



Attachment E: Responses from Ambassador Nobuyasu Abe

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"Is Nuclear-free East Asia Possible?: Opportunities and Constraints"

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Prepared remarks for

Is a Nuclear-free East Asia Possible? Opportunities and Constraints

6th Jeju Forum Panel, May 28, 2011

When a world's strongest military power advocates nuclear disarmament, it is an opportune time to move the world towards a world without nuclear weapons. That was the significance of President Obama's Prague speech two years ago. In East Asian context this means we have to move Russia, China and North Korea to renounce nuclear weapons.

The U.S. and Russia have concluded the new treaty to reduce their strategic nuclear forces last year and will soon be engaged in the next round of negotiations. China has never engaged in practical disarmament process but we have to engage China in a nuclear weapons reduction negotiation as soon as possible. China claims its nuclear arsenal is so small in comparison with those of the U.S. or Russia that it can only join negotiations at a later stage. Well, if that is so, I would like to know how large the Chinese nuclear arsenal is and when it can join a nuclear disarmament negotiation.

Countries around China are concerned about the Chinese military modernization and buildup. It will be better if China can join nuclear reduction efforts soon rather than it engages in a surge first and then reduction at a later stage.

North Korea presents another kind of challenge to nuclear disarmament efforts in East Asia. In so far as North Korea engages in what it claims the buildup of its nuclear deterrence, South Korea, Japan and the U.S. are obliged to keep credible deterrence to prevent any provocation, intimidation or worse aggression from the North. This will inevitably put a limit to the extent Japan and South Korea can realistically foresee U.S. nuclear reduction.

How you can stop North Korean nuclear buildup and reverse it is a big, big question. Unfortunately, I do not see any immediate prospect of it. Some analysts say that we will have to see the North Korean drive to continue for a while before it comes to realize that its nuclear acquisition does not give any better security or any political or economic rewards. It's sooner the better.

Last of all, in a way, the American and our perception that nuclear reduction is possible today is derived from the realization that we have a lot better conventional defense capability. This is a lot better option than depending on nuclear weapons because once they are used, they bring about catastrophic consequences, immediate and long, debilitating

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