



Xi calls to restart peninsula talks

By: Li Xiaokun, Zhou Wa and Zhang Yuwei – January 24, 2013

Communist Party of China chief Xi Jinping called for the resumption of the Six-Party Talks concerning the Korean Peninsula during a meeting with a special envoy of the Republic of Korea (ROK)'s President-elect Park Geun-hye.

The remarks yesterday came hours after Beijing supported a United Nations Security Council resolution unanimously condemning the rocket launch in December by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK). The resolution also expanded existing UN sanctions.

In a swift response, Pyongyang rejected involvement in any future disarmament negotiations and vowed to bolster its nuclear deterrence.

Analysts said Beijing is adopting a constructive approach by paying attention to the concerns of Pyongyang while taking into account viewpoints from other parties.

To solve the nuclear issue on the peninsula, both the symptoms and root causes must be addressed, Xi told envoy Kim Moo-sung during their meeting at the Great Hall of the People.

Kim played a key role in Park's presidential campaign last year.

Dialogue and consultation are the key to solving the DPRK nuclear issue and ensuring a nuclear-free peninsula, Xi said.

The meeting came one day before Glyn Davies, Washington's special representative for DPRK policy, holds talks with the ROK's chief nuclear envoy Lim Sung-nam in Seoul. Davies will then fly to Beijing.

Foreign Ministry spokesman Hong Lei called yesterday for all sides to show restraint.

"The DPRK's satellite launch highlights the urgency of solving issues on the peninsula, and we believe the root of the problem is security concerns," Hong said.

The Six-Party Talks, involving China, the DPRK, the ROK, the US, Russia and Japan, are an effective way to address concerns, he added.

The UN resolution, No 2087, reiterated a demand that Pyongyang abandon its nuclear weapons programme in a "complete, verifiable and irreversible manner", and ordered it to end the use of ballistic missile technology.

It also ordered a freeze of more DPRK assets and imposed a travel ban on four more officials.

The DPRK Foreign Ministry said that it will reject any attempts to engage Pyongyang in disarmament negotiations.

"There can be talks on the peace and stability of the Korean Peninsula and the region, but no talks on denuclearisation of the peninsula," it said in a statement carried by the Korean Central News Agency just hours after the resolution was adopted.

Six-nation disarmament negotiations, hosted by China, have been stalled since Pyongyang walked away from the talks following UN punishment for a 2009 rocket launch.

The DPRK statement also vowed to "bolster the military capabilities for self-defence, including the nuclear deterrent". It said Pyongyang "should counter the hostile policy of the US with strength, not with words". Pyongyang carried out nuclear tests weeks after rocket launches in 2006 and 2009, and the region is bracing for the possibility of another nuclear test.

Yu Shaohua, director of the Department for Asia-Pacific Security and Cooperation Studies at the China Institute of International Studies, said the DPRK will tend toward caution.

"Words are one thing while actions are another. You can see in the past year that Pyongyang has been cautious in its deeds. All the parties involved know drastic action will trigger results that nobody can bear."

Yu said the resolution is quite a moderate one. "It has warned the DPRK to abstain from actions threatening regional security, yet avoided comprehensive sanctions affecting normal economic development of the country.

"But it is wrong to say it has a very limited effect. Satellites are one of Pyongyang's core concerns, and it cares deeply about global attitudes toward its launches."

Speaking after the council vote, Li Baodong, China's permanent representative to the UN, said sanctions and resolutions alone won't work and must "be supplemented by diplomatic efforts through teamwork".

US Ambassador to the UN Susan Rice said the US had "particularly good cooperation with China in this regard", and with other council members, to reach agreement on the resolution.

Washington has long pursued a resolution imposing new sanctions on Pyongyang, while Beijing was worried it would further irritate the DPRK.

The resolution finally just expanded the UN blacklist.

China called the latest resolution "generally balanced".

"UN Security Council Resolution 2087 not only shows the stance of the international community on the DPRK's satellite launch, it also delivers some positive information, including calling for a peaceful solution to the peninsula issue through dialogue and negotiation as well as the resumption of the Six-Party Talks," said Foreign Ministry spokesman Qin Gang.

Ted Galen Carpenter, a defence and foreign policy analyst at the Cato Institute in Washington, said China fulfilled its responsibility in handling a thorny global issue.

"It also shows that Beijing is becoming more proactive -and constructive - in dealing with important regional and global security issues."

"Given China's growing economic and diplomatic influence, such a development is not surprising, and we should expect similar leadership initiatives in other matters in the future."

Jonathan Pollack, a foreign policy analyst at the Brookings Institution in Washington, said that despite unity on this latest resolution, China and the other UN Security Council members should consider if a piecemeal, step-by-step approach can persuade Pyongyang "to alter its nuclear course".