
United States and the Republic of Korea Launch Strategic Consultation for Allied Partnership

Media Note

Washington, D.C., 19 January 2006

[The following is the text of a joint United States and Republic of Korea statement on the launch of the Strategic Consultation for Allied Partnership.]

The first session of the U.S. and Republic of Korea (ROK) Strategic Consultation for Allied Partnership was held 19 January 2006, in Washington, D.C. The decision to launch a ministerial-level strategic consultative process was made at the Gyeongju Summit in November 2005 and signifies the growing reach and ambitions of the partnership between the United States and the Republic of Korea.

The U.S. and ROK alliance was forged in battle and tested through the long years of the Cold War. Today, our alliance remains a bulwark of stability in Northeast Asia and our security cooperation has provided a framework for the development and growth of our economic ties and the nurturing and protection of common values rooted in shared respect for democracy, human rights and the rule of law.

Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice and Foreign Minister Ban Ki-Moon agreed that the U.S. and ROK partnership encompasses a broad range of interests and goals. The Strategic Consultation for Allied Partnership aspires through regular high-level meetings supported by senior-level discussions to harness and focus the respective strengths of our societies to resolve pressing regional and global challenges.

Secretary Rice and Foreign Minister Ban set out a dynamic agenda for future discussions within the framework of the Strategic Consultations. Their emphasis is on creative initiatives producing concrete results and highlighting cooperation between the two countries. Key initiatives include:

- Cooperation and coordination of efforts to promote freedom, democratic institutions and human rights worldwide, demonstrated by their successful shared effort in Iraq and Afghanistan;
- Strengthened cooperation on fighting terrorism, and exerting common efforts for the observance and implementation of international security cooperation regimes for the prevention of proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction and their delivery means;
- Coordination and combination of efforts to develop comprehensive international strategies to fight transnational pandemic disease;
- Maintaining a strong U.S. and ROK alliance to contribute to peace and stability in Northeast Asia, leading possibly to an eventual regional multinational mechanism for security cooperation;
- Developing common approaches to reinforcing peace and stability through multilateral peacekeeping and improved collaboration on crisis response and disaster management.

These initiatives will form the core of the agenda for a U.S. ROK Sub-Ministerial dialogue chaired by Under Secretary Nicholas Burns and his counterpart, Vice Foreign Minister Yu Myung-Hwan, in Seoul.

Regarding the issue of strategic flexibility of U.S. forces in the ROK, Secretary Rice and Foreign Minister Ban confirmed the understanding of both governments as follows:

The ROK, as an ally, fully understands the rationale for the transformation of the U.S. global military strategy, and respects the necessity for strategic flexibility of the U.S. forces in the ROK.

In the implementation of strategic flexibility, the U.S. respects the ROK position that it shall not be involved in a regional conflict in Northeast Asia against the will of the Korean people.

Together, the Ministers expressed hope that a basis for a permanent peace regime on the Korean Peninsula can be explored in the course of resolving the North Korean nuclear issue. Secretary Rice and Minister Ban reaffirmed that efforts to establish a peace regime on the Korean Peninsula will be based on the U.S. and ROK alliance.

The two Ministers discussed steps the two countries can take together to end the threat from the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) nuclear weapons and programs. They agreed that the DPRK must return promptly to the Six-Party Talks and that the focus of future discussions in Beijing must be on steps to implement the 19 September 2005 Joint Statement.

The two Ministers welcomed recent progress in U.S. and Korea trade relations, and discussed ways to further deepen bilateral economic cooperation. Secretary Rice and Minister Ban welcomed the inauguration of the Strategic Consultation for Allied Partnership, viewing it as an important contribution to the strength of the bilateral relationship. They pledged sustained follow up through further discussions later in the year.