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thank you. I'm looking forward to our conversations. Thank you, sir.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:46 a.m. at the Blue House. In his remarks, he referred to Kim Yoon-ok, wife of President Lee.

The President's News Conference With President Lee Myung-bak of South Korea in Seoul

August 6, 2008

President Lee. President Bush, along with Mrs. Bush and Barbara Bush, visited Korea. I would like to extend my warmest welcome to all three of them.

It's been a little over 5 months since I became President, but already today's meeting was the third meeting with President Bush. We had a very deep and insightful meeting. President Bush and I reaffirmed once again the importance of our alliance, and we discussed ways on how to strengthen this alliance.

The security environment is changing very rapidly, and there's a need for the Korea-U.S. alliance to adapt to these changes. With this in mind, President Bush and I agreed that not only must we strengthen the military and security aspect of our alliance but also expand our alliance so that it encompasses the political, economic, social, and cultural aspects as well.

Furthermore, we both agreed that we must work to expand our alliance so that Korea and the U.S. will continue to cooperate in various global issues, such as maintenance of peace, eradicating terrorism, climate change, and nonproliferation. Based on shared values and mutual trust, President Bush and I agreed to continue discussing specific ways to build our alliance into a strategic and future-oriented structure.

President Bush and I agreed that, through the six-party talks, there were positive steps made in resolving the North Korean nuclear issue. And I offered my sincere appreciation and praised President Bush's leadership in this endeavor. We agreed that our ultimate aim is to achieve the denuclearization of North Korea, and we agreed that this aim will be achieved by thoroughly verifying, through a rigorous verification regime, the completeness and correctness of the declaration submitted by North Korea.

Throughout this process, Korea and the U.S. will, of course, continue our close cooperation. And President Bush and I agreed to work closely together so that the third-phase actions can take place as soon as possible, bringing us closer to our objective, which is North Korea completely abandoning all their nuclear weapons and existing nuclear programs.

President Bush and I also agreed that the denuclearization of North Korea and substantive cooperation between the two Koreas should move along in parallel. Also, we made it clear that we are willing to actively assist North Korea strengthen exchange and cooperation with the international community so that it can take part in building peace and sharing in the prosperity of the peninsula and Northeast Asia.

Last July 11th, at the Mount Kumgang resort area, an innocent South Korean national was killed—an unacceptable incident that should have never occurred and one that must never happen again. President Bush and I agreed that North Korea must be forthcoming and fully cooperate so that we find out what really happened and to come up with ways to prevent such incidents from recurring.

We also discussed specific ways to strengthen cooperation between Korea and the U.S. President Bush said that he will do his best so that the ratification of the KORUS FTA, as well as Korea's participation in the Visa Waiver Program will be finalized within this year.

I also welcomed the workstudy program called WEST, the first ever program of its kind to be proposed by the U.S. to any other country, and assured President Bush that I will do my best so that it can be implemented as soon as possible. This WEST Program allows approximately 5,000 students every year to visit the U.S. for a period of 18 months so that they can study English, work, and have an opportunity to experience life in the U.S. This program will help young Koreans and Americans get a better understanding of each other's culture.

President Bush and I agreed to further expand our cooperation in the area of space

science and aeronautics by promoting joint space exploration, development of scientific research satellites, and Korea's participation in NASA's International Lunar Network project.

We also talked about how we are going to continue working closely together, as well as with the international community, on issues of global concern, such as climate change—issues that we already had a chance to discuss during our last meeting in Toyako, Japan, last month.

I thanked President Bush for his swift action in correcting the Dokdo issue, and I also explained to him the historical background of this critical importance.

Once again, along with the Korean people, let me extend to you, Mr. President, and to your family our warmest welcome from the bottom of our hearts. Also, I look forward to you and Mrs. Bush to come and visit Korea freely when you have more time, Mr. President. I will always be ready to welcome my real friend whenever you come by. I will always be ready with open arms.

President Bush. I think you're referring to my retirement. [*Laughter*] It's great to be back, and I can't thank you and Mrs. Kim enough for your gracious hospitality. And Laura and I and Barbara are looking forward to lunch.

It's important for the people of your great country to know how much Americans value our friendship and our relationship, and that we have a very important alliance, and that it is being transformed to make sure that it's modern and effective. It's—alliances aren't stagnant; they've got to constantly reassess. And that's what we're doing in a way that will not only help defend the freedom here on the peninsula, Korean Peninsula, but also will help us meet the challenges of a new century.

And I want to thank you for being a—you know, a forward-looking President. Transformation involves realigning our forces here in Korea, improving the interoperability of our forces, as well as preparing for Korea to take on greater operational responsibilities in times of conflict. Of course, the whole purpose of the alliance is to prevent the conflict from happening in the first place.

We're working to speed your entry into the Visa Waiver Program, as you mentioned. The idea is to get it done by the end of this year. I think people are optimistic about that, Mr. President. And then I appreciate you bringing up the workstudy program. It's an exciting opportunity for young Koreans to come to our country to learn and study and work. And I believe the best foreign policy for America is for people to get to know our country firsthand. And I thank you for bringing up the program, and the responsible officials in our Government will work hard to bring it to a conclusion.

We talked about the six-party talks. Yes, I'm pleased that the 5-megawatt reactor at Yongbyon was destroyed. That's then the ultimate verification, isn't it? We could see with our own eyes that the North Korean Government did what they said they were going to do. And now the question is, will they continue that type of accountability? And so, we're in the process now of making sure the North Korean Government understands they have many more obligations under the six-party talks, and that we will deal with the North Koreans based upon the principle of action for action.

I mean, I told the President I am concerned about North Korea's human rights record. I'm concerned about its uranium enrichment activities, as well as its nuclear testing and proliferation, its ballistic missile programs. And the best way to approach and answer those concerns is for there to be strong verification measures. And that's where we are in the six-party talks. And the choice is the leader of North Korea's to make. We made our choice; five nations bound together saying the same thing. And so we'll see what his decision is, Mr. President.

I strongly support you—your Government's request to investigate last month's shooting of a South Korean tourist. And you spoke eloquently in our meeting about how you felt when you first learned about the incident and how the people of your good country must feel when they learned the news of this woman's death.

We talked about our confronting global security challenges together. I do want to thank you very much for your contributions to two

young democracies, Iraq and Afghanistan. The Korean people have made sacrifices to support troops there and support other missions there, and they've made a difference. And I appreciate that very much. I also want to thank you very much for committing to send 350 troops to Lebanon as part of the U.N. mission.

The United States and Korea are working to open up markets. We concluded a free trade agreement with Korea. And it's an important agreement for the United States. It's important for our businesses; it's important for our workers. And our Congress must get this agreement done and ratify it. I'm going to push hard for it, Mr. President.

I am worried about the protectionist signals coming out of the U.S. Congress. And one way to kind of send a different message is for the Democratic leadership in the Congress to bring the—bring a couple of trade bills up, Colombia and Korea, and get some votes out there, and let Congress—people in Congress declare one way or the other whether they're for open markets and free and fair trade. And I can assure you, Mr. President, this administration is for free and fair trade, and will continue to press hard for what I think is a very good agreement.

Finally, I do want to say how much I appreciate your work on environmental challenges. Korea has been very constructive when it comes to climate change, and I want to thank you for your leadership on that issue. There's no doubt, we need a long-term global goal for reducing emissions. We need mid-term national goals and plans, and we need a lot of research and development to solve the problem in a way that enables us to say to our people, our economies can continue to grow and we'll be responsible stewards of the environment.

I want to thank you once again for your grand hospitality. Our relationship is important, it's vital, and I believe it's strong. Thank you, sir.

Free Trade Agreement/Island of Dokdo/ Afghanistan

Q. A question going out to President Lee. Mr. President, President Lee, you said that passage of the KORUS FTA will be one of the most important aspects of reviving the Korean economy. Do you, sir, despite the opposition within the U.S. Congress, do you expect the KORUS FTA to be ratified within the U.S. Congress? And if so, when do you expect the KORUS FTA to be ratified?

Additionally, with regards to the Dokdo issue, we already see the conclusion of this issue, but, however, we still have the question of the naming issue because Dokdo is still referred to as Liancourt Rocks. What kind of dialog did you have with President Bush during the summit meeting regarding Dokdo naming?

Lastly, did President Bush request President Lee to dispatch troops to Afghanistan?

President Bush. You sound like the American press. [*Laughter*]

President Lee. As for the last question, I think President Bush should be answering that question. As for the KORUS FTA, it benefits both Korea and the United States, and this is my firm belief. It will help the Korean economy revive itself, and the KORUS FTA will be an opportunity for us to upgrade Korea's economy up a notch. It will improve our competitiveness internationally, improve our productivity, broaden our trade base. And also, through the broadened trade base, we will be able to create new jobs for Koreans. So these are all reasons why I fully support, and why I believe that the KORUS FTA must pass.

And also the KORUS FTA has a lot of implications in terms of improving and strengthening the Korea-U.S. bilateral relationship. And so, that is why I recognize the significance of the KORUS FTA.

Today President Bush and I discussed and we agreed that we will continue to do our best so that the KORUS FTA will be able to pass by the end of this year. We promised each other we'll do our best. I will, on my part, continue to convince the Korea National Assembly for ratification, and President Bush said that he will continue his strenuous efforts to try to convince the U.S. Congress that they ratify the U.S.—the KORUS FTA.

As for the Dokdo naming issue, this is not a Korea-U.S. issue; this is a Korea-Japan issue. So—well, I told President Bush—I thanked him, of course, for correcting swiftly the naming issue within the United States.

But for the remaining issues, this is an issue that the Korean Government must take up in terms of the justifiability, the historical right that we have over Dokdo, and all the data that we have managed to accrue.

And so, we will continue our efforts to try to correct this and to tell the international community of our sovereign rights regarding this Dokdo issue. So, we'll be very consistent and continuously let people know, and tell the international community and let them know that this is a sovereign land belonging to South Korea. We have Korean nationals living there, and we have exercised control over these islands for many years. And so this is our position, which has always been consistent. And so we have—we're confident that we'll be able to correct this.

As for Afghanistan and sending Korean troops, I think, again, President Bush should be able to answer that. But I can tell you that we did discuss this issue.

President Bush. We discussed it. I thanked the President for the contributions that Korea has made to Afghanistan. And the only thing I talked to him about was noncombat help. I asked him to consider as much noncombat help as possible to help this young democracy.

China/Six-Party Talks

Q. Thank you, both. To President Bush, China's crackdown on human rights is drawing intense scrutiny. People are being harassed and jailed just for speaking their mind—trying to speak their mind. I know you say that you speak candidly with President Hu about this, but with all eyes on Beijing and the world watching, I'd like to ask you directly, what do you think of how China treats its people?

And, President Lee, I'd like to ask you—you noted progress in the six-party talks. Do you think that North Korea will go along with verification of its nuclear programs? For people who think that this is just another go-around, why will this time be any different?

President Bush. I've been meeting with Chinese leaders now for 7½ years; my message has been the same: You should not fear religious people in your society; as a matter of fact, religious people will make your society a better place; that you ought to welcome people being able to express their minds. And to the extent that people aren't able to do that and people aren't able to worship freely is—you know, I think is a mistake. And I explained it to him every single time.

And the reason I'm going to the Olympics is twofold: one, to show my respect for the people of China; and two, to cheer on the U.S. team. And by the way, the order ought to be reversed as to why I may—went. I hope our team wins as many gold medals as possible; and if not win gold, silver; and if not silver, bronze.

And this is an athletic event. But it's also an opportunity to say to the Chinese people, we respect your traditions; we respect your history. And as I said many times, I don't need the Olympics as an opportunity to express my views about religious freedom, since I have been doing it since I've been the President.

President Lee. I think I need to answer part of the question. As for the six-party talks and the prospects for the six-party talks, I think there are many skeptics as to the future of the six-party talks. I think many people around the world look at the behavior of North Korea up until today and they say—and they wonder whether North Korea will faithfully carry out verification. However, we have a difficult opposition, and I think right now is a good time to really praise the leadership of President Bush for dealing with a very difficult opponent.

And as to what kind of behavior North Korea will take, what's most important is—number one is that we must have a denuclearization of North Korea. So I will be patient; I will be consistent; and I will do my best. And I have faith and I am confident that we will be able to move on to the verification process and move on to the next phase of that. And we will try to—our best to make it complete, and I believe that North Korea must faithfully cooperate in the verification process

So, regardless of what North Korea has in mind, I believe it's important for the rest of the members of the six-party talks to continue pursuing our objective. And at times we might have to wait; at times we might be difficult, but we will be consistent.

North Korea/Six-Party Talks

Q. A question going out to His Excellency, President Bush. With regards to removing North Korea from the terrorism list, we understand that beginning on the 12th, North Korea might be able to be removed from the list. When do you expect, Mr. Bush, President Bush, that North Korea may be removed from the list? Are there any preconditions or is there anything that North Korea must do for them to be removed from the list of state sponsors of terrorism?

President Bush. Yes. The 12th is the first opportunity where they may be lifted off the list. And, yes, they got a lot to do. They got to, like, show us a verification regime that we can trust. This is a step-by-step process.

I don't know whether or not they're going to give up their weapons. I really don't know. I don't think either of us knows. I know this: That the six-party talks is the best way to convince them to give up their weapons. I know there's a framework in place that will make it easier for those of us who care about this issue to work together to send a common message to the North Korea leader: You have a choice to make. You can verifiably do what you say you're going to do, or you'll continue to be the most sanctioned regime in the world.

We have put out a step-by-step process to—as a way forward for the North Korean leader. This isn't a U.S. proposal; this is a five-party proposal. South Korea has been a very integral part of the process, and they will remain an integral part of the process. We're all at the table together, saying the same thing.

And so, part of the step-by-step was to say, okay, if you do the following things like you said you would do, you get off the terrorist list. That could conceivably happen, as you mentioned, on the 12th. However, it's going to require action on the leader of North Korea's part. It just doesn't automatically happen.

We changed the way it used to be. It used to be that—okay, we'll give you something and hope that you end up responding. It's no longer that way. The six-party talks basically says, you have made a promise; once you fulfill your promise, then something will happen positively. And so I—we'll see. It's his choice to make as to whether or not he gets to come off the list. If he is off the list, I want to remind you, that he'll still be—they will still be the most sanctioned country in the world.

And so then the fundamental question is, do they want to continue on and try to change the status? Do they want to try to change their isolation? Do they want to enter the community of nations? Do they want to be viewed as a peaceful country? And so there's a series of steps that we've all agreed to, including North Korea, that it's up to them to make the decision as to how they'll proceed.

North Korea

Q. Yes——

President Bush. Yes, Paul [Paul Wiseman, USA Today]. [*Laughter*]

Q. I was wondering, do you think that North Korea has fundamentally changed from being a member of the axis of evil a few years ago?

President Bush. That's to be determined. The human rights abuses inside the country still exist and persist. The North Korean leader has yet to fully verify the extent to which he has had a highly enriched uranium program. There's still more steps to be done on the plutonium program. So, in order to get off the list, the axis of evil list, then the North Korean leader is going to have to make certain decisions. And that's all part of the six-party talks.

And again, I can't predict the North Korean leader's decisionmaking. I don't know what he's going to do. But I do know that the best way to solve this issue is for five other nations to be saying the exact same thing.

And there has been progress. I mean, one thing is for certain that he did blow up the cooling tower. That was—that's verifiable because we all saw it. And it's—that was a positive step. And I—you know, I think all of us appreciated that positive step, but there's more steps to be taken. And my hope is that the axis of evil list no longer exists. That's my hope, for the sake of peace. And it's my hope for—you know, for the sake of our children.

Thank you very much for your attention. Thank you for your questions. Why don't you go find a shade tree to stand under? [*Laughter*]

NOTE: The President's news conference began at 11:05 a.m. at the Blue House. In his remarks, the President referred to Kim Yoon-ok, wife of President Lee; Chairman Kim Jong Il of North Korea; South Korean tourist Park Wang-ja, who was killed by a North Korean soldier on July 11; and President Hu Jintao of China. President Lee and some reporters spoke in Korean, and their remarks were translated by an interpreter.

Remarks to Military Personnel at United States Army Garrison—Yongsan, South Korea

August 6, 2008

The President. Thank you all. Berlus—how about the corporal? What a silver-tongued devil. Thank you, Corporal Berlus. Thanks for the kind introduction. I'm feeling pretty spiffy in my new jacket; feeling pretty warm in it too. [*Laughter*]

I am so honored to be here at freedom's frontier. Thanks for coming out to say hello. I always look forward to the chance to say, "Hooah!"

Audience members. Hooah!

The President. Yes, sir! No better place to do it than right here with U.S. Forces Korea. I thank the units here from the 8th Army Pacific Victors——

Audience members. Hooah!

The President. ——members of the 7th Air Force——

Audience members. Hooah!

The President. ——the U.S. Navy Forces Korea——

Audience members. Hooah!

The President. ——Marine Forces Korea——

Audience members. Hooah!

The President. ——and members of the Special Operations Command.

Audience members. Hooah!

The President. I appreciate the fact that you're carrying our flag with such honor in this vital part of the world. The American people are grateful for your service, and so is your Commander in Chief.

Audience members. Hooah!

The President. Thank you. I bring greetings to the South Korean military who is with us today, members from the KATUSA and the Zaytun Division.

Audience members. Hooah!

The President. We're honored by your friendship. We're proud of our alliance, and we're inspired by your work to advance the cause of liberty.

I also bring my love and greetings and appreciation to the military families.

Audience members. Hooah!

The President. Now, I understand our spouses did not take the oath of office when they enlisted. They took another oath. Matter of fact, their service to the country began with the simple words: "I do." So, to the military spouses and to the children who are here, please know that the United States of America is grateful for the sacrifices that you all are making on behalf of our country. And I'm proud to be in your presence, and so is the First Lady of the United States, Laura Bush.

And I'm traveling—or we're traveling with our daughter, one of two daughters—welcome, Barbara.

I know the commander very well. See, I got to see General Sharp up close a lot during the last 7½ years. He was in the Pentagon for a while; then he was transferred to this very important post. So, General Sharp, it's great to be with you again. Thank you for your fantastic service to our country. I'm proud to be with your wife. I also am proud to be with General Lee, deputy commander of the Combined Forces Command. It's an honor to meet your wife too, General. How about Sergeant—Command Sergeant Major Robert Winzenried. Robert, I'm glad you're here.

Audience members. Hooah!

The President. By the way, just so you sergeants understand, you are the backbone of the United States military——

Audience members. Hooah!

The President. ——and I appreciate your service.

We're also here today with the Ambassador from the United States to Korea, Sandy Vershbow, and his wife, Lisa. Ambassador,