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# U.N. Council Condemns Korean Ship Attack

By JOE LAURIA



Agence France-Presse/Getty Images

North Korean leader Kim Jong Il, in an undated photograph released Friday, inspects a power-station site.

Condemnation of the sinking of a South Korean naval vessel left major parties from the U.S. to North Korea declaring diplomatic victory Friday, and appeared to open a door to the North's return to talks over its nuclear program.

The United Nations Security Council on Friday issued a formal statement—the subject of a month of negotiations between the U.S. and China—condemning the March attack on the Cheonan that killed 46 South Korean sailors.

Some analysts saw the statement as a compromise between China and the West that could bring representatives of reclusive, authoritarian North Korea back to negotiations over its nuclear program that it left in April 2009. But they were skeptical that such talks would differ greatly from past rounds that have failed to produce an agreement.

Though strongly worded, the statement of the 15-nation council carefully avoided directly blaming North

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Korea. Instead, it cited a five-nation investigation that in May blamed the sinking on a torpedo attack by North Korea, or DPRK.

"In view of the findings of the Joint Civilian-Military Investigation Group...which concluded that the DPRK was responsible for sinking the Cheonan, the Security Council expresses its deep concern," the statement said. "Therefore, the Security Council condemns the attack which led to the sinking of the Cheonan."



North Korea wants to resume negotiations after U.N. Security Council statement did not directly blame it for the Cheonan incident. Video Courtesy of Reuters.

China, a party to the consensus document, hasn't blamed its neighbor and ally or the sinking. The statement notes that North Korea "has stated that it had nothing to do with the incident."

North Korea's ambassador to the U.N., Sin Son Ho, on Friday called the statement a "great diplomatic victory," saying, "we have made it clear that this incident had nothing to do with us."

But Mr. Sin said Pyongyang was ready to re-engage in stalled six-party talks, a position North Korea's foreign ministry expanded upon in a statement Saturday morning in

Asia.

"We will make a consistent effort to achieve a peace treaty and denuclearization through a fair six-party talk," the statement said.

The North Korean comments didn't mention preconditions for rejoining the negotiations, which since 2003 have included five rounds between North Korea, South Korea, Japan, Russia, China and the U.S.

"The underlying motive for Beijing was to get North Korea back" to the table, said Ted Galen Carpenter, an analyst at the Cato Institute. "Chinese officials very likely concluded that if there was a strong condemnation, North Korea would balk."

China's foreign ministry urged "calm and restraint" and called for an early resumption of the talks and called for parties to "take this opportunity to flip over the page of the Cheonan incident as soon as possible," a spokesman Qin Gang said in a statement.

Susan Rice, U.S. ambassador to the U.N., said the message to North Korea was "crystal clear."

"The Security Council condemns and deplores this attack. It warns against any further attacks. And [it] insists on full adherence to the Korean Armistice Agreement," she told reporters.

The U.S. had no immediate reaction to Mr. Sin's statement on rejoining talks.

Secretary of State Hillary Clinton leaves late next week for an Asia trip that includes stops in South Korea and Vietnam, where North Korea is expected to be a major topic of discussion. Mrs. Clinton said Friday that "a peaceful resolution of the issues on the Korean Peninsula will only be possible if North Korea fundamentally changes its behavior."

South Korea's foreign ministry expressed its gratitude to council members.

"North Korea should accept the strong position by the international community that no further provocation against South Korea will be tolerated," the ministry said in a statement late Friday in Seoul. "We urge North Korea to respect the spirit of the statement, honestly acknowledge its wrongdoings of provocation against the Cheonan, and apologize."

But many South Koreans saw the message as disappointing at best for not directly linking Pyongyang to the attack.

"Each party can interpret it to their own advantage," said Koh Yu-hwan, professor of North Korean studies in Dongguk University in Seoul. "I'd say it's an agreement on obscurity, and a mere formality."

Daniel Sargent, a historian at the University of California at Berkeley, said he doesn't believe this marks a genuine opening to the North. "They may want to go back to the talks," Mr. Sargent said. "But then they will stall them and postpone them and go back into the same routine."

—Jaeyeon Woo in Seoul and Jay Solomon in Washington contributed to this article.

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