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## NATIONS SEEK TO HOLD NORTH KOREA TO TEXT OF AGREEMENT

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The United States, Russia and other nations urged North Korea yesterday to abide by a six-nation deal to dismantle its nuclear programs after the government in Pyongyang issued a statement that cast doubt on the agreement it had signed with great fanfare in Beijing on Monday.

North Korea, in a statement issued by an unnamed foreign ministry spokesman, said it would not begin to dismantle its nuclear programs until after it received a civilian nuclear reactor. That statement ran counter to the interpretation U.S. officials had offered of the agreement -- that a civilian nuclear reactor was only a distant possibility after North Korea had dismantled its programs and demonstrated its compliance.

"We will stick to the text of the Beijing [agreement], and I believe we can make progress if everybody sticks to what we agreed to," Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice told reporters at the United Nations. At the same news conference, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov agreed, saying, "I also think we have to stick to the text of the agreement." Officials in Japan and China echoed those sentiments.

In its statement, North Korea asserted that the United States had been isolated on the issue of whether North Korea could pursue peaceful nuclear power, leaving it no choice but to withdraw its objection. Once the United States provides North Korea with a light-water reactor, the statement said, North Korea will return to the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty.

Christopher R. Hill, the chief U.S. negotiator, had predicted before he left Beijing that North Korea would issue such a statement, if only for face-saving domestic purposes. Other U.S. officials also said they were not alarmed, calling it a predictable propaganda stunt and saying North Korea's true intentions would be apparent when the talks resume in November.

Still, analysts and some U.S. officials privately said the North Korea statement demonstrated some of the pitfalls in the long-sought statement of principles. The statement outlined a series of goals -- such as North Korea abandoning its nuclear

programs, normalizing relations, providing North Korea with energy aid -- but left unstated the sequence and timing of steps needed to achieve those goals.

The final stumbling block was North Korea's demand for a civilian nuclear reactor. The idea was anathema to the Bush administration, which came into office deeply skeptical of a 1994 agreement freezing North Korea's programs in exchange for two light-water reactors. The concrete had been poured for the \$4 billion project, but it was terminated after the Bush administration accused North Korea in 2002 of violating the accord by conducting a clandestine nuclear program.

During the final round of talks, China proposed text that said North Korea "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 light-water reactor" to North Korea.

Rice, working primarily with South Korean Foreign Minister Ban Ki Moon, then came up with a solution over the weekend -- that the text was acceptable as long as each party could offer its own interpretation of the sequencing. Hill, in his statement, made clear "appropriate time" would come at the end of the process -- if ever.

One senior U.S. official, asked if he believed North Korea really intended to give up its nuclear programs, paused and then said: "We'll see . . . we'll see."