
JAPAN, U.K. AND NETHERLANDS AGREE TO MAINTAIN PRESSURE ON NORTH KOREA

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Foreign Minister Taro Kono agreed Monday with counterparts from the U.K. and the Netherlands on the need to maintain pressure on North Korea to attain the goal of ridding the country of nuclear and other weapons, officials said.

Kono reached the agreement in separate meetings with Boris Johnson of the U.K. and Stef Blok of the Netherlands on the fringes of a Group of 20 foreign ministers gathering.

According to the officials, Kono and Johnson shared the view that Japan and the U.K. should step up cooperation in realizing a free and open Indo-Pacific region.

The Japanese minister also confirmed with Blok the close partnership between their nations in dealing with North Korea as the Netherlands currently presides over a U.N. committee on sanctions on Pyongyang, the officials said.

During the G-20 meeting the same day, foreign ministers from advanced and emerging economies recognized the need for a multilateral approach in tackling global challenges. The ministers discussed multilateralism and global governance as well as fair and sustainable development. North Korea was also high on the agenda ahead of the landmark U.S.-North Korean summit scheduled for June 12.

The ministers discussed how to handle North Korea despite Pyongyang wavering and threatening to cancel the planned meeting between its leader Kim Jong Un and U.S. President Donald Trump. Kono stressed the need for Pyongyang to abolish weapons of mass destruction and missiles in a complete, verifiable, and irreversible way.

Argentinan Foreign Minister Jorge Faurie summed up the discussions as highly productive and fruitful in a joint news conference with his German and Japanese counterparts. We have all agreed that its better to keep and have multilateralism, he said.

German Foreign Minister Heiko Maas expressed his concern about isolationist tendencies in the world economy, stressing the need for the G-20 to find a collective answer to global challenges. Many of the topics and conflicts we are dealing with on the international stage just show how much multilateralism is under pressure from various angles right now, the minister said at the news conference.

Even with fears about trade friction between the United States and China receding, the focus remains fixed on Trump's trade policies.

Japan, which will take over the G-20 presidency next year, will host a meeting of the groups foreign ministers on Nov. 22 and 23 in Nagoya, Kono announced.

In Tokyo on Monday, Japan and Singapore agreed during talks between their defense ministers to closely cooperate toward the first-ever meeting between U.S. and North Korean leaders, scheduled to take place next month in the city state.

Defense Minister Itsunori Onodera was told by his visiting counterpart, Ng Eng Hen, at the outset of their meeting that Singapore is pleased to serve as the venue for the U.S.-North Korea talks, set for June 12, and that he hopes the meeting will yield positive results.

Onodera said the talks must lead North Korea to take concrete actions toward complete, verifiable and irreversible abandonment of all of its ballistic missiles and weapons of mass destruction.

He also noted that North Korea is taking a conciliatory approach but has not promised anything officially on concrete steps for denuclearization.

While preparations are under way for the landmark summit between Trump and Kim, Pyongyang has recently threatened to call off the meeting if Washington is going to insist on its unilateral denuclearization before providing any rewards.

<https://www.japantimes.co.jp/news/2018/05/22/national/politics-diplomacy/japan-britain-netherlands-agree-keep-pressure-north-korea/#.WwQCubuFTIU>

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