

## **Six-Party Talks resumption sought**

Quian Rushia

March 15, 2016

China and Russia have both called for resumption of the Six-Party Talks on the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula as a senior U.S. Treasury official is visiting China for the implementation of new sanctions on the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK).

Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Lu Kang told the press briefing in Beijing on Monday that China and Russia will adhere to the goal of denuclearization on the Korean Peninsula and will not recognize DPRK as a nuclear state.

"The two sides support the resumption of the Six-Party Talks, bringing back the denuclearization issue to the negotiation table and making efforts towards that end," Lu said, describing Foreign Minister Wang Yi's March 10-11 trip to Moscow, where he met with Russian President Vladimir Putin and Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov.

The Six-Party Talks, which involve the two Koreas, China, the U.S., Russia and Japan, have been stalled since 2008.

China and Russia also reiterated their opposition to the possible deployment of the THAAD (Terminal High Altitude Area Defense) missile defense system in South Korea.

"The two sides agree that the U.S. deployment of the THAAD system in the ROK, which far exceeds the actual defense needs of the Korean Peninsula, will directly harm the strategic security interests of China and Russia and disturb regional strategic balance," Lu said.

U.S. State Department spokesman John Kirby said on March 11 that the THAAD system is defensive.

"And we are in consultations with South Korea about the potential deployment of THAAD to the peninsula. No decisions have been made. And we believe that these consultations – we continue to believe these consultations are prudent given the continued rhetoric and provocative behavior coming out of Pyongyang," he said.

On Monday, U.S. Department of Treasury announced that Acting Under Secretary for Terrorism and Financial Intelligence Adam Szubin will visit Beijing and Hong Kong on March 15 and 16.

It describes the trip as providing "an important opportunity for discussions of ways to strengthen U.S.-China coordination to North Korea's destabilizing behavior and to ensure sanctions targeting the North Korean regime are as effective as possible" given the recent UN Security Council resolution and the U.S. Treasury and State departments' designations against DPRK this month.

The new UN Security Council sanctions passed on March 2, and unilateral measures taken by the U.S. and South Korea have not altered DPRK's behavior so far. The DPRK has instead launched short-range missiles as a protest of the new sanctions and the U.S.-ROK military drills.

The eight-week Key Resolve/Foal Eagle military exercises, which involve some 17,000 American troops and more than 300,000 South Korean soldiers, is said to be the largest in recent years.

DPRK has long regarded such drills as provocative and responded last week by threatening a "pre-emptive nuclear strike".

The Washington Post on Sunday quoted DPRK Today as saying that "our hydrogen bomb was much bigger than the one developed by the Soviet Union".

"If this H-bomb were to be mounted on an intercontinental ballistic missile and fall on Manhattan in New York City, all the people there would be killed immediately and the city would burn down to ashes," the Post quoted the report as saying.

Ted Carpenter, a senior fellow of defense and foreign policy at the Cato Institute, said tightening sanctions is not a realistic strategy to defuse the Korean nuclear issue.

China has proposed a parallel approach that includes denuclearization and at the same time replacing the 1953 armistice agreement with a peace agreement, an approach China believes satisfies concerns from all the parties involved.