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I. United States

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1. ROK-DPRK Relations

United Press International ("S.KOREA SEEKING IMPROVED TIES WITH NORTH," Seoul, 03/17/98) reported that ROK President Kim Dae-jung discussed methods for improving relations with the DPRK at a meeting with Unification Minister Kang In-duck. Kim stressed the need to allow non-government organizations in the ROK to provide the DPRK with direct aid rather than funneling it all through the Red Cross, as is now required. He added that the ROK ought to focus on helping the DPRK with its agricultural sector by providing pesticides, fertilizer, and farming equipment. He told Kang to work on setting up joint ROK-DPRK commissions at the truce village of Panmunjom, as called for under the 1991 agreement on reconciliation.

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2. Four-Party Peace Talks

The Associated Press ("KOREA TALKS PROCEED SLOWLY," Geneva, 03/17/98) reported that ROK officials speaking on condition of anonymity said that the PRC delegation to the four-party peace talks was to meet informally with the other delegations Tuesday morning, and that all parties will meet formally later. They added that a head-to-head session between the two Koreas is not yet planned.

US State Department Spokesman James Rubin ("STATE DEPARTMENT NOON BRIEFING," USIA Transcript, 03/16/98) stated that all parties to the four-party peace talks can raise any issue they wish relating to establishment of a peace regime on the Korean Peninsula, and issues concerning tension reduction. Regarding DPRK demands for US troop withdrawal from the ROK, Rubin said, "Anything can be discussed but it's a non-starter." He added, "We hope to move the process forward through these discussions, but our expectations are not high for breakthroughs in what will be a slow and painstaking effort." Asked whether the conclusion of a peace agreement would cause the US to reconsider its troop posture in the ROK, Rubin replied, "It's too hypothetical to get into at this point." He concluded, "The Korean Peninsula is a very dangerous place and it's a long, long away from being not a dangerous place."

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3. Japanese Aid for DPRK

The AP-Dow Jones News Service ("JAPAN LDP MULLS SENDING FOOD MISSION TO N. KOREA - KYODO," Tokyo, 03/17/98) reported that Japan's Kyodo News agency said that the ruling Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) is considering sending a mission of agricultural experts to the DPRK before the end of the month to assess the food situation. Yoshiro Mori, the chairman of LDP Executive Council who headed an earlier mission to Pyongyang last November, instructed lawmakers Shin Sakurai and Tokuichiro Tamagawa to begin coordination talks with DPRK officials to arrange the visit. A senior member of the LDP said an expert survey of the DPRK's current food supply situation was considered in order to give the party a reliable assessment that could guide party leaders in making a decision regarding new assistance to the DPRK.

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4. Japanese Waste Exports to DPRK

The AP-Dow Jones News Service ("S. KOREANS PROTEST JAPANESE INDUS WASTE EXPORTS TO N. KOREA," Seoul, 03/17/98) reported that about 30 ROK environmentalists staged a rally in front of the Japanese embassy in Seoul Tuesday, protesting alleged Japanese exports of harmful industrial waste to the DPRK. The protesters said in a statement, "It is selfish for Japan to export poisonous industrial wastes to North Korea which is incapable of processing them." Last week, Japanese media reported that an aluminum company in Nagoya, Japan, was under investigation for allegedly exporting 51,000 metric tons of poisonous aluminum waste to the DPRK over the past eight years. ROK environmentalists said that the wastes can easily explode and seriously contaminate water and earth if not property processed.

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5. ROK Financial Crisis

The AP-Dow Jones News Service (Chang Woo-hyuk, "S. KOREA GOVT TO ALLOW FOREIGNERS TO BUY LOCAL LAND," Seoul, 03/17/98) reported that ROK Construction and Transportation Minister

Lee Jung-moo said Tuesday that the government will remove virtually all restrictions on the purchases of local land by foreign investors. Currently, foreigners are allowed to buy land for business-purposes only. However, Lee said that foreigners will not be able to purchase land on areas preserved for national security, cultural assets, and islands.

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6. Clinton's Visit to PRC

The Associated Press ("CHINA: CLINTON VISIT WILL OPEN TIES," Beijing, 03/17/98) reported that PRC Foreign Ministry spokesman Zhu Bangzao said Tuesday that US President Bill Clinton's expected June visit will open "a new stage" in relations between the two countries. Zhu said the two sides are making "active preparations" for the trip, although he gave no dates. Zhu hailed the US decision not to support a motion to criticize the PRC at the UN Human Rights Commission in Geneva, but he denied that a deal had been worked out with US officials that would link Clinton's visit to the release of PRC political prisoners. Zhu also said that Chinese companies have not sold and do not intend to sell chemicals to Iran that could be used to develop nuclear weapons.

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7. Russian Nuclear Posture The Washington Post carried an analytical article (David Hoffman, "DOWNSIZING A MIGHTY ARSENAL," Moscow, 03/16/98, A01) which said that, despite drastic reductions in Russian strategic forces since the end of the Cold War, Russian leaders have decided to rely on the deterrent power of nuclear weapons more than ever to compensate for their even weaker conventional forces. The article quoted Lev Volkov, a prominent Russian military strategist, as saying, "All we have is the nuclear stick. Of course, we should all together decrease this nuclear danger. But right now, we have nothing else." Some Russian strategists recently proposed that Russia abandon the bilateral arms-control process with the US and go its own way with a small, independent nuclear force. Independent estimates by authoritative Russian and Western experts show a movement toward a drastically reduced nuclear force in the next 10 to 15 years. Specialists said that Russia will likely wind up with an arsenal of 1,000 to 1,500 warheads a decade from now regardless of arms control treaties. However, the total could fall to half that if the economy does not recover. The article quoted A.D. Baker III, editor of Combat Fleets of the World, as saying that at the present rate of decline, Russia's strategic-missile submarine fleet "will be virtually extinct within a decade." Georgi Arbatov, a prominent strategist and adviser to Soviet leaders, stated, "We have whole graveyards of nuclear weapons and we don't know what to do with them." Sergei Rogov, director of the USA-Canada Institute, said that Russia and the US continue to operate under the doctrine of Mutual Assured Destruction. He added, "You don't threaten your 'strategic partner' with assured destruction 24 hours a day. We need to abandon the Mutual Assured Destruction conditions with the United States." Many Russian military and political leaders also feel that the nuclear face-off is burdensome, diverting resources from deterring potential threats from the Islamic world and China.

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8. Russian Nuclear Safety

US State Department Spokesman James Rubin ("STATE DEPARTMENT NOON BRIEFING," USIA Transcript, 03/16/98) stated that the US believes that, despite officially having a no-first-use policy until the early '80s and the early '90s, the Soviet Union and Russia have always maintained a launch-on-warning capability. He added, "With regard to the risk of accidental launch by Russia, although we believe that Russian nuclear forces remain under secure command and control, the US continues

to review all credible proposals to assure continued confidence regarding the possibility of an accidental or unauthorized launch of nuclear weapons."

II. Republic of Korea

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1. Light-Water Reactor Project

Executive members of the Korea Peninsula Energy Development Organization (KEDO) will convene for ambassador-level talks in New York on March 19-20, reported Japanese foreign ministry officials. Accordingly, representatives from the ROK, the US, the European Union, and Japan will discuss matters regarding the division of costs for a light-water reactor project in the DPRK. (Hankyoreh Shinmun, "KEDO MEETING TO CONVENE MARCH 19-20," 03/17/98)

US Ambassador to the ROK Stephen Bosworth said March 16 in an interview with Arirang TV, an English language network, that the multinational project to build two light-water reactors in the DPRK will ultimately help the ROK during its time of economic crisis. Bosworth said that more than half of the total cost of the light-water reactors will go to ROK workers and materials. "At this time of economic recession here in Korea, actually the KEDO project is a very useful source of new demand for the Korean economy," Bosworth argued. (Korea Times, "LWR PROJECT WILL HELP S. KOREA: BOSWORTH," 03/17/98)

The International Atomic Energy Agency announced on March 16 that the DPRK is refusing the inspection of its nuclear facilities, claiming that the US is not following through with agreements reached between the two countries. The US and the DPRK had agreed on a "nuclear-agreement" under which the DPRK is to suspend its development of nuclear arsenals in exchange for the US supply of alternate energy sources. (Joongang Ilbo, "DPRK UNCOOPERATIVE WITH IAEA," 03/17/98)

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2. ROK Contribution to US Military

The ROK is expected to offer the US a much lower level of financial contribution to the overall cost of maintaining a US military presence in Korea in 1999. "Considering our economic difficulties and the subsequent constraints exerted on the defense budget, it is inevitable to reduce our contribution," said a senior official at the Ministry of Defense on March 16. The official said, on condition of anonymity, that the ministry is working out its position in preparation for negotiations with the US, possibly starting next month. (Korea Times, Oh Young-jin, "KOREA TO REDUCE BURDEN FOR US MILITARY PRESENCE," 03/17/98)

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