

Thomas G. Walsh
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Peace Talks

Prospects and Challenges for Peace on the Korean Peninsula in Light of Recent Developments

Click the following link to see the recording of our

May 8th “Peace Talks” Webinar:

www.youtube.com/watch?v=NGrLRo57-hw

The following is the link for the

Audio/Podcast: soundcloud.com/upfpeacetalks/peacetalks4

UPF International, May 8—The fourth program of “Peace Talks,” entitled “Prospects and Challenges for Peace on the Korean Peninsula in Light of Recent Developments,” had over 325 participants from 68 countries.

In his opening remarks, **Dr. Thomas Walsh** (*Chairman, Universal Peace Federation*) raised some questions for the panel of experts: How does the health of Kim Jong Un impact the balance of power in the region, as well as prospects for rapprochement between ROK and DPRK? What do the recent parliamentary election results indicate about the political stability of the administration of Moon Jae In? Is it a moment for a re-boot of North-South dialogue? Dr. Walsh also reminded everyone that May 8 is the 75th anniversary of VE Day.

Panelists:

Amb. Joseph DeTrani (*former U.S. Special Envoy to the Six Party Talks with North Korea*) began by addressing the COVID-19 crisis. North Korea claims that there are

no cases in the country, but there is compelling evidence to the contrary. Kim Jong Un's recent unexplained absence over a period of two weeks highlighted the extreme transparency challenge -- the international community cannot offer aid to the people of North Korea due to the lack of information. Amb. DeTrani called for more dialogue and interaction between North and South to address issues such as families separated by the border. UPF and other international NGO organizations have the ability to advocate for a peaceful resolution between the North and South. The April 15th legislative elections showed resounding support for the current government's approach for peace and denuclearization.

Amb. Tae Ik Chung (*Chairman, Korean Council on Foreign Relations*) highlighted, along with the pandemic, the recent general election in South Korea. Pres. Moon Jae In now has a "mandate to conduct foreign policy." In addition, Thae Yong-ho, a North Korean defector was elected to South Korea's National Assembly, an event likely to make waves in the North. On Kim's disappearance, the Ambassador suggested that this was likely a means of grabbing the US's attention while also dealing with Kim's health issues. Any succession crisis in the North is extremely dangerous; we must know who is in control of the nuclear facilities. The pandemic has created greater friction between China and the US, which will hamper any international plan in the event of a crisis in the North. Amb. Chung challenged the USA: Is there a crisis plan? China has deployed soldiers along its borders with North Korea, and is prepared to intervene. Amb. Chung concluded that we should tackle these issues more seriously.

Dr. Alexandre Mansourov (*Adjunct Professor of Security Studies, Edmund A. Walsh School of Foreign Service, Georgetown University, Washington, DC*) contends that North Korea is currently engaged in "business as usual." North Korea has adopted international best practices regarding the pandemic. He believes that the recent panic about Kim Jong Un's absence has been the result of a misinformation campaign meant to undermine stability of the situation by an unnamed set of conspirators. The campaign of disinformation seems to have backfired, undermining the credibility of NK experts and defectors as well as global media analysts. Dr. Mansourov concluded by commending The Washington Times newspaper for rejecting the fake news disinformation, and UPF's "One Family Under God" approach toward sustainable peace.

Q&A followed. Panelists were, overall, pessimistic about the prospect of Korean reunification in the near to medium term. They agreed that the reunification of Germany after the collapse of the USSR is not a viable model for Korea. Amb. DeTrani called for a swift resolution of recent military budget conflicts between the US and the ROK. Dr. Mansourov called for the US, Japan, and South Korea to "stay the course" with regard to the current policy of simultaneous pressure and engagement.

The conference ended with an opportunity for each panelist to give a final thought. Amb. DeTrani called for a reconstitution of something like the 6 Party Talks. Amb. Chung called for the US to initiate dialogue, because North Korea is more enthusiastic about engaging with the USA than usual. Dr. Mansourov called for UPF to reach out to North Korea, and display moral leadership and honesty in order to open dialogue.

Send comments to email: peacetalks@upf.org.

UPF's next webinar will be on Friday, May 15. Watch for details.

Upcoming Events

MAY 7: [Vesak Day](#)

MAY 15: [UN International Day of Families](#)

JUN 1: [UN Global Day of Parents](#)




Contact Us

www.upf.org | e.news@upf.org | 220 White Plains Rd. FL5, Tarrytown, NY 10591, USA

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