



Middle Powers Initiative

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STATEMENT ON THE NORTH KOREAN NUCLEAR TEST

The Middle Powers Initiative (MPI) deplores the nuclear test by North Korea and urges all parties to exercise restraint and place their faith in diplomacy rather than ratcheting up bellicosity. MPI is dedicated to the promotion of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation through diplomacy and the rule of law. We deplore the proliferation of nuclear weapons as well as the failure of the nuclear weapons states to demonstrate adequate leadership in fulfilling their legal duty to work for and obtain the universal elimination of nuclear weapons.

MPI agrees with Secretary General Kofi Annan that North Korea's action "aggravates regional tensions ... and jeopardizes security both in the region and beyond." We support Mr. Annan's view that "serious negotiations be renewed urgently in the framework of the six-party talks." We are encouraged that UN Secretary-General-elect Ban Ki-moon has indicated his willingness to visit the region to assist in the development of a diplomatic solution to this crisis.

It is also useful to recall the European Union's strategy against WMD proliferation, adopted in 2003, which states, "The more secure countries feel, the more likely they are to abandon [WMD] programs: disarmament measures can lead to a virtuous circle just as weapons programs can lead to an arms race."

We welcome the unanimity of the Security Council in adopting Resolution 1718 in response to the North Korean test. The challenge to and responsibility of the Security Council – and all nations – now is to ensure the diplomatic aspects of the resolution - in particular, the call for the resumption of the Six Parties talks - are favored over the punitive aspects.

Further steps towards increased militarization and nuclearization on the Korean Peninsula cannot result in anything but a disaster. Only diplomacy anchored to the bedrock principles of international law can offer an effective solution.

We applaud Japanese Foreign Minister Taro Aso's statement last week that, "The government of Japan has no position at all to consider going nuclear. There is no need to arm ourselves with nuclear weapons, either." In a similar vein, South Korea's emphasis on negotiations over confrontation is extremely satisfying. China – which stands to lose much in terms of economic development and military security in the event any of its neighbors "go nuclear" – has a special role in solidifying the diplomatic track.

We encourage the Government of North Korea to return to the Six-Party Talks, along with the governments of China, Japan, Russia, South Korea and the United States. We note that the

North Korean government has reaffirmed its support for the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula and for the September 19, 2005, "statement of principles" on negotiations over the crisis. We call on the parties to refrain from any further provocative actions that could derail the renewal of these talks, including further nuclear tests or any threats to use force against any of the parties. The six parties should also explore the possibility for a nuclear-weapon-free zone in North East Asia.

MPI believes the Government of the United States must take a leadership role in advancing diplomatic solutions and finally engage North Korea in one-to-one talks leading to a full integration of North Korea into the world community as a non-nuclear weapon state with appropriate security assurances that give it confidence that such weapons have no value. Such a course – long overdue - would help diffuse tensions and create the necessary political space. The United States must remain conscious of its singular capacity to strengthen or weaken the international order based on the rule of law. Whether one supports or rejects the political system of North Korea, it remains a sovereign state and thus has a right to peace and security. However, its pursuit of nuclear weapons degrades its standing among nations and must be changed. Only by offering integration into the international community will peaceful change be possible and only by ending North Korea's pursuit of nuclear weapons will its integration be possible.

The actions by North Korea clearly demonstrate the folly of rejecting arms control treaties in the belief that treaties undermine national sovereignty. The record demonstrates consistent improved national and international security through arms control treaty law. Specifically these actions demonstrate the need for the full entry-into-force of the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) and of its monitoring agency. This throws into sharp relief the lack of wisdom exhibited by powerful countries such as the United States, India and China in failing to ratify the CTBT. A CTBT, coupled with a fully-respected nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, would establish a vital international norm against testing and any further dangerous developments of nuclear weapons. In fact, a vital CTBT would lower the currency of nuclear weapons, establish measures to ensure compliance with a ban on nuclear testing and lead us all to a much safer world.

Founded in 1998, MPI (www.middlepowers.org) is dedicated to the worldwide reduction and elimination of nuclear weapons, in a series of well-defined stages, working primarily with "middle power" governments. MPI is a program of the Global Security Institute (www.gsainstitute.org). For more information, contact MPI at 646 289 5170 or mpi-ny@gsainstitute.org.

For more information, see:

An Op-Ed in the New York Times by Jimmy Carter

http://www.cartercenter.org/news/editorials_speeches/nytimes_101106.html

An analysis by Ernie Regehr for Project Ploughshares

<http://www.ploughshares.ca/libraries/Briefings/brf066.pdf>

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