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## **KOREA UPDATE: US Conditionally Welcomes Results of North-South Summit**

September 20, 2018

### **KEY POINTS:**

1. The third Moon-Kim summit September 18-20 featured important pledges by both sides to engage in economic cooperation, reduce military tensions, and work toward a nuclear-free Korean Peninsula.
2. While the Pyongyang Declaration represents **a significant step toward tension reduction** through military confidence-building steps and the promise to strengthen inter-Korean engagement, **fundamental issues remain unresolved** regarding denuclearization.
3. Most importantly, Pyongyang's pledge to pursue **additional steps** to dismantle its nuclear facilities was **tied to unspecified "corresponding measures" from the US.**
4. President Trump and Secretary Pompeo **congratulated Moon and Kim on the "successful outcome" of their summit** in Pyongyang. Pompeo signaled the US was prepared to "engage immediately" with North Korea based on Pyongyang's commitment to denuclearize, a process "to be completed by January 2021."
5. **Implications of the Pyongyang Declaration for US-North Korea dialogue will become clearer when Moon meets with Trump** in New York on Monday.

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South Korean President Moon Jae-in and North Korean leader Kim Jong Un held their third summit this week in Pyongyang. From the outset, the two leaders displayed a warm and friendly bond, built upon their historic meeting at the border village of Panmunjom and impromptu session leading up to the US-DPRK summit. Building upon the April 27 "Panmunjom Declaration," the Koreas reaffirmed their commitment to advancing North-South relations and to making the Peninsula "a land of peace, free from nuclear weapons and nuclear threats." In addition to his aim to improve inter-Korean ties, Moon's three-day visit to Pyongyang aspired to jump-start stalled denuclearization talks between the US and North Korea and to pave the way for a second meeting between Trump and Kim.

### **Pyongyang Declaration**

During a live press conference on the second day of talks, Moon and Kim signed their second joint statement this year. As an annex to the new Pyongyang Declaration, **the defense ministers of the two Koreas also signed a military accord** outlining confidence

building measures (CBMs) to reduce the risk of accidental armed clashes between the two sides. **“The South and North today agreed to get rid of all threats in every part of the country that could spark war,”** Moon [declared](#).

Among the steps agreed to by both sides in the [Pyongyang Declaration](#) were:

- Reduction of military tensions along the demilitarized zone (DMZ) through the creation of an Inter-Korean Joint Military Committee, suspension of military drills within 3.1 miles of the DMZ, and other means;
- Reopening the Kaesong industrial complex and Mount Kumkang tourism project “as conditions ripen”;
- Opening a permanent facility in the Mount Kumkang area to hold reunion meetings for separated families;
- Working together in their bid to co-host the 2032 Summer Olympics; and
- Close cooperation in the process toward a nuclear-free Korean Peninsula

Denuclearization was discussed more specifically than in previous North-South encounters. Pyongyang vowed to **“permanently dismantle” the Tongchang-ri missile engine test site and launch pad “under the observation of experts from relevant countries.”** The North also expressed its willingness to pursue additional measures “as the United States takes corresponding measures in accordance with the spirit of the June 12 US-DPRK Joint Statement.”

Lastly, **Kim Jong Un agreed to visit Seoul** “at an early date” this year, in what would be the first such visit by a North Korean leader.

#### A Step Toward Denuclearization?

While the Pyongyang Declaration represents **a significant step toward tension reduction** through significant military CBMs and the promise to strengthen inter-Korean engagement, **fundamental issues remain unresolved** regarding the US priority of denuclearization. There is still no clear timeline for the North to abandon its nuclear weapons programs, let alone a commitment from Pyongyang to declare its stockpile of fissile material and nuclear technology.

Most importantly, **Pyongyang’s pledge to dismantle its nuclear facilities was not set in concrete, but voiced in conditional terms.** Additional steps by the North towards denuclearization, such as the “permanent dismantlement” of its Yongbyon nuclear facilities, would be **tied to unspecified “corresponding measures” from the US.** Experts expect these to entail a formal declaration ending the Korean War and partial sanctions relief. Moreover, the missile engine test site Kim Jong Un agreed to dismantle is a pledge he had already [made](#) to Trump in Singapore. **Kim’s promise to allow international “experts” to monitor the closing of the site, however, could be seen as a step in the right direction.**

For his part, **Moon came just short of promising steps that would require sanctions relief.** His agreement to reconnect cross-border railways and roads by year’s end and to resume operations at Kaesong “as conditions ripen” will raise eyebrows in the US, given these initiatives could potentially threaten to undermine the international sanctions regime.

## The View from Washington

President Trump welcomed the announcements from Pyongyang by [tweet](#) late Tuesday. Trump then [told](#) reporters the next day that the Moon-Kim summit was **“very good news”** and that “tremendous progress” was being made with North Korea, citing the halt in nuclear and missile tests. When asked about Kim Jong Un’s call for “reciprocal measures,” Trump responded by saying, **“Well, we’ll see what he’s looking at. We’ll see. But in the meantime, we’re talking.** It’s very calm.”

Echoing Trump’s positive remarks, the State Department issued Wednesday a [statement](#) by Secretary of State Pompeo commending the **“successful outcome”** of the Pyongyang summit. He declared the **US is “prepared to engage immediately** in negotiations to transform US-DPRK relations,” **based on North Korea’s commitment to permanently dismantle** “all facilities” at Yongbyon and the Tongchang-ri site **“in the presence of US and IAEA inspectors.”**

Towards that end, Pompeo outlined his plan to meet with North Korean Foreign Minister Ri Yong Ho in New York next week and to arrange a meeting between North Korean officials and Special Representative for North Korea, Stephen Biegun, in Vienna. “This will mark the beginning of negotiations to transform US-DPRK relations through the process of **rapid denuclearization of North Korea, to be completed by January 2021.**”

## What’s Next

Whether the Pyongyang summit will allow the US and North Korea to overcome the impasse in their denuclearization talks will become clearer when Moon meets with Trump in New York on Monday. Upon his return to Seoul on Thursday, Moon [told](#) reporters that **Kim wants to “complete denuclearization quickly and focus on economic development.”** He added that the North Korean leader was **eager to hold a second meeting with the US President “in the near future,** in order to move the denuclearization process along quickly.”

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