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North Korea 'keen' for six-party nuclear talks



Talks over North Korea's nuclear programme have stalled repeatedly in the past

North Korea says it is eager to resume six-party talks on its nuclear programme "at an early date" and "without preconditions".

North Korea remained "unchanged" in its desire to restart the talks, a foreign ministry statement said.

Six-party talks involving North and South Korea, the US, Russia, China and Japan were last held in late 2008.

North Korea's statement came after two days of exploratory talks between the US and North Korea in New York.

The week before, North Korean officials met counterparts from the South on the sidelines of a security conference in Indonesia.

North Korea pulled out of the six-party talks in April 2009, shortly before carrying out a second nuclear test.

The North Korean statement said the government was ready to fulfil commitments it signed up to in 2005 to end its nuclear programme in return for energy and economic aid.

Following talks in New York on Friday, a US official said the path was open to better relations with North Korea, if the country was really committed to stopping its nuclear programme.

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North Korea nuclear talks 'businesslike', says US



North Korea's nuclear strength remains unclear as efforts to restart talks falter

The US says a first day of talks on North Korea's nuclear programme had been "serious and businesslike".

The talks between US North Korea envoy Stephen Bosworth and North Korean Deputy Foreign Minister Kim Kye-gwan are to continue on Friday in New York.

US officials stress that the talks are "exploratory", aimed at gauging whether North Korea is serious about resuming negotiations that ended in 2008.

North Korea conducted nuclear tests in 2006 and 2009.

"Today's discussions have been serious and businesslike," a US statement said after Thursday's talks. "We look forward to continuing our meetings tomorrow."

Mr Kim said: "The atmosphere was good, the meeting was constructive and interesting. We exchanged views on general issues."

The US wants North Korea to fulfil commitments it signed up to in a 2005 document, which provided for North Korea to end its nuclear programme in return for energy and economic aid.

"We're quite clear, broadly, on what we're looking for, which is for North Korea to live up to its commitments," said state department spokesman Mark Toner.

"It needs to take concrete steps toward denuclearisation."

Six party talks involving North and South Korea, the US, Russia, China and Japan were last held at the end of 2008.

In a surprise move, North Korean officials met their counterparts from the South last week on the sidelines of a security conference in Indonesia.

Tensions between the Koreas increased last year after two attacks that left 50 South Koreans dead.