

**Statement by H.E. Mr. Taro Kono, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Japan
at the Foreign Ministers' Meeting
on Security and Stability on the Korean Peninsula
16 January 2018**

Mme. Chairperson,
Mr. Chairperson,
Honorable Ministers,
Distinguished Delegates,

Let me begin by expressing my deep appreciation once again to Foreign Minister Freeland and Secretary Tillerson for their untiring efforts to gather all of us at today's meeting. I am also grateful for their generosity to allow me to speak following their remarks.

As we have all witnessed, North Korea has been escalating its outrageous acts of provocation. The international community must counter in unison the grave and imminent threat posed by North Korea. Last month, the United Nations Security Council Briefing was convened under my presidency, and it was made crystal clear in the Briefing that a nuclear-armed North Korea will never be accepted. Against this backdrop, today's meeting is very timely and meaningful. The international community will once again gather strength in order to materialize North Korea's denuclearization.

Today, I would like to start with how I see the current situation as well as North Korea's intention, and also like to touch upon some thoughts on the way forward.

First, my observation on the current situation on the Peninsula.

As was expressed by Prime Minister Abe, my government welcomes the recent talks between South and North Korea with regard to the latter's participation to the Pyonchang Olympic.

After all, the Olympic and Paralympic Games are peaceful festivals, and we all support the ROK government's efforts to make these events successful.

That being said, we should not avert our eyes from the fact that North Korea relentlessly continues its nuclear and missile programs. I am aware that some people argue that now that North Korea is engaging in inter-Korea dialogue, we should reward them by lifting up sanctions or by providing some sort of assistance. Frankly, I think this view is just too naïve. I believe that North Korea wants to buy some time to continue their nuclear and missile programs. They simply want to get something out of this dialogue. I would therefore argue that this recognition should be the starting point of today's discussion.

Secondly, we should judge its intention in terms of what they are actually doing, NOT in terms of what we hope they are doing.

How should we interpret North Korea's willingness toward dialogue and its continued obsession with the nuclear and missile programs?

Number 1, they must be hoping to get sanctions lifted by some countries. Number 2, they must be attempting to obtain some financial assistance, in whatever form, exploiting the good will of others. Number 3, they must also be hoping that the military exercise between the US and ROK militaries be cancelled. Number 4, they must be intending to drive a wedge between those tough countries and those that are not so tough.

In addition, if the inter-Korean dialogue does not advance as North Korea wishes, North Korea may blame others and use it as a pretext to conduct further provocative and dangerous actions.

In any case, what we should have in mind is that North Korea continues to advance its nuclear and missile programs, even as we speak, and we should not be naïve about their intent. Nor should we be blinded by North Korea's "charm offensive." In short, it is not the time to ease pressure or to reward North Korea.

My last point comes from my earlier observation, namely to uphold the maximum pressure campaign.

International sanctions have gradually borne fruits. The increase in the number of ship-to-ship transfer is a testament that the current sanction regime is finally biting. It is also likely that sanctions will produce even further results this year. The fact that North Korea is engaging in dialogue could be interpreted as proof that the sanctions are working.

I would therefore argue that now is the time for all the countries to renew their determination to implement relevant Security Council resolutions fully and rigorously, reinforcing autonomous measures when and where available. This could include cutting off "diplomatic" ties with North Korea as well as repatriating North Korean workers. Only through these measures, can we make North Korea change its policy. In this regard, Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan has just decided to cut its "diplomatic" ties with North Korea. Japan highly appreciates Jordan's initiative and expects other countries to follow the same path and take further actions.

As I mentioned at the beginning, this year started with North Korea's move toward the inter-Korean dialogue. However, there has not been any positive move in terms of resolving the nuclear and missile programs, as well as the abductions issue. Today's Foreign Ministers' Meeting provides a timely opportunity to demonstrate an unwavering commitment of the international community to achieve complete, verifiable and irreversible denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula and to stop North Korea's other provocations. Together, we should continue to maximize pressure on North Korea and corner North Korea in order to change its policy toward denuclearization.

Thank you very much.