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N. Korea to get 265,000 tons of food aid

North Korea will get 265,000 tons of nutritional aid in return for suspending nuclear tests and uranium enrichment, its official news agency reported.

The Korean Central News Agency said the details of the agreement resulting from talks between the United States and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (official name North Korea) in Beijing last week were provided by a Foreign Ministry spokesman as answers to its questions.

The Beijing round, the third such between the two sides, were led by North Korean First Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs Kim Kye Gwan and Glyn Davies, special representative of the U.S. State Department for North Korea policy.

KCNA, without any interpretation, reported the talks were aimed at building confidence for the improvement of relations, stability on the Korean Peninsula and resumption of the stalled six-nation talks on North Korean's nuclear disarmament involving the two Koreas, China, Russia, the United States and Japan.

"The U.S. reaffirmed that it no longer has hostile intent toward the DPRK and that it is prepared to take steps to improve the bilateral relations in the spirit of mutual respect for sovereignty and equality," the report said.

The report said the United States "promised to offer 240,000 metric tons [265,000 tons] of nutritional assistance with the prospect of additional food assistance." It said the two sides would "finalize the administrative details in the immediate future."

"The DPRK, upon request by the U.S. and with a view to maintaining positive atmosphere for the DPRK-U.S. high-level talks, agreed to a moratorium on nuclear tests, long-range missile launches, and uranium enrichment activity at Nyongbyon and allow the [International Atomic Energy Agency] to monitor the moratorium on uranium enrichment while productive dialogues continue."

The report after the six-nation talks resume, "priority will be given to the discussion of issues concerning the lifting of sanctions on the DPRK and provision of light water reactors."

This the first agreement since the December death of North Korean leader Kim Jong

II. The isolated, impoverished Communist country is now led by the late leader's youngest son Kim Jong Un, about whom little is known to the outside world.

The Beijing talks, however, were expected to provide an indication of which way the new leadership would be headed.

The New York Times said the latest the announcement appeared to signal the new leader is at least willing to consider a return to negotiations and to engage with the United States.

The U.S. State Department said the North Koreans also agreed to a moratorium on long-range missile launches, of particular interest to neighboring Japan and South Korea.

"These are concrete measures that we consider a positive first step toward complete and verifiable denuclearization of the Korean peninsula in a peaceful manner, which remains this administration's core goal," White House press secretary Jay Carney told reporters. "The agreements that the North Koreans have made are very welcome, but obviously they need to be followed up by actions."

The U.N. nuclear watchdog agency agreement would once again give its inspectors access to nuclear facilities to verify and monitor the suspension of uranium enrichment activities, which has been a main demand of the United States. After walking out of the six-nation talks, North Korea had ordered the IAEA inspectors out of the country.

IAEA Director General Yukiya Amano called the announcement "an important step forward," adding his agency is ready to return to North Korea for monitoring activities.

The U.S. State Department's announcement did not say when North Korea would fulfill its side of the deal or when the six-nation talks would resume.

Xinhua News Agency, China's state-run news outlet, quoted experts as saying they believe the announcement is both encouraging and significant.

Ted Carpenter, senior fellow with the Washington-based **Cato Institute**, told Xinhua: "[The announcement] suggests that the new DPRK leadership may be willing to be more flexible on these issues, and that aspect has the potential to reduce tensions on the Korean Peninsula."

The United States and North Korea held their first two rounds of talks in New York last July and Geneva last October.

The six-nation talks, launched in 2003, stalled in April 2009 after North Korea walked out and later conducted its second nuclear test. The first test was conducted in 2006. The uranium enrichment program was disclosed in November 2010.

Richard Bush, senior fellow at the Brookings Institution, was quoted as telling Xinhua that the latest development demonstrated some degree of "seriousness and sincerity" that are acceptable for Washington and its allies to move into further negotiations.

Carpenter said the food aid indicated the Obama administration is willing to "reward significant DPRK conciliatory actions with corresponding conciliatory steps from the United States."