



Policy Forum 11-33: The Sixth Anniversary of the September 19 Joint Statement: We Cannot Delay the Resumption of the Six-Party Talks Anymore



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By Korea Peace Forum

October 4, 2011

Nautilus invites your contributions to this forum, including any responses to this report.

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I. Introduction

Korea Peace Forum, a non-governmental forum that seeks to build peace in the Korean Peninsula, writes “it is now time to gather our power and wisdom to develop the six-party talks into an opportunity for co-prosperity and peace, not only on the Korean Peninsula, but also in Northeast Asia. We should not forget that this is one of the most important historical issues to be solved by the new South Korean government in 2013.”

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II. Article by Korea Peace Forum

- “The Sixth Anniversary of the September 19 Joint Statement: We Cannot Delay the Resumption of the Six-Party Talks Anymore”

By Korean Peace Forum [\[1\]](#)

Sep. 19th 2011

Though the the six-party talk participants signed the September 19 joint statement 6 years ago, it could still be a very valuable tool in solving North Korea’s nuclear problems and achieving peace on the Korean Peninsula.

Deadlock Worsens the Condition of Nuclear Issues

We cannot put off the implementation of the joint statement anymore and the six-party talks must be resumed as soon as possible. There are some people who believe the negotiations with North Korea were in vain. Some claim that the six-party talks gave North Korea time to develop their nuclear programs. This is wrong and contradicts historical facts. The deterioration of relations on the Korean Peninsula occurred when the six-party talks were broken off. The North’s ballistic missile launch and its first nuclear test were conducted when talks broke down over a severe confrontation between the North and U.S. due to the BDA (Banco Delta Asia) issue. The North’s second nuclear test in May of 2009, and their November 2010 revelation of a uranium enrichment program, came after the talks had fallen apart and remained dysfunctional. These facts prove that the absence of the six-party talks has reinforced the North’s nuclear capability.

The talks are at a stalemate for several reasons. One is the disappearance of South Korea as a facilitator. The former Roh Moo-hyun administration managed to arbitrate the relations between the U.S. and North Korea, taking an important role when the six-party talks were at critical moments. However, this South Korean role has not continued under the current government. The Lee administration is making the error of sticking to an unrealistic policy toward North Korea, the so-called “initiative of denuclearization, opening, and USD 3000”. The ROK government is demanding

'denuclearization' as a precondition for the talks to resume. The government also asked for trouble by tying all pending issues to the North's nuclear program. The precondition suggested by the South Korean government is that North Korea take a 'responsible action' such as an apology for the Cheonan warship sinking and Yeonpyung island attacks.

Although the Obama administration pledged to work toward the 'denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula through the six-party talks', the US government has held a consistently negative position on the talks. During Obama's three years in office the six-party talks have not met once. On the contrary, it has been a year and six months since North Korea, which used to shun six-party talks, clarified its intention to return to the talks without any conditions. But the chances are dim for the six-party talks to be held again.

The current situation is not positive. Last July, South-North denuclearization talks were held at the ARF (ASEAN Regional Forum), and Kim Gye-kwan, from the North Korean Ministry of Foreign Affairs, visited the U.S. for a senior-level talk. These talks were expected to revive the possibility of the six-party talks. Furthermore, North Korean leader Kim Jung-il visited China and Russia, consenting to unconditional six-party talks. The Lee administration, however, asked for denuclearization measures before the resumption of talks. Even though the Obama administration tried to belatedly return to the six-party talks, it is not going smoothly on account of the US financial crisis and disturbance by the Republican Party, who won the last midterm elections. North Korea, which already lost trust in the international society, has also been intransigent, claiming its uranium enrichment program is for 'peaceful purposes'. These factors make it hard to resume the six-party talks.

The Six-Party Talks are of Vital Interest

The current environment for the six-party talks is very different from what it was in the past. This is the first time that the absence of six-party talks has lasted almost three years. South Korea has adopted a hardline policy it hadn't used before. Another feature is the conflict between North Korea, China, and Russia and South Korea, the US, and Japan; the former are asking for the six-party talks without conditions and the latter are requiring preconditions for talks. Building a peace regime on the Korean Peninsula was the most important goal and most influential means to solve the North's nuclear problems during the Roh administration. However this effort does not exist in the current administration, creating a miserable situation. South Korea, the US, and Japan distrust the North's intention to abandon nuclear weapons and North Korea, China, and Russia distrust the other country's intention to withdrawal their hostile policy toward the North. This situation will be an obstacle for the talks.

Notwithstanding, we cannot and should not give up. Because finding alternatives seems impossible, the end of the six-party talks can lead to a crisis on the Peninsula. South Korea is in danger of responding to nuclear weapons in North Korea by demanding the redeployment of US tactical nuclear weapons due to the conflict between the North the U.S. Unfortunately there is a restriction to expanding cooperation with a North that possesses nuclear weapons; we cannot exclude the possibility that North Korea will strengthen its military adventurism because of those nuclear weapons. If a light-water reactor project is set up without international supervision or safeguard measures in the North, another Fukushima-type nuclear accident could break out on the Korean Peninsula. As this arms race and military confrontation are intensified, the Korean people, including dispersed families, are full of worries. The worsened relations between the two Koreas could result in another Cold War in Northeast Asia, constructing a bipolar system between the U.S. and China. It is a vital interest for us to make a denuclearized and peaceful Korean Peninsula through the six-party talks and inter-Korean dialogues. At the same time, a denuclearized Korea will be a step

toward a peaceful 21st century.

We strongly urge the Lee Myung-bak administration to prevent the current situation from being aggravated and to lay the foundation to solve this problem. This is a duty the President of a divided country has to carry out. The six-party talks have to be held swiftly in the spirit of the September 19 joint statement. The conversations between North Korea and the U.S., as well as North Korea and Japan, need to be advocated actively so that work to 'root the North's nuclear problems out' can begin.

Advocates for progressive reform should develop a creative strategy for the six-party talks. If the Lee administration obtains some positive results, they should be encouraged and developed. Otherwise advocates should develop a vision and policy for denuclearization and a peace regime. They should not neglect to interact with people and international society over this matter. They have to strive for an 'elaborate' solution for the complicated nuclear problem and an 'audacious' solution to denuclearize the Korean Peninsula and build a peace regime.

These goals and policies are not a problem of the North-US relations; they are neither a problem of ideology nor an issue of fractions. The year 2013 is the 60th anniversary of Korean Armistice Agreement and the 20th anniversary of the North's withdrawal from the NPT (Non Proliferation Treaty). The six-party talks sought to end the North's nuclear issues and the confrontation between the North and US. Nonetheless, it is now time to gather our power and wisdom to develop the six-party talks into an opportunity for co-prosperity and peace, not only on the Korean Peninsula, but also in Northeast Asia. We should not forget that this is one of the most important historical issues to be solved by the new South Korean government in 2013.

III. Notes

[1] The Korea Peace Forum is a non-governmental forum that seeks to build peace in the Korean Peninsula. The Korea Peace Forum is composed of scholars in the field of inter-Korean relations and peace in the Korean Peninsula; leading figures and key individuals in the religious, cultural, artistic, and civic society arenas who have long been involved in these issues; and former high-ranking government officials who have dealt with inter-Korean affairs.

IV. Nautilus invites your responses

The Northeast Asia Peace and Security Network invites your responses to this report. Please send responses to: bscott@nautilus.org. Responses will be considered for redistribution to the network only if they include the author's name, affiliation, and explicit consent.

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