the DPRK partook in another missile test.

A fourth round of Six-Party Talks took place in two phases: from July 27 to August 7 and from September 13 to 19. The first phase of the Fourth Round of Six-Party Talks was largely unsuccessful in that no agreements could be made, thus they were recessed until September's second phase.

On 19 September, the DPRK's delegation to the Six-Party Talks signed a ["Statement of Principles"](#) whereby Pyongyang agreed to abandon all nuclear programs and return to the NPT and restore IAEA safeguards in exchange for a U.S.-provided light-water reactor. Implementation was delayed because the DPRK and the United States had desired that the other side fulfill its obligations under the agreement first.

Despite the "Statement of Principles," the Six-Party Talks process was put on hold for over a year. A key issue holding back the talks was a disagreement over financial sanctions placed by the United States on businesses working with the DPRK. In September 2005, Washington froze the assets of Macao-based Banco Delta Asia. The reasons for this action was

controversial, with the United States claiming that the bank was involved in money laundering unrelated to the nuclear issue, while experts claimed it was to gain negotiating leverage over the DPRK nuclear weapons program. As a result, North Korea refused to return to talks and sought to resume building its own nuclear reactor in light of U.S. refusal to implement the Agreed Framework.

2004: In January, U.S. nuclear scientist Dr. Siegfried Hecker was allowed unofficial access to the Yongbyon nuclear facilities. Although he did not find enough evidence to prove they had a weapons program, he did discern they "most likely" have the ability to produce plutonium.

[The Second Round of Six-Party Talks](#) resumed from February 25-28. While mostly inconclusive, the participants did express their commitment to a nuclear-weapon-free Korean Peninsula and their willingness to coexist peacefully. All parties agreed to coordinate steps to address the nuclear and related concerns and to hold a third round of talks.

The [Third Round of Six-Party Talks](#) took place June 23-26 in Beijing where parties stressed the need for "words for words" and "actions for actions" and reaffirmed their commitments to the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula. They agreed, in principle, to a fourth round of talks to be held in September 2004.

2003: On 10 January, DPRK announced its withdrawal from NPT.

On 5 February, North Korean officials declared they had reactivated the Yongbyon nuclear reactor to produce electricity "at the present stage." Despite the DPRK's reassurances of the peaceful nature of program, the IAEA referred the case to the UN Security Council on February 12.

On February 17, the U.S. and the ROK announce they will hold joint military exercises in March, which the DPRK responds to with a missile launch on February 24 and a second on March 10.

On April 12, North Korean officials indicated interest in returning to multilateral talks. China hosts trilateral talks between the U.S. and DPRK in Beijing at the end of April.

No agreement was made between the parties during the first round of Six-Party Talks held from August 27-29, but all participants expressed a willingness to continue talks at a future date.

2002: On January 29 during his State of the Union address, U.S. President George W. Bush referred to

North Korea as a member of the “axis of evil” due to their suspected nuclear weapons program.

Through April, U.S. and South Korean officials attended several meetings to discuss the possible resumption of U.S. negotiations with North Korea to reinvigorate the 1994 Agreed Framework. South Korean presidential aide Lim Dong Won met with North Korean officials, including leader Kim Jong-Il, who agreed to receive U.S. diplomat Jack Pritchard to discuss restarting U.S.-North Korean negotiations on the Agreed Framework. At issue were the IAEA inspections of North Korea’s nuclear facilities, called for in the 1994 agreement when a “significant portion” of the new reactors was completed. U.S. officials said the inspections could take three to four years to conduct, making their early commencement necessary to avoid interruption or delay in U.S. aid for building the two LWRs intended to supply electricity to North Korea. North Korean officials, however, were reluctant to allow the inspections in the wake of U.S. President Bush’s January “axis of evil” speech, and due to concerns that the United States would renege on its pledge to help the country complete the LWRs.

During a visit to the DPRK from October 3-5, U.S. Assistant Secretary James A. Kelly and his delegation advised the North Koreans that the United States had recently acquired information indicating that North Korea had a program to enrich uranium for nuclear weapons in violation of the Agreed Framework and other agreements. On October 16, U.S. officials claimed that North Korea acknowledged they had such a program; however, there is still much conflict over the interpretation of North Korean statements if they really “admitted” possession or asserted their “right” to possession. The following day, Kim Jong-Il stated he would allow inspections of decommissioned nuclear facilities.

On November 14, U.S. President George W. Bush declared that November oil shipments to North Korea would be the last if the North did not agree to put a halt to its weapons programs.

On December 12, the DPRK threatened to reactivate nuclear facilities for energy generation as a consequence of the Americans’ decision to halt oil shipments. Finally, North Korea expelled IAEA inspectors and stated plans to reopen its reprocessing facilities.

2001: On February 22, North Korea threatened to abandon its participation in the Agreed Framework if the Bush administration followed a “different” North Korea policy from that of the Clinton administration.

North Korea also accused the United States of not sincerely implementing the Agreed Framework and emphasized that, should the United States continue to delay implementation, it would not be bound to the agreement any longer. The United States stated in response that it was willing to continue dialogue with the DPRK on security issues and that it would honor the Agreed Framework.

On 6 March, U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell announced that the United States planned to engage with North Korea and pick up where President Clinton had left off. The administration noted some “promising elements” that had been left on the table. President Bush further noted that he was looking forward, at some point in the future, to having a dialogue with the DPRK. However, such dialogue would require complete verification of the terms of a potential agreement. The DPRK called the new U.S. policy hostile.

On 6 June, the United States announced its determination to resume “serious discussions” on a “broad agenda” with the DPRK, i.e., comprehensive negotiations, including “improved implementation of the Agreed Framework, verifiable missile ban and North Korean conventional forces on the peninsula.” Some experts interpreted the new comprehensive approach as linkage between progress on nuclear issues with missile, and conventional issues in dealing with North Korea. The DPRK refused to resume talks with the United States on such a comprehensive basis, accusing the Bush administration of committing to a policy of isolation and suppression of North Korea. The DPRK stated that instead of holding comprehensive discussions, bilateral talks should focus on compensating the DPRK for the loss of electricity due to delays in the construction of the Light Water Reactor (LWR) under the Agreed Framework and warned that the accord was in danger of collapse. The Bush administration stated that it was committed to the Agreed Framework; however, construction of the LWR, required by the accord, had not yet begun.

However, on 7 June, President Bush announced that his administration would not immediately resume negotiations with the DPRK, he expressed concerns about the ability to verify any agreement with a closed society like North Korea. U.S. officials stated that the administration was conducting a comprehensive review of U.S. policy towards the DPRK.

US Congressional Republican leaders urged the administration to reconsider the terms of the Agreed Framework by abandoning the LWR project in favor

of conventional power plants to meet North Korea's civilian energy needs. They called into question Pyongyang's "track record" and said that North Korea's regime could hardly be trusted with LWR technology or fissile material.

On 13 June, U.S. special envoy Jack Pritchard met North Korea's UN envoy in New York, beginning a dialogue between the Bush administration and the government in Pyongyang. This meeting was followed by the U.S. administration's decision to resume negotiations with North Korea after a three-month review.