

Administration of Barack Obama, 2016

**Remarks Following a Meeting With President Park Geun-hye of South Korea
in Vientiane, Laos**

September 6, 2016

President Obama. It is always a pleasure to meet with my friend and partner, President Park of the Republic of Korea, and her delegation. As we all know, the R.O.K. is one of America's oldest and closest allies. Our alliance remains the linchpin of peace and security, not just on the Korean Peninsula, but across the region.

In recent years, we've worked together to strengthen our alliance and to ensure our readiness against any threat. For instance, our missile defense cooperation, THAAD, is a purely defensive system to deter and defend against North Korean threats. And today I want to reaffirm that our commitment to the defense and security of North [South][°] Korea, including extended deterrence, is unwavering.

We had extensive discussions about the recent provocations by the D.P.R.K., and we are united in condemning North Korea's continued missile launches, including this week while China was hosting the G-20. These launches are provocative. They're a violation of North Korea's obligations internationally. Its nuclear and missile programs are a threat to not only the R.O.K., but to Japan, other allies in the region, partners in the region, and to the United States.

So we are going to work diligently together with the most recent U.N. sanctions that are already placing North Korea under the most intense sanctions regime ever. We're going to work together to make sure that we're closing loopholes and making them even more effective. And President Park and I agree that the entire international community needs to implement these sanctions fully and hold North Korea accountable.

North Korea needs to know that provocations will only invite more pressure and further deepen its isolation, but that if it is willing to recognize its international obligations and the importance of denuclearization in the Korean Peninsula, the opportunities for us to dialogue with them are there. And we do not have any interest in an offensive approach to North Korea. We want peace and security for all peoples, but their current behavior has not been ones that are conducive to the kinds of dialogue and diplomacy that both the R.O.K. and the United States would prefer.

Beyond the region, our alliance is a global one. We stand together against ISIL. We stand together in providing humanitarian assistance for the Syrian people and for refugees, promoting global health, and fighting climate change. The R.O.K. has been an excellent partner in helping Afghanistan stabilize. It has been an outstanding partner on global health and security issues. We talked about the leadership summit that we'll be hosting at the end of this month on refugees and the important contributions that the Republic of Korea are making.

And let me just say that as I wrap up over the next several days my last trip to Asia, what a pleasure it's been to work with President Park and her team. They have been steady, consistent partners, and President Park has been a stalwart ally and friend on a whole range of issues. And her steady and wise leadership, I think, has greatly contributed to the strengthening of what was already one of our most important alliances. So I want to thank her personally for the

[°] White House correction.

excellent contributions she's made to advancing all the various issues that we've been working on. And I want to thank her team as well that worked very hard behind the scenes to make that happen.

President Park. Today I met with President Obama and held fruitful discussions on how we will respond to the common challenges that confront both our nations. In particular, it was a pleasure to reconfirm that the Korea-U.S. alliance is stronger than ever and is playing a pivotal role for the peace and stability of not only the Korean Peninsula, but the entire region.

North Korea's nuclear test earlier this year and continued missile launches are fundamentally threatening the security of both the Korean Peninsula and Northeast Asia. I would like to make it clear that Korea and the U.S. will respond resolutely to any provocations by North Korea by utilizing all means.

North Korea launched another missiles again yesterday. I send a stern warning that the continuation of such reckless provocations will lead North Korea down the path of self-destruction. I express my gratitude to President Obama once again for clearly expressing today the unwavering commitment of the U.S. for the defense of the Republic of Korea. President Obama and I have agreed to maintain a strong deterrence posture by enhancing our combined defense capabilities, to include the deployment of the THAAD system.

Next, the faithful implementation of the U.N. Security Council Resolution 2270 is vital to deterring North Korea's advancement of its nuclear and missile capabilities, and it is meaningful that our two countries have been engaged in close cooperation in this regard. The United States and Korea have agreed to faithfully implement U.N. Security Council resolutions and further strengthen our efforts to seal the loopholes and sanctions implementation even more tightly. Taking into consideration the importance of China's role in effective implementation of sanctions and the resolution process of the North Korean nuclear issue, our two countries have agreed to continue to communicate with China through various channels.

Regarding the human rights situation of North Korean people, I would like to express my appreciation for the efforts made by many in the United States, both in and out of government. And I plan to further strengthen cooperation with the United States and the international community on the basis of our North Korean Human Rights Act, which entered into force on September 4. The improvement of the human rights situation for North Korean people will be a critical stepping stone for our path toward unification, and unification will provide opportunities for North Korean people to be treated equally.

Lastly, in order for the Korea-U.S. alliance to contribute to a greater peace and broader prosperity, President and I have agreed to not only expand cooperation in new frontiers such as global health, climate change, and space, but also expand our roles in areas such as refugees, peacekeeping operations, and development cooperation. I find it meaningful that through our discussions today, I was able to confirm yet once again that the foundations of our bilateral relationship are rock solid.

I once again express my respect for President Obama, for the vision and leadership that he has shown for our alliance.

NOTE: The President spoke at 5:01 p.m. at the Landmark Mekong Riverside Hotel. In his remarks, he referred to the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) terrorist organization. President Park spoke in Korean, and her remarks were translated by an interpreter.

Categories: Meetings With Foreign Leaders and International Officials : South Korea, President Park.

Locations: Vientiane, Laos.

Names: Park Geun-hye.

Subjects: Commerce, international : Group of Twenty (G–20) nations; Environment : Climate change; Laos : President Obama's visit; North Korea : International and U.S. sanctions; North Korea : Nuclear weapons development; North Korea : U.N. Security Council resolutions, noncompliance; South Korea : Afghanistan, role; South Korea : Defense relationship with U.S.; South Korea : President; South Korea : Relations with U.S.; Syria : Refugees, humanitarian situation; Terrorism : Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) terrorist organization.

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