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North Korea 'to return to talks'



North Korea and China's neighbours hoped the visit would restart talks

North Korea says it is willing to return to six-party international talks on its nuclear weapons programme, state media has reported.

North Korean leader Kim Jong-Il made the announcement to Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao, who is visiting Pyongyang, said North Korea's KCNA news agency.

But Pyongyang said the return would be dependent on the progress of its planned bilateral talks with the US.

The US says it remains ready to engage bilaterally with North Korea.

A US State Department spokesman said the aim for Washington was to convince Pyongyang to take the path to complete denuclearisation of the Korean Peninsula.

The spokesman said this remained the core objective, and that the multi-party process was the best mechanism for achieving that.

North Korea pulled out of the Chinese-hosted six-party talks earlier this year.

'Vital consensus'

"The hostile relations between the DPRK [North Korea] and the United States should be converted into peaceful ties through the bilateral talks without fail," KCNA quoted Mr Kim as saying.

"We expressed our readiness to hold multilateral talks, depending on the outcome of the DPRK-US talks."

Mr Kim was quoted as saying that North Korea's "efforts to attain the goal of denuclearising the peninsula remain unchanged".

The move followed strong international criticism over its testing of long-range missiles.

Mr Wen is on the second day of a three-day trip to North Korea which China says is to mark the 60th anniversary of diplomatic ties between the countries.

But regional neighbours had hoped the visit would also help restart the stalled nuclear talks.

China's state media agency, Xinhua, said Mr Wen and Mr Kim had "reached vital consensus on realising the denuclearisation of the Korean Peninsula".

'Friendly'

The importance of Mr Wen's visit was underlined when he was met on arrival on Sunday by Mr Kim.

On Sunday the two countries signed a series of co-operation deals, Chinese state media reported.

Mr Kim accompanied Mr Wen to a Korean opera, Xinhua said, where the two held "friendly talks".

Mr Wen is being accompanied on his visit by China's foreign minister.

China is North Korea's biggest trading partner and is the country which holds the greatest sway over the communist regime.

North Korea withdrew from the six party talks - which also involve China, the US, Japan, Russia and South Korea - in April, and conducted its second nuclear test in May, raising regional tensions.

But in recent weeks it has issued more conciliatory statements.

5 October 2009 02:20 UK

China visit sparks N Korea hopes



Mr Wen received red carpet treatment when he arrived in North Korea

Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao is spending a second day in North Korea in a visit regional neighbours hope will help restart stalled nuclear talks.

The importance of Mr Wen's visit was underlined when he was met on arrival on Sunday by leader Kim Jong-il.

Mr Wen then met Premier Kim Yong-Il, who said Pyongyang had not abandoned

denuclearisation and was open to "bilateral and multilateral dialogue".

But there was no solid commitment to rejoin the multilateral talks.

China says Mr Wen's three-day visit is to mark the 60th anniversary of diplomatic relations, but it is being keenly watched for progress on the nuclear issue.

North Korea withdrew from six-party talks - which also involve China, the US, Japan, Russia and South Korea - in April and conducted its second nuclear test in May, raising regional tensions.

But in recent weeks it has issued more conciliatory statements, suggesting it could resume negotiations.

Warm welcome

On Sunday the two countries signed a series of co-operation deals, Chinese state media reported.

Top leader Kim Jong-Il later accompanied Mr Wen to a Korean opera, Xinhua news agency said, where the two held "friendly talks".

More discussions between the two are expected on Monday, media reports suggest.

Mr Wen is being accompanied on his visit by China's foreign minister and Beijing's delegate to the six-party talks.

China hosts the six-party talks, is North Korea's biggest trading partner and holds the greatest sway over the communist regime.

18 September 2009 13:12 UK

N Korea 'ready for nuclear talks'



China is a key ally of isolated North Korea

North Korean leader Kim Jong-il has said he is willing to engage in talks on his country's controversial nuclear programme, Chinese state media said.

Mr Kim made the offer to the visiting envoy of Chinese President Hu Jintao, the Xinhua news agency said.

China has been pressing North Korea to return to international talks aimed at the nuclear

disarmament of the North.

The North pulled out of multilateral talks after international condemnation of a missile launch in April.

Sanctions

Kim Jong-il told the envoy, Dai Bingguo, that "North Korea will continue adhering towards the goal of denuclearisation... and is willing to resolve the relevant problems through bilateral and multilateral talks," Xinhua said.

The statement follows one from Washington last week that the US was prepared to talk directly with North Korea in order to resume stalled negotiations that also take in China, South Korea, Japan and Russia.

NUCLEAR CRISIS

Oct 2006 - North Korea conducts an underground nuclear test

Feb 2007 - North Korea agrees to close its main nuclear reactor in exchange for fuel aid

June 2007 - North Korea shuts its main Yongbyon reactor

June 2008 - North Korea makes its long-awaited declaration of nuclear assets

Oct 2008 - The US removes North Korea from its list of countries which sponsor terrorism

Dec 2008 - Pyongyang slows work to dismantle its nuclear programme after a US decision to suspend energy aid

Jan 2009 - The North says it is scrapping all military and political deals with the South, accusing it of "hostile intent"

April 2009 - Pyongyang launches a rocket carrying what it says is a communications satellite

25 May 2009 - North Korea conducts a second nuclear test

[N Korea's uranium admission](#)

[Q&A: North Korea nuclear test](#)

The US has previously said it will not tolerate a nuclear North Korea.

Mr Dai has been accompanied on his trip to Pyongyang by Beijing's chief envoy to the six-party talks.

On Wednesday, they met North Korea's lead man on nuclear negotiations, Kang Sok-ju.

North Korea pulled out of the six-party talks in April after criticism of the long-range rocket launch.

In May, the North said it had staged a second "successful" underground nuclear test, saying

it was more powerful than a test carried out in October 2006.

Mr Kim's statement is the latest in a series of conciliatory gestures that some analysts say is designed to relieve pressure on North Korea since the UN passed fresh sanctions in response to the nuclear test.

But the positive noises have been mixed with more threats, including a statement earlier in September that North Korea was in the final stages of enriching uranium and was continuing to reprocess and weaponise plutonium.

The North says that it remains under military threat from its historic rival, South Korea, and South Korea's allies, primarily the US.

But North Korea is believed to have enough plutonium for at least six nuclear bombs.

10 October 2009 04:49 UK

Nations urge early N Korea talks



South Korea and Japan have agreed an aid proposal for North Korea

Leaders of China, South Korea and Japan have met in Beijing and called for an early resumption of talks on North Korea's nuclear programme.

The nations said they were committed to a denuclearised Korean peninsula.

Tokyo and Seoul have been pushing a policy of withholding aid packages until after the North has dismantled its nuclear weapons programme.

But correspondents say that winning the support of China - a key ally of Pyongyang - may not be easy.

North Korea has already indicated that it may return to multi-party talks on the nuclear issue but has also said it wants direct negotiations with the US first.

In a joint statement issued after their morning summit in Beijing, the leaders said: "We will remain committed to dialogue and consultation and continue to work through peaceful means to pursue the denuclearisation of the Korean peninsula.

"We will make joint efforts with other parties for an early resumption of the six-party talks, so as to safeguard peace and stability in north-east Asia."

The leaders also said they would work closely together to make the upcoming global

climate change talks in Denmark a success.

Conditions

On Friday, South Korean President Lee Myung-bak and Japanese Prime Minister Yukio Hatoyama said sanctions against North Korea should remain in place until it began dismantling its nuclear programme.

But Mr Lee told reporters the countries had agreed on the "need for a fundamental and comprehensive solution" to the nuclear issue.



Wen Jiabao was to brief the other leaders on his talks with Kim Jong-il

The two leaders agreed to offer North Korea a one-off package of aid in exchange for denuclearisation, instead of the step-by-step measures that have been followed since the talks began in 2003.

The BBC's Michael Bristow in Beijing says South Korea and Japan might find it tough to win China's public support for their latest proposals as Beijing sees North Korea as a close ally.

But as North Korea's biggest trading partner, it holds the greatest sway over the secretive Pyongyang regime.

At the Beijing talks it was expected that Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao would brief the other leaders on his recent meeting with North Korean leader Kim Jong-il in Pyongyang.

On Monday, Mr Kim told Mr Wen he was "willing to attend multilateral talks, including the six-party talks, depending on the progress in its talks with the United States".

Pyongyang pulled out of the six party talks in April this year and tensions in the region rose after it launched a series of missiles and conducted an underground nuclear test - drawing UN sanctions in response.

The country had previously said it would never re-engage with the multilateral talks, which include delegates from the two Koreas, China, the US, Russia and Japan.

The US has said it is willing to engage directly with North Korea, but only as part of a return to the six-party forum.

Washington has said it is seeking the North's complete denuclearisation.