

26 May 2010 9:52 UK

US demands world response over Korea warship sinking

Mrs Clinton pledged US support

US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton says the international community must respond in the growing crisis over the sinking of a South Korean warship.

She said there was "overwhelming" evidence that North Korea was to blame, and urged Pyongyang to halt its "policy of belligerence".

Mrs Clinton was speaking in South Korea at the end of an Asian tour.

North Korea denies it was responsible, and has warned of retaliation if action is taken against it.

After an international investigation produced proof that the ship, the Cheonan, was hit by a North Korean torpedo, South Korea announced a package of measures, including a halt to most trade. It is also seeking action via the United Nations Security Council.

The North then announced, late on Tuesday, that it was cutting all ties with the South. It has also banned South Korean ships and planes from its territory.

South Korean Foreign Minister Yu Myung-Hwan told a joint news conference he and Mrs Clinton had agreed that North Korea should take responsibility for the sinking of the Cheonan, torpedoed on 26 March with the loss of 46 lives.

"This was an unacceptable provocation by North Korea and the international community has a responsibility and a duty to respond," Mrs Clinton said.

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North Korea has a record in calculated risk. This crisis might be another example of that

Paul Reynolds, World affairs correspondent, BBC News website [War rhetoric could end in dialogue](#)

The incident required "a strong but measured response," she said.

Before going to Seoul, Mrs Clinton had two days of discussions in Beijing with her Chinese counterparts.

She has been pressing China to join the international condemnation but Beijing is taking a cautious line, calling for restraint.

"I believe that the Chinese understand the seriousness of this issue and are willing to listen to the concerns expressed by both South Korea and the United States," Mrs Clinton said on Wednesday.

"We expect to be working with China as we move forward in fashioning a response."

Chinese Vice-Foreign Minister Zhang Zhijun earlier said his country was still evaluating information on the sinking of the Cheonan.

"We have always believed that dialogue is better than confrontation," he added.

Tank exercises

With tensions rising rapidly, the North has reacted angrily to trade and shipping sanctions announced by the South.

SINKING OF CHEONAN - KEY DATES



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- March 26: Explosion hits naval corvette near disputed maritime border, killing 46 on board
- May 20: Independent investigators produce proof North Korean torpedo struck vessel
- May 24: South Korea declares trade with North frozen, demands apology
- May 25: North Korea announces it is severing all ties with South

[Korean propaganda fight](#) [How South Korean ship was sunk](#) [Q&A: Cheonan sinking](#)
[Timeline: North Korean attacks](#)

It said on Wednesday it would cut off a road link across the heavily defended border if Seoul resumed propaganda broadcasts, halted six years ago.

Earlier, the North said it would match Southern sanctions with its own, and sever the few remaining lines of communication between the two governments.

South Korean ships and planes would be banned from Northern territorial waters and airspace.

All South Korean workers in the jointly run Kaesong industrial park north of the border were expected to be expelled although they were allowed to enter on Wednesday, Reuters news agency reports.

Apart from Kaesong, there is little economic relationship left between the two states, their ties almost frozen since Lee Myung-bak took office in 2008, the agency notes.

"North Korea is not closing up Kaesong immediately because it is saving the cards it needs in order to play the game," said Jang Cheol-hyeon, a researcher at the Institute for National Security Strategy.

The two states are technically still at war after the Korean conflict ended without a peace

treaty in 1953.

South Korean K1 tanks could be seen on Tuesday conducting an exercise to prepare for a possible surprise attack by North Korea.



N Korea 'wants denuclearisation'



Kim Jong-il met Chinese president Hu Jintao as part of a five-day visit to China [Reuters]

North Korea's leader has told China's president that he is committed to "denuclearisation", pledging to work with Beijing to restart talks on the country's nuclear programme, Chinese state media reported.

Kim Jong-il met Hu Jintao during a five-day visit to China earlier this week, the official Xinhua news agency said on Friday.

Kim said "the DPRK [North Korea] will work with China to create favourable conditions for restarting the six-party talks", Xinhua reported, referring to the international negotiations on disarmament.

"The North Korea side stated that its stance in favour of denuclearisation of the Korean peninsula has not changed.

Chinese television footage of Kim meeting Hu and other Chinese officials showed the North Korean leader speaking animatedly and gesturing with both hands.

Kim wore thick glasses, his trademark grey-green suit, and had thinning hair. The swelling that was obvious in his left hand after an apparent stroke in 2008 was no longer apparent.

Japanese scepticism

Japan said that it welcomed the focus on the six-party disarmament talks during the visit to China, but was sceptical that there would be any tangible progress on the issue.

"I think it was good that there was mention of the six-party talks," Katsuya Okada, Japan's foreign minister, told a news conference.

"But realistically speaking, I don't think the talks can move forward unless the issue of the South Korea ship becomes clear."

Tensions between North Korea and its southern neighbour have been heightened since a South Korean naval vessel was sunk in mysterious circumstances close to the disputed maritime border between the two neighbours.

Traces of explosives similar to the type found in torpedoes have been found on the wreckage of the *Cheonan*, which went down after an explosion killing 46 people, the Yonhap news agency reported on Friday.

But Seoul has not formally accused Pyongyang of being involved, with Won Tae-Jae, the defence minister, saying "no conclusion has been made".

North Korea has repeatedly denied that any the sinking was caused by one of its torpedoes or a mine.

Korean ally

The issue is likely to dominate a series of talks this month between China, Japan and South Korea, first among foreign ministers and then their leaders.

China is the North's only real ally, providing the impoverished nation with much needed support and trade.

During Kim's recent visit, he toured the northern Chinese port cities of Dalian and Tianjin, both models for Chinese economic and investment policies.

The North Korean leader also said he welcomed Chinese investment in his country "based on the principles of mutual benefit and win-win", the Xinhua report said.

Witnesses at the Chinese border city of Dandong said Kim's armoured train had now crossed the border back into North Korea.

Kim has visited China four times since 2000, each time by train and each time under intense secrecy.

7 May 2010 04:09 UK

N Korea committed to disarmament talks - Chinese media

North Korean leader Kim Jong-il is committed to ending the North's nuclear programme, Chinese state media says.

Mr Kim arrived in China on Monday, in a visit shrouded in secrecy.

State broadcaster Xinhua said he had told Chinese President Hu Jintao he would "work with China to create favourable conditions" for talks.

Six-party negotiations to dismantle the North's nuclear capability, are hosted by China, and involve the two Koreas, the US, Japan, and Russia.

The talks foundered in April 2009 after a North Korean missile launch.

12 May 2010 08:09 UK

North Korea reports nuclear fusion success

By John Sudworth
BBC News, Seoul



A new star appeared in the sky when Kim Jong-il was born, biographers say

North Korea has announced that it has made significant progress towards the development of thermo-nuclear power.

It is a claim that is likely to be met with some scepticism.

Despite hopes that the technology can produce large quantities of cheap, clean energy, no country has so far succeeded in making it work.

North Korea is one of the world's poorest countries and struggles to generate enough electricity for lighting and other basic needs.

The statement, carried by North Korea's official state media, said the country's scientists had succeeded in carrying out nuclear fusion.

Laboratory demonstrations of the process, known to release large amounts of energy, are nothing new.

But the North Koreans appear to be claiming to have gone much further, by building what they describe as a "unique thermo-nuclear reaction device".

'Highly unlikely'

The dream of overcoming the huge technical challenges to make nuclear fusion commercially viable has so far eluded scientists in Europe, America and China, but they continue to try because the prize is so great: a cheap and abundant source of energy with little environmental impact.

North Korea's claim that it has completed the fundamental research, putting the technology within its grasp, will be dismissed as highly unlikely unless concrete evidence is produced.

Pyongyang says its latest scientific breakthrough coincides with the birthday of the country's founder, and eternal president Kim Il-sung - not the first time it seems that the laws of nature have been bent in his honour.

According to official biographies, when his son, the current leader Kim Jong-il was born, a new star appeared in the sky.