

Attachment F: Responses from Choi Kang

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What Can Nuclear Security Summit Do To Resolve Nuclear Issues

In East Asia? [1]

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Prepared remarks for

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

6th Jeju Forum Panel, May 28, 2011

To answer the above question, we must look at two aspects--the objective(s) of the Washington Nuclear Security Summit and issues at stake in East Asia—and the nexus between them.

The preparation for the Seoul Nuclear Security Summit (hereafter SNSS) is under its way and many meetings among the government officials and experts are taking place nowadays in one place or another. Even though there is no official agreement on the agenda items to be discussed at the upcoming Seoul Summit, the discussion is relatively confined to the items, which are drawn from the Washington Communique and the Work Plan, mainly on security of nuclear material. These are: information security (U.K.); HEU guidelines (France); transportation security (Japan); illicit trafficking (Jordan); nuclear forensics (the Netherlands); security culture (Russia); radioactive source security (Germany); treaty ratification (Indonesia); and international coordination (Pakistan).

Right now, it is totally unpredictable what would be the possible outcome of the Seoul Nuclear Security Summit, which will be held in the spring of 2012, approximately one year after the Fukushima nuclear accident, since each item requires extensive consultation, coordination, and cooperation due to the differences among the participating countries over the details. It seems that

we don't have much time to iron out the differences and to come up with rather concrete measures.

Thus the question arises whether we should expand the scope of the SNSS beyond the nuclear security issue or not. There are pros and cons over the expansion of the scope of the SNSS. If expanded, the SNSS might be overloaded and would lose the focus and direction. Consequently, the SNSS could be recorded as a kind of talk-shop or an event with no meaningful results. On the other hand, if it failed to reflect the region-specific issues and challenges, it could be criticized for being willfully blind to the reality on the ground and for being too narrowly focused only on nuclear terrorism, which might have limited relevance to East Asia.

While focusing on the original purpose, it is necessary to find the ways, which will make the SNSS as a meaningful gathering in solving, or laying a ground for resolving, the concerns and challenges in East Asian region. In other words, we should find the ways to accommodate both the original purpose and the regional concerns. For that, first, it is necessary to sort out the region-specific issues and, secondly, to identify the common elements between the original items and the region-specific issues in East Asia. And then, we can think of ways to ensure and promote the progress in both ends in parallel.

Nowadays, in East Asia, we have the following challenges in nuclear field: North Korean nuclear challenges and nuclear safety issues/nuclear power industry.

The North Korean nuclear challenges are multi-folded: challenges to all three Ss (security, safety and safeguard). And some of them could be reviewed and approached from nuclear security perspective.

First of all, if North Korea continues to run and expand its nuclear programs [2], it will have more nuclear material at its disposal. North Korea can use them either to manufacture nuclear weapons or to sell them to others including non-state actors, or both. Given the fact of North Korea-Syrian nuclear cooperation and the suspicion of North Korean-Myanmar nuclear cooperation, if North Korean nuclear challenges are not checked properly, it is highly likely that vertical as well as horizontal proliferation is going to be a reality and that more nuclear material is in the hands of unreliable actors. That is exactly the opposite to the novel objective of the Nuclear Security Summit—"global zero or a world without nuclear weapons." So that, despite the reservation expressed by some participating countries, North Korean nuclear issue should be addressed at the SNSS from nuclear security perspective and consensus, or a common position, among the participating countries over the denuclearization of North Korea will definitely create a very positive background. For that purpose, there should be the recognition of the September 19 Joint Statement, maybe UNSC Res 1874 also, as the starting point and there should also be the message to North Korea that North Korea itself should prove its willingness to solve the problem by concrete actions, not by words.

If it is not possible to discuss the North Korean nuclear problem in the plenary meeting among the participating countries due to time constraint or for the sake of focused discussion, there should be a separate meeting among the concerned parties for in-depth discussion before and after the plenary meeting.

The second group of concerns and issues to be addressed in the upcoming the SNSS is the issue of peaceful use of nuclear energy and nuclear safety. The Washington NSS, due to its objective of nuclear security, did not sufficiently address the issue of peaceful use of nuclear energy, despite the increasing demand for nuclear energy in the coming years.

The issue of nuclear security should not function to constrain the inalienable right of all the parties

to the NPT (Article IV of the NPT) in conformity with Article I and II of the Treaty, which constitute the first pillar of the NPT--non-proliferation. From this regard, measures for nuclear security should not constrain the inalienable right of peaceful use of nuclear energy. Rather this should be geared toward ensuring and promoting such right in the coming years. Thus we must make it sure that these two goals advance in harmonious way. Especially, measures for nuclear security should not be used against nuclear fuel cycle for peaceful use of nuclear energy. On the other, no one should be allowed to use the issue of nuclear fuel cycle for purposes other than those being specified in the NPT. For that, it is possible, maybe desirable, to think of regional cooperation over nuclear fuel cycle including regional depository mechanism as we can see in the case of Europe (EURATOM). Since the WNSS has already suggested regional cooperation on nuclear security, it would be possible to expand the scope of cooperation further. And this would enable more countries to take in the march towards a safer and more secure world from nuclear security threats.

The related issue is safety issue. Nowadays many countries in East Asia, mostly in Northeast Asia, have plans to build more nuclear power plants. As of today, there are 95 reactors in operation in Northeast Asia (China: 13, South Korea: 21, Japan: 54, and Taiwan: 6). By the year 2020, it is estimated that there will be about 108 additional nuclear power reactors (planned/under construction) in East Asia (China: 77, Japan: 14, South Korea: 11, Taiwan: 2, Vietnam: 2, and Indonesia: 2). The Fukushima incident has provided us the very important opportunity to revisit the issue of nuclear safety. In order to ensure the continued advancement of nuclear industry as an alternative source of energy in the coming years, the nuclear safety should be further strengthened and the international as well as regional cooperation in this area should be sought wholeheartedly. Given the prospectus of nuclear power industry in East Asia, there should be a regional cooperation mechanism dedicated toward the enhancement of nuclear safety. This could involve better and safer design of nuclear power plant, operation/ management including human resources, and crisis/consequence management. It would be possible to introduce a kind of nuclear safety monitoring and oversight mechanism or group of experts. This would also possibly increase transparency of and confidence in nuclear power industry.

The latter two can go hand in hand. And these can ensures not only nuclear security but also nuclear safety and inalienable right of peaceful use of nuclear energy. Consequently, it would make a meaningful and significant contribution to strengthening the founding pillars of nonproliferation regime. If these concerns are well taken in the upcoming SNSS, the SNSS will become a great success story by encouraging many countries to participate in attaining the objectives laid out at the WNSS.

References

- [1] This is a draft and not for citation. The views and ideas in this paper are purely those of the author. They do not represent the official views and position of the ROK Government.
- [2] On November 12, 2010, North Korea revealed uranium enrichment facilities in Yongbyun Radiochemical Lab. They said that 2,000 centrifuge devices are installed and its capacity is 8,000kg SWU/year. It is estimated that North Korea can produce 40kg HEU per year. And North Korea might have other secret facilities.

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