

## UPF's Fourth Peace Talk: Prospects and Challenges for Peace in Korea

Thomas Walsh  
May 8, 2020



UPF International, New York -- The fourth program of "Peace Talks," titled "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 the Republic of Korea (South Korea) and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (North Korea)? 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. "Today, we remember that historical conflict and the aspirations of peace which brings us together today."

### 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. Ambassador DeTrani called for more dialogue and interaction between the 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, he said. The April 15th legislative elections, he reflected, showed

resounding support for the current government's approach to 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: President 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 Jong Un's disappearance, the Ambassador suggested that this was likely a means of grabbing the attention of the United States 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 United States, which will hamper any international plan in the event of a crisis in the North. Ambassador Chung challenged the United States: Is there a crisis plan? China has deployed soldiers along its borders with North Korea and is prepared to intervene. Ambassador 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 North Korea experts and defectors as well as global media analysts. Dr. Mansourov concluded by commending The Washington Times newspaper for rejecting the disinformation and UPF's "One Family Under God" approach toward sustainable peace.

QandA 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. Ambassador DeTrani called for a swift resolution of recent military budget conflicts between the United States and the South Korea. Dr. Mansourov called for the United States, 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. Ambassador DeTrani called for a reconstitution of something like the Six Party Talks. Ambassador Chung called for the United States to initiate dialogue because North Korea is more enthusiastic about engaging with the United States than usual. Dr. Mansourov called for UPF to reach out to North Korea, displaying moral leadership and honesty in order to open dialogue.