Topic: North Korean Nuclear Program

Background:

Nuclear weapons pose a unique problem in international relations. Their devastating power were made clear at the close of World War II, and subsequent tests of ever-more destructive devices. Yet states who possess them feel nuclear weapons keep them safe against attack, arguing that the devastating potential deters would-be aggression. The result of this paradox is a world in which some states have nuclear weapons, others seek them, and many wish to stop their spread.

The Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) was made to address these various concerns. Entered into force in 1970, and made permanent in 1995, the NPT binds nuclear states to commitments not to spread nuclear weapons or weaponization materials, and non-nuclear states agree not to seek nuclear weapons or materials from abroad or by their own efforts. All states retained the right to possess civilian nuclear energy and research programs, subject to inspection and verification by the UN’s NPT watchdog, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA).

North Korea (DPRK) was an NPT signatory, and in 1992 signed the South-North Joint Declaration on the Denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula, agreeing not to manufacture, receive, possess, deploy or use nuclear weapons. The IAEA concluded in 1993 that they could not guarantee that North Korean nuclear material is not being used for weaponization. The 1993-1994 crisis led to the “Agreed Framework” in which DPRK agreed to freeze its weapons program and have a staged process of denuclearization in return for economic, diplomatic and security assurances from the USA. The remainder of the decade included talks, distrust and accusations about missed payments by the US and long-range missile tests and development by DPRK.

In 2002, the Bush Administration announced evidence of clandestine weapons and uranium enrichment activity, and added DPRK to an “axis of evil, arming to threaten the peace of the world.” By the end of the year, DPRK orders IAEA inspectors out of the country, and shortly after announced withdrawal from the NPT.

From 2003 on, DPRK worked on nuclear weapons and long-range ballistic missile technologies in the face of US and multilateral sanctions. Multilateral diplomacy under the so-called “Six Party Talks” attempted to manage DPRK’s behavior, including underground nuclear testing and long-range missile testing. Intelligence estimates in the past 15 years guess that DPRK is in possession of 1-2 to 6-8 nuclear devices of questionable effectiveness, and missile technologies that can reach parts of the United States. Some medium-range ballistic missile tests in 2016 and 2017 failed, exploding after lift-off, while others in passed through or landed near Japanese territorial waters, increasing regional and global tensions. UN
Security Council Resolution 2375 joins a long line of international sanctions in 2017. The Trump Administration’s posture of “maximum pressure” increases sanctions, and raises the situation to verbal, visible crisis, with threats by DPRK on Guam and US replies threatening “fire and fury.”

In early 2018, ahead of the Olympics in South Korea, North & South Korean talks yielded cooperation, including a “hot line” between the two countries’ leaders. US-DPRK engagement began in 2018 as well, with the US and DPRK heads of state meeting on June 12, 2018. The resulting Joint Declaration calls for a “lasting and stable peace regime on the Korean peninsula” and “work toward denuclearization of the Korean peninsula.” The August IAEA Annual Report cited the “continuation and further development of the DPRK’s nuclear programme.” China, Russia and DPRK issued a joint statement October 2018 for continued denuclearization and also for the UN “to adjust sanctions” while condemning “independent sanctions” from individual states. January 18, 2019, North Korean diplomats met with US officials, with Trump announcing a second Summit to take place.

The UN Security Council and IAEA have played a major role in the North Korea issue, but the General Assembly is allowed to chime in on matters of international security. Arguably, not much tangible progress has been made in the situation, perhaps warranting a statement from the broader UN General Assembly. Consider your member state’s position on:

- North Korea’s program
- The Sanctions against North Korea
- Nuclear weapons and proliferation

What is your member state’s hopes and goals for the situation of North Korea’s nuclear weapons program?

Sources:

On the UN and Member States


On North Korea
Arms Control Association. “UN Security Council Resolutions on North Korea.”


IAEA. “Verification in the DPRK.” [https://www.iaea.org/newscenter/focus/dprk](https://www.iaea.org/newscenter/focus/dprk)