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The President's News Conference with President Park Geun-hye of South Korea in Seoul, South Korea

April 25, 2014

Moderator. Ladies and gentlemen, we will now commence the joint press conference by President Obama and President Park Geun-hye. The joint press conference will begin with the opening statements by two head of the states, followed by Q&A session. First, President Park Geun-hye will deliver the statement.

President Park. I'd like to extend my sincere welcome to His Excellency President Obama. To the victims of the sunken ferry ship *Sewol* and their families, President Obama expressed consolation and sympathy and provided support. I truly thank you from the bottom of my heart. This is being simultaneously translated.

President Obama's visit to Korea is the fourth time, and Seoul is the city he most frequently visited during his term. Of all the U.S. Presidents, the number of his visits to Korea outnumbered that of his predecessors. This reflects President Obama's special interest on Korea and full commitment and confidence to further strengthen U.S.-R.O.K. alliance.

Most recent North Korea's provocation is a public announcement on possibility of engaging another nuclear test, thereby imposing threats and provocation. Amidst the situation, President Obama's visit to Korea sends a strong message to North Korea that its provocative acts cannot be tolerated. President Obama and I will spare no effort to exercise deterrence against North Korea's provocation and strengthen our mutual cooperation.

Above all, faced with the D.P.R.K.'s threat, the U.S.-R.O.K.'s defense capabilities is solid and will be further cemented. Tomorrow President Obama and I will jointly visit R.O.K.-U.S. Combined Forces Command for the first time ever since it was formed in 1978 to reaffirm U.S.-R.O.K.'s deterrence capabilities against D.P.R.K. D.P.R.K.'s so-called new pattern of provocation will bring about new levels of international pressure.

We also exchanged views on what measures Korea and the U.S. need to take jointly, together with the international communities, in the face of the D.P.R.K.'s provocation. We sincerely hope that North Korea takes the course toward peace and stability while make a right choice to resolve the stress and hardship that North Koreans undergo.

We considered that the security environment is experiencing threats imposed by D.P.R.K.'s nuclear program and missile activities. Therefore, we shared the view that the timing and condition of the OPCON transfer slated for 2015 can be reviewed. We also agreed to beef up our capacities to effectively deal with D.P.R.K.'s nuclear and missile threats. As a part of that effort, Korea's air and missile defense, KAMD, will be developed into an independent system and will collaborate to enhance KAMD's interoperability while securing its efficient operation.

The vital foundation of our alliance is high-level security dialogue, which we plan to further reinforce. In the later part of this year, two-plus-two Defense and Foreign Affairs Ministers talk is scheduled. We expect the talks will be meaningful opportunity to discuss current issues, visions of our alliance, present and future, of the Korean Peninsula.

Based on strong deterrence capabilities of R.O.K. and the U.S., we decided to lay the groundwork for sustainable peace and peaceful unification and make joint efforts to build new Korean Peninsula. To realize that, it is crucial to achieve progress in D.P.R.K.'s denuclearization. We share the concern over D.P.R.K.'s continuous attempt to advance its nuclear capabilities, so with a sense of urgency, we will make progress in the denuclearization. Based on our close coordination, we will continue our efforts to induce consistent response and active cooperation from the international communities, including the five parties.

North Korea's pursuit of two goals at once—on nuclear arsenals and economic development—are incompatible. D.P.R.K. must realize that. And therefore, to lay the groundwork for peaceful unification in the Korean Peninsula, I explained President Obama my initiative for peaceful unification presented in Dresden last month. In December 2012, as President Obama mentioned in Seoul, residents of both South and North Korea will eventually become free citizens of an integrated country.

Reflecting development process of human history, barriers built due to conflict, distrust, sociocultural differences eventually collapse. During that process, I believe we need to shower constant the North Korean residents with caring interest and deliver message of hope, especially efforts unnecessary to provide humanitarian assistance to North Koreans and recover our common sense of identity.

Peaceful unification in the Korean Peninsula will provide new economic opportunities to its neighboring countries and allies and contribute to promote global peace and stabilities.

Though North Korea regime rejects the initiative I proposed in Dresden, my proposal will assure minimal level of value of life to be enjoyed by North Koreans and recover common sense of identity between North and South Koreans. With that principle in mind, we will pursue the initiative.

President Obama and I share the view that while the tension and conflict persist in Northeast Asian region, we must actively seek ways to promote peace and collaboration in the Northeast Asia. In that context, I strongly support the U.S. policy to rebalance toward the Asia-Pacific region as it contributes positively to the regional peace and cooperation. I firmly believe that President Obama's Asia trip demonstrates his strong commitment toward his policy of rebalancing toward the region and his pledge to implement the commitment.

As the U.N. Security Council member, South Korea stands side by side with the U.S. to resolve any major issues undermining peace and stability in the global community. The U.S. and Korea are marching together to carry out development cooperative activities in Asia, Africa, and also poverty fightings. We'll gather our wisdom to tackle new global challenges such as climate change, energy, nuclear security, cybersecurity, marine security, and etcetera.

Another important pillar of our alliance is practical cooperation in economic, social, and cultural sectors. This topic has continued so far and will continue. KORUS FTA will, together with the U.S.-R.O.K. mutual defense treaty, have become two major linchpins of our alliance. We plan to expand mutual, beneficial cooperation based on KORUS FTA.

We share the view that, followed by FTA between the two countries, TPP will enable both of our countries to expand our cooperation in the future. We will closely coordinate with each other regarding Korea's participation in TPP.

Regarding the issue of the energy, scientists from two sides are conducting joint research in the field of IT, high-tech manufacturings, polar regions, space explorations. In these areas,

they are closely collaborating further down the road. Energy-related companies and experts from both sides have strengthened cooperation in clean energy and shale gas sectors. Thus, we are stepping up the bilateral partnership to a new level.

Today, after 60 years, precious nine Korean cultural artifacts were returned to Korea. Such social and cultural cooperation between the U.S. and Korea will enrich our friendly ties and achieve further development. Based on the past six decades of unwavering trust built between the two nations, the U.S.-R.O.K. alliance will advance farther as to effectively handle the challenges in the Korean Peninsula, Northeast Asia and the world. Our alliance will continuously strengthen its role as a linchpin for peace and stability in the Asia-Pacific region and also contribute to the people of the U.S. and Korea and the world.

Once again, welcome to Korea, President Obama, and I wish you a successful Asia trip. Thank you.

Moderator. Next, President Obama will deliver the statement.

President Obama. Well, thank you, President Park, for your kind words and warm welcome. And I want to thank the people of South Korea for your enduring friendship and unfailing hospitality.

As I said earlier, I know my visit comes at a time of great sorrow for your nation. And again, on behalf of all Americans, I want to express our deepest condolences—our *aedo*—to all the families who lost loved ones on the ferry *Sewol*. So many were young students with their entire lives ahead of them. I'm a father of two daughters of the same age, or close to the same age, as those who were lost, and so I can only imagine what the parents are going through at this point, the incredible heartache.

I brought with me on this trip—in addition to the flag that I mentioned earlier—a magnolia tree from the South Lawn of the White House. These magnolia trees have stood for more than a century, and they represent in our country beauty and, with every spring, renewal—the same qualities embodied by all those students. So during my visit this tree will be presented to Danwon High School as a reminder of their beautiful lives and the friendship between our nations. And going forward, the United States will continue to offer whatever support we can provide as you respond to this tragedy.

These difficult days remind us that, whatever the challenges, our two nations stand together. Our alliance remains a linchpin of security in Asia. Our solidarity is bolstered by the courage of our servicemembers—both Korean and American—who safeguard this nation. America's commitment to the South Korean people will never waver.

And, President Park, I want to thank you for your strong personal commitment to our alliance. I was honored to welcome you to Washington for your first foreign trip as President, and we've worked closely ever since. In our discussions today, we agreed to continue to modernize our alliance, including enhancing the interoperability of our missile defense systems. At the same time, President Park recommended, and I agreed, that given the evolving security environment in the region, including the enduring North Korea nuclear and missile threat, we can reconsider the 2015 timeline for transferring operational control for our alliance. Together, we'll ensure that our alliance remains fully prepared for our mission.

With regard to North Korea, the United States and South Korea stand shoulder to shoulder both in the face of Pyongyang's provocations and in our refusal to accept a nuclear Korea—North Korea. Threats will get North Korea nothing other than greater isolation. And

we're united on the steps Pyongyang needs to take, including abandoning their nuclear weapons and ballistic weapons program and living up to their international obligations.

And of course, we're also deeply concerned about the suffering of the North Korean people, and the United States and South Korea are working together to advance accountability for the serious human rights violations being committed by the North.

I mentioned to President Park that the United States supports the Korean people's desire for unification, and I share President Park's vision—as you outlined, Madam President, in your recent speech in Dresden—of "a unified Korea that's free from the fear of war and nuclear weapons." It's a vision of a unified Korea where people throughout this peninsula enjoy the political and economic freedoms that exist here in the South.

Beyond this peninsula, our alliance is increasingly a global one. We're grateful for South Korea's partnership, from typhoon relief in the Philippines to humanitarian efforts in Syria. As Madam President mentioned, we're working closely on new clean energy technologies to address climate change and with the international community on an ambitious new climate agreement. Around the globe, we're leaders in development, because we want more people to experience the kind of incredible growth and progress that South Korea shows is possible.

And finally, we agreed to continue expanding our extraordinary economic ties. Since we signed our free trade agreement 2 years ago, our overall bilateral trade has gone up. The United States is exporting more to South Korea, and South Korea is exporting more to the United States, which supports good jobs in both countries. Today President Park and I discussed how we can make sure that we implement KORUS fully, which would also help ensure that South Korea can eventually meet the high standards of the Trans-Pacific Partnership.

So, President Park, thank you again for your partnership and for all that you've done to keep our alliance strong. I'm looking forward to our working dinner tonight. Time and again, we've seen how much our people can accomplish together, not just for our own countries, but for the security and prosperity of the people around the world. And we very much appreciate your leadership on that project.

Kamsahamnida.

Moderator. [*Inaudible*]—first from the Korean side. Please state your name and affiliation before you pose your question. Please go ahead, Mr.—[*inaudible*].

Q. My name is—[*inaudible*]—of SBS. I have a question for President Park. Madam President, last month at Dresden, Germany, you have announced your unification initiative centering around the three main proposals for laying the groundwork for peace and unification, but North Korea flatly rejected it and has continued with its threats of provocation. In particular, North Korea is showing signs for an attempt at the fourth nuclear test against this backdrop. The two leaders said that there will be—at their opening statements—strong sanctions and against—posed against North Korea by the international society, and they will not—the two countries will not tolerate a nuclear test.

I would like to know what the President's evaluation is. Is there a possibility of North Korea actually carrying out the nuclear test? And if the provocations continue, if you are to improve and move forward in the Korean relations, are you considering a more flexible measure to be taken against the North?

Nextly, with regards to the U.S.-Korea transfer of the wartime command or the OPCON, the two leaders have said that they will review the timing and conditions for transfer. And if the transfer schedule is pushed back again, have you discussed with the President Obama specifically on when that timing will be?

President Park. Yes. At the Korean Government and also at the Defense Ministry, our assessment is that the North Korea is actually fully ready to carry out the fourth nuclear test, so it can actually carry out the test whenever it deems necessary. That is our assessment. We're not very certain of what the timing will be, but I think we believe that they are fully ready now.

And this is a very tense situation. To come up with some flexible measure—that is your question—actually, the Dresden initiative is a case in point for a win-win of the two Koreas and for improvement of the quality of life for the North Korean residents. It's indeed a flexible policy. But the North Korea is responding with threats of provocation and about carrying out North Korea—to carry out nuclear tests. So this is a point that we really need to think seriously.

With regards to the transfer of the OPCON, Korea and the United States have decided that the basic direction should be to strengthen the KORUS, combine the defensive posture. We believe that it should not incur any negative situations on the defense posture for the Korea. And therefore, against the heightening tensions of the threats currently, the timing is 2015. But we have agreed that we could revisit this issue about reviewing the timing and conditions for transfer.

So, currently, I don't think it is quite appropriate that I give you exact timing or the conditions. But the authorities—the defense authorities of the two countries—will be able to come to a coordination effort together, and that was what we will do to encourage the defense authorities to move forward.

Ukraine/International Sanctions Against Russia/Arab-Israeli Peace Process

Q. Thank you, Mr. President, Madam President. Mr. President, you have stated that you're teeing up sanctions on Russia, but the Europeans are divided on how far they want to go. Can you tell us what, if any, consultations you plan to have with European leaders to nudge them forward? And are you worried that this could delay the process? Also, Mr. President, at a time when your attention is needed on the Ukraine and other world crises, is it now time to throw in the towel on the Middle East peace effort, especially now that the—that Israel has dropped out of the talks?

I also have a question for you, Madam President. Condolences on your country's tragic loss. Madam President, given that South Korea and Japan have important shared security interests in the region, what, if anything, can your Government do to get past this ritual of bitter dispute over Japan's World War II militarist past? Thank you.

President Obama. Well, with respect to Ukraine, the consultation with my European counterparts has been constant, not just over the last several weeks, but for the last several months. And I have been deeply encouraged by the unity that you've seen between the United States, Europe, Canada, and many countries around the globe uniformly condemning Russia's actions in annexing Crimea, uniformly condemning Russian further meddling in Ukraine and the destabilizing activities that are taking place in the south and the east.

And both the Europeans and the United States have been consistent in calibrating sanctions that could provide a deterrent to the Russians, providing support to the Ukrainians, leaving open a path for resolving this problem diplomatically.

Now, as I said yesterday, what we've seen since the Geneva agreement is the Ukrainian Government has been carrying out the terms of that agreement. It's introduced legislation providing amnesty to those that would lay down arms and exit from these government buildings that have been occupied. It has put forward a process for constitutional reform that ensures the rights of all Ukrainians. And it's a credible document, one that's been presented to the Council of Europe and is getting input throughout Ukraine as well as from experts outside of Ukraine on constitutional reform. And so what you've seen is the Government in Kiev doing what it said it would do. What we have not seen is Russia speaking out clearly that—and condemning the proRussian militias that have taken over these buildings and using its influence to deescalate the crisis.

So I'll be talking to the Europeans—not all of them, but some key European leaders—again this evening, making sure that they share my assessment in terms of what's happened since the Geneva talks took place. As I said yesterday, we already have a series of additional targeted sanctions that are ready to go, and we want to make sure that we're consulting with them, assuming that we don't see any drastic changes in behavior on the part of the Russians. We'd like to see that, but we haven't assumed that.

But what's also important is laying the groundwork so that if and when we see even greater escalation, perhaps even military incursion by Russia into Ukraine, that we're prepared for the sort of sectoral sanctions that would have even larger consequences.

And one thing I should say about European leadership: They've been unequivocal in condemning Russia, and they have actually moved steadily when it comes to applying sanctions and consequences towards Russia. But there are a lot of countries inside of Europe, and they have a whole process that they've got to go through to deal with any actions that have significant impact on their own economies. And so there's some variation inside of Europe. That is as much of an issue as it is any differences between our assessments and theirs. And we want to work with them to make sure that we're coordinating as much as possible because that's going to maximize our efforts.

Last point: I think it's important for us not to anticipate that the targeted sanctions that we're applying now necessarily solve the problem. What we've been trying to do is to continually raise the costs for Russia of their actions while still leaving the possibility of them moving in a different direction. And we've—we'll continue to keep some arrows in our quiver in the event that we see a further deterioration of the situation over the next several days or weeks.

As far as the Middle East is concerned, this is a problem that's been going on for 60, 70, 80 years. We didn't anticipate that we were going to solve it during the course of a 6- or 9-month negotiation. I think it's fair to say that one of my jobs as President is to worry about a bunch of different problems at the same time and not just pick and choose which problems that I have the luxury to worry about.

It is still in America's interests as well as Israel's interests and the interests of the Palestinian people to see if we can resolve a conflict that is combustible. And so far, at least, what we've seen is some movement on both sides to acknowledge that this is a crisis long running that needs to be solved. What we haven't seen is, frankly, the kind of political will to actually make tough decisions. And that's been true on both sides.

And the fact that most recently President Abbas took the unhelpful step of rejoining talks with Hamas is just one of a series of choices that both the Israelis and the Palestinians have

made that are not conductive to trying to resolve this crisis. And I make no apologies for supporting Secretary of State Kerry's efforts—tireless efforts—despite long odds, to keep on trying to bring the parties together.

There may come a point at which there just needs to be a pause and both sides need to look at the alternatives. As I've said in the past—and I will continue to repeat—nobody has offered me a serious scenario in which peace is not made between Israelis and Palestinians and we have a secure, democratic Jewish State of Israel and the Palestinians have a state. Folks can posture, folks can cling to maximalist positions, but realistically, there's one door, and that is the two parties getting together and making some very difficult political compromises in order to secure the future of both Israelis and Palestinians for future generations.

We have not yet seen them walk through that door. We will continue to encourage them to walk through that door. Do I expect that they will walk through that door next week, next month, or even in the course of the next 6 months? No. Are we going to continue to try to offer constructive approaches that could lead them to go ahead and take those steps? Absolutely. And I make no apologies for that. It's the right thing to do. It's important, and it's in America's national interests as well as the interests of the region and the interests of Israel.

President Park. When it comes to Korea and Japan, there are a number of shared interests amongst the two countries. However, there has been some conflict going on between the two countries because of historical views. And your question is how we are going to resolve those differences.

I'd like to first begin by extending appreciation to you for expressing condolences to the victims of the *Sewol* ferry.

On this issue, at The Hague, we had a trilateral Korea-U.S.-Japan summit meeting. So I think my talk can begin from the trilateral summit meeting. The United States, particularly President Obama, has exerted a lot of efforts for the trilateral summit to be realized in Hague. And at that summit meeting, the three countries have come to an agreement that will be coordinated efforts for resolution of the North Korean nuclear issue.

However, I'd like to say that before we had this trilateral summit meeting, what the Japanese leader has done, the commitment that he has made—I'd like to trace the talks back to the—[*inaudible*]—dialogue or the—[*inaudible*]—dialogue—the leader has said that he will faithfully abide by those two dialogues—[*inaudible*]—dialogues and that there will be some effort for resolution of the issues related to the Korean comfort women victims. And since there has been some consensus reached, we should make sure that we do not lose that momentum and carry forward to make progress from there.

So I think what is most important is that we go back to the pledges made by Prime Minister Abe and their truthful actions be implemented from the Japan side. That is very important. And for the comfort women issue, for the victims—Korean victims—at the director general level at the Ministry of Finance—Foreign Affairs, excuse me, there will be further consultations. We hope that there will be talks carried out at that director general meeting and that there will be like truthfulness displayed by the Japanese side so that we can carry on the momentum for cooperation. And if we're not able to achieve much progress as we anticipated at that moment, we won't be able to carry on, to move—make progress from the momentum that we were able to realize at that time.

With regards to the Korean comfort women victims, many have passed away, and we only have 55 remaining survivors. And I think it's very important that we come up with efforts,

truthful efforts for these victims, because if we let go of this—we do not make progress in the near future—we won't be able to do anything about those victims. And therefore, by implementing truthful actions based on those commitments that we have made, we'll be able to make progress with the momentum that we were able to achieve at the time. However important the coordinated efforts will be between those—our three countries, I think efforts should be exerted by all the parties concerned. And it cannot be—progress cannot be achieved by efforts of a single party. And therefore, in this regard, I really look forward to efforts made by the Japanese side.

Moderator. Yes, Mr.—[*inaudible*]—please go ahead.

North Korea/U.S. Policy in East Asia/South China Sea Maritime Territorial Disputes/China-U.S. Relations/Japan-South Korea Relations

Q. My name is—[*inaudible*]. I have questions for President Obama. Despite numerous warnings from the international community, North Korea is continuing with threats and provocation. And because of the new developments of Ukraine, there are voices of concern about the possibility that U.S. attention is going to be diverted to Europe and that the North Korean nuclear issue is going to go down in the U.S. foreign policy priority list. I'd like to know what your ideas for—are for resolution of the North Korean nuclear issue. And for resumption of the six-party talks, I'd like to know if you're considering relaxing of the preconditions you set for resumption of the talks.

And nextly, I'd like to talk about some conflicts going on in Northeast Asia. Korea, Japan, and China are the three countries in Northeast Asia that engage in close political and economic cooperation; in reality, they are mired in historical and territorial disputes. If you were to foster a friendly atmosphere for cooperation, what can the United States do? And with regards to Prime Minister Abe's statement at the press conference yesterday, he has made statements justifying the visit of—to Yasukuni Shrine by Japanese political leaders. I'd like to know your views over the historical views held by Japanese politicians.

President Obama. Well, as I said earlier in response to one of your American counterparts' questions, the United States and I don't have the luxury of choosing just one problem at a time. So the North Korea situation is of direct concern to us, not only because it threatens our key allies in the region, the Republic of Korea and Japan, but it also poses a direct threat to us. Some of the missile technology that's being developed, the nuclear weapons that are being developed in North Korea, when matched up with a thoroughly irresponsible foreign policy and a provocative approach by the North Korean regime, poses a threat to the United States. And so we can't waver in our attention. We have to make sure that in strong concert with our allies, that we are continuing to press on North Korea to change its approach.

Now, in terms of what the United States believes is going to be most effective, we've been very consistent over the last 5 years. We don't reward bad behavior. We don't go through a constant cycle in which provocative actions by North Korea result in dialogue that leads nowhere and concessions to the North Koreans.

And we have also been consistent in saying that if North Korea is serious about talks, here are the specific steps that we can begin to take. Denuclearization has to be on the table. There has to be a discussion about how we are going to remove a key threat not only to the region, but also to the world, because North Korea is also one of the principal proliferators of dangerous weapons around the world.

So far, at least, we have not gotten a positive response from North Korea on that front. What's been encouraging is the degree to which China—partly because of consultations with President Xi and Madam President Park, conversations between myself and President Xi and others—China is beginning to recognize that North Korea is not just a nuisance, this is a significant problem to their own security. And we've encouraged them to exert greater influence over North Korea because China has the most significant effect on North Korean calculations.

President Park and I agree that in light of what we expect to be further provocative actions from the North Koreans, whether in the form of long-range missile tests or nuclear tests or both, that it's important for us to look at additional ways to apply pressure on North Korea, further sanctions that have even more bite, as well as highlighting some of the human rights violations that make North Korea probably the worst human rights violator in the world.

It is also important for us to recognize, however, that North Korea is already the most isolated country in the world by far. Its people suffer terribly because of the decisions that its leaders have made. And we are not going to find a magic bullet that solves this problem overnight. What we're going to have to do is to continue with a consistent, steady approach. And the single most important thing is making sure that there's strong unity of effort between ourselves, the Republic of Korea, Japan, and other like-minded countries in the region. We have to present a strong, forceful alliance, and we have to prepare for any eventuality, while still opening the prospect for a negotiated resolution to this longstanding conflict.

With respect to some of the other issues in East Asia, the United States position has been clear and consistent throughout. We consider ourselves a Asia-Pacific power. We don't have a stake in the specific claims that have caused some of these disputes. We're not parties to the disputes over the Senkaku Islands, for example. Our primary interest is making sure that international norms and rule of law are upheld and that disputes of this sort are resolved through peaceful, diplomatic means. And we will continue to encourage all the parties concerned—whether it's Japan, China, Republic of Korea, or with respect to disputes in the South China Sea—to use the law and diplomacy to resolve these disputes.

And my message to China has consistently been that although clearly there are going to be differences between ourselves and China on certain issues, there are also enormous areas of cooperation. We're not interesting in containing China. We're interested in China's peaceful rise and it being a responsible and powerful proponent of rule of law in an international system. In that role, it has to abide by certain norms. Large countries have to abide by rules, perhaps even more than small countries, because when we don't, it's—worries people. And we want to move away from a system in which might alone makes right.

So we'll continue to encourage all parties concerned to take steps to resort to international norms and rule of law. We've been encouraging ASEAN and China, for example, to come up with a code of conduct that can resolve some of these maritime disputes. We will make sure that freedom of navigation and other principles that have underwritten the prosperity of the Asia-Pacific region and the growth in trade and commerce of this region continue, and we'll continue to project ourselves in the Pacific to ensure that that continues.

Finally, with respect to the historical tensions between South Korea and Japan, I think that any of us who look back on the history of what happened to the comfort women here in South Korea, for example, have to recognize that this was a terrible, egregious violation of human rights. Those women were violated in ways that, even in the midst of war, was shocking.

And they deserve to be heard, they deserve to be respected, and there should be an accurate and clear account of what happened.

I think Prime Minister Abe recognizes, and certainly, the Japanese people recognize, that the past is something that has to be recognized honestly and fairly. But I also think that it is in the interests of both Japan and the Korean people to look forward as well as backwards and to find ways in which the heartache and the pain of the past can be resolved, because, as has been said before, the interests today of the Korean and Japanese people so clearly converge. You're both democracies. You both have thriving free markets. You both are cornerstones of a booming economic region. You both are strong allies and friends of the United States. And so when you think about the young people of the Republic of Korea and Japan, my hope would be that we can honestly resolve some of these past tensions, but also keep our eye on the future and the possibilities of peace and prosperity for all people.

That's one of the most important lessons, I think, from the horrors of war, is being able to look back and learn lessons that allow people to avoid war in the future.

President Vladimir Vladimirovich Putin of Russia/Russia-U.S. Relations/Ukraine

Q. Jonathan Karl, ABC News. Madam President, thank you. Mr. President, thank you. It wasn't that long ago you were talking about a reset with Russia and were optimistic that relations with Vladimir Putin could be dramatically improved. Did you misjudge him, or did he mislead you? And at this point, isn't it clear that sanctions simply are not going to change his behavior? And just a personal relations question: I'm sure you saw, President Putin was asked that if he were drowning, would you save him? And he said he thought you would save him. So I'm just wondering, was he correct on that? And do you think that Putin would save you? [*Laughter*]

And to President Park, in light of the fact that, as President Obama points out, North Korea is already the most isolated country on the planet, the most sanctioned country, what do you think should be done specifically if they go through with another nuclear test?

President Obama. First of all, I absolutely would save Mr. Putin if he were drowning. I'd like to think that if anybody is out there drowning, I'm going to save them. I used to be a pretty good swimmer. I grew up in Hawaii. [*Laughter*] A little out of practice.

Keep in mind that, when I came into office, the idea of reset was a recognition that there were a range of issues in which U.S. and Russian interests converged. It was in our national security interests to try to foster cooperation with the Russians so that, for example, we could have alternative supply lines to our troops in Afghanistan; so that we could obtain cooperation from Russia in applying sanctions to Iran and forcing them to the table to see if we could resolve that issue peacefully. And in fact, during the first term of my administration, the approach we took resulted in concrete benefits to the national security posture of the United States. We were able to reduce weapons of mass destruction. We were able to make sure that our troops were adequately supplied in Afghanistan at times, as you'll recall, when there were some tensions within Pakistan after we conducted the raid against bin Laden in Abbottabad. We were able to bring Iran to the table, and we now have what so far, at least, have been constructive discussions about resolving the nuclear problem there.

So those were all things that were good for us, and I believe they were actually good for the Russians as well. Mr. Putin, in my second term, has had an increasing tendency to view the world through a cold war prism and to see Russia's interests as invariably in conflict with the West's. I disagree with him in my assessment of what's in Russia's interests, but he's the

President of that country. There are still areas that we should be cooperating—on counterterrorism, for example. But his decisions recently—first, with respect to supporting the horrendous bloodshed carried out by the Asad regime in Syria, and then, most clearly, with respect to the situation in Ukraine—makes it much more difficult for us to cooperate. And I suspect that that's going to linger for some time to come.

We'll continue to look for areas where, if it's in our national security interests, and they think it's in their interests, that we'll try to find areas where we can work together. But the violations of sovereignty and territorial integrity in Ukraine is a principle that the United States has to stand up to.

Now, with respect to the impact of sanctions, Russia has a deep interest in what happens in Ukraine, and I think they're going about meeting those interests in entirely the wrong way. But what's clear is—you're right—Mr. Putin is going to make decisions based on what he thinks is best for Russia, and he views Ukraine as absolutely central, critical to his foreign policy and the long-term strategic interests of Russia.

That doesn't mean that he doesn't take into account other long-term interests of Russia. Tens of billions of dollars of capital fleeing Russia poses a problem for Russia's long-term interests. Russia being isolated so that no business man or woman with any sense are going to want to invest there. That's a problem for Russia's long-term interests. And President Putin is not a stupid man and, I think, recently acknowledged that this has already had an impact. And certainly if the situation gets worse and sanctions are broadened to an entire sector, that will have a more severe impact on the Russian people and the Russian economy.

And so there's going to come a point at which he's got to make a fundamental decision. Is he willing to see the Russian economy that was already weakened, that was already faltering, weaken further because he's unwilling to deal with Ukraine in a diplomatic fashion that respects their sovereignty, but still meets any legitimate interest that Russia may have? Or is he going to use military force and the kind of destabilizing activities that we've seen so far? That's a choice that he's going to have to make. But we shouldn't make the choice easy for him. He should recognize that the international community as a whole is not going to encourage the kinds of actions that he's taken so far.

Q. But you acknowledge sanctions basically have not changed the behavior?

President Obama. Well, Jonathan, I think that's self-apparent. I think that there are no guarantees in life generally and certainly no guarantees in foreign policy.

One of the things that I think has been interesting during this entire discussion—and we've seen this on a lot of foreign policy issues over the last several years—we seem to have gotten in the habit of thinking that when there are hard foreign policy problems, that there may actually be a definitive answer. Typically, those who offer that definitive answer come up with the use of force as the definitive answer. You would think, given that we've just gone through a decade of war, that that assumption would be subject to some questioning. Certainly, in my position as President of the United States and as a student of history, very rarely have I seen the exercise of military power providing a definitive answer either.

So you've got some tools in the toolbox; you try to figure out which ones have the best chance of working. Sometimes, it's going to take time to see whether or not a particular approach worked or not. You may not know until after the fact. But what I do know is, is that sanctions have consequences on Russia and that if Mr. Putin were primarily interested in making sure that Russia is a strong, thriving nation for years to come, then he's a lot better off

abiding by the agreement that we came up with in Geneva; resolving the situation in Ukraine peacefully; allowing Ukrainians to make their own decisions about their lives so that they can have good relations both with Russia and with Europe; and businesses can continue to have confidence that if they invest in Russia or have economic relations with Russia; or Europeans can have confidence with respect to energy that they purchase from Russia, that it's not going to be suddenly disrupted because of some Russian territorial ambitions that violate international law. Good? [*Inaudible*]—can't remember what the other question was. [*Laughter*]

President Park. Yes, that was a long statement, I must say. So going back to the question posed to me, when North Korea—nuclear test is actually carried out by North Korea, what will the Korean Government do? That is the question, if I remember it correctly. Now, if North Korea is actually going to carry out the fourth nuclear test, that is going to change—fundamentally change—the Northeast Asian security landscape, and I believe that all our efforts to resolve the nuclear issue through six-party talks is going to be completely dissolved. It's going to go in the air.

We tried to resolve the problem through dialogue, but what North Korea did was to buy time to upgrade its nuclear capability. And now with this upgraded nuclear capability, North Korea is not willing to listen to anyone. If this is going to be the situation, there's no actual meaning in us carrying out six-party talks. And to the neighboring countries, there may be an arms—nuclear arms race triggering. So there's actually no stopping—for other neighboring countries, North Korea is not stopped. And South and North Korea has tried to improve relationship, but I think we're going to lose the momentum for the South Korean efforts to improve that relationship if the North Korean nuclear test is going to take place.

And also, there is a close linkage between North Korean nuclear program and others, so I believe that North Korea's nuclear capability is going to bring a serious threat to world peace too. And against the backdrop of such analysis, I believe this is not going to be a problem only for the Northeast Asian region, this is going to be a serious threat to the global peace. And if such an event is going to be realized, the U.N., in order to uphold the peace, will have to impose very strong sanctions.

That is my view. And I also believe that there is a strong role to be played by China. I'd like to emphasize the role of China. China, with regards to possession of North Korea's nuclear capabilities, of their testing, North Korea has strongly opposed to the idea, and it has also maintained a very strong position for the U.N. sanctions. So if against a very bad situation, if China is going to maintain a very strong position, take very strong measures to make sure that North Korea—China will not tolerate the situation, then it's going to be very important. The trade relations, about 90 percent of trade relations and about 80 percent of economic support is going from China to North Korea, and therefore, China's influence in North Korea is indeed huge.

And against this very dangerous situation, I really look forward to China's leading role in making sure that the threat is not going to be translated into action. That is my hope.

Moderator. Thank you very much. Thank you, Madam President, Mr. President, members of the press entourage and international press corps. This concludes entirely the press conference. Thank you very much.

NOTE: The President's news conference began at 6:15 p.m. at the Blue House. In his remarks, the President referred to President Mahmoud Abbas of the Palestinian Authority; President Xi

Jinping of China; and President Bashar al-Asad of Syria. President Park referred to Minister of National Defense Kim Kwan-jin and Minister of Foreign Affairs Yun Byung-se of South Korea. President Park and some reporters spoke in Korean, and their remarks were translated by an interpreter.

Categories: Interviews With the News Media : Joint news conferences :: South Korea, President Park.

Locations: Seoul, South Korea.

Names: Abbas, Mahmoud; Abe, Shinzo; Assad, Bashar al-; Kerry, John F.; Park Geun-hye; Putin, Vladimir Vladimirovich; Xi Jinping.

Subjects: Asia : Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN); Asia : South China Sea, maritime territorial disputes; China : President; China : Relations with U.S.; Foreign policy, U.S. : Diplomatic efforts, expansion; Japan : Prime Minister; Japan : Relations with South Korea; Middle East : Arab-Israeli conflict, peace process; North Korea : Human rights issues; North Korea : International diplomatic efforts; North Korea : Nuclear weapons development; North Korea : Relations with South Korea; Palestinian Authority and Palestinians : President; Russia : International diplomatic efforts; Russia : President; Russia : Relations with U.S.; Russia : Relations with Ukraine; South Korea : Defense relationship with U.S.; South Korea : Free trade agreement with U.S.; South Korea : President; South Korea : President Obama's visit; South Korea : Relations with Japan; South Korea : Relations with North Korea; South Korea : Relations with U.S.; South Korea : Sewol ferry, sinking; State, Department of : Secretary; Syria : Civil war and sectarian conflict; Syria : President; Trans-Pacific Partnership (TPP); Ukraine : Democracy efforts; Ukraine : Political unrest and violence; Ukraine : Relations with Europe; Ukraine : Relations with Russia; Ukraine : Russia, role.

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