



## UNSC passes the test . . . so far!

by Ralph A. Cossa

Hat's off to Pyongyang! It has helped to accomplish in 10 days what American officials had failed to accomplish in almost four years of diplomacy: a unanimous United Nations Security Council (UNSC) resolution that not only condemns its July 5 (Fourth of July in the U.S.) missile launches and demands that North Korea "suspend all activities related to its ballistic missile programs," but that also deplors North Korea's nuclear weapons aspirations.

Much has been made in the press coverage of UNSC 1695 about the fact that it does not cite Chapter VII of the UN Charter (which makes measures enforceable by armed action if necessary). But this was no watered-down resolution. If one compares the initial "hard-line" Japanese draft with the considerably toned down initial Chinese/Russian proposal for a "presidential statement," the final product is no middle-ground compromise; it is surprisingly tough and comprehensive. While we may never know the details of the Chinese diplomatic mission to the DPRK (Democratic Peoples Republic of Korea or North Korea) that preceded the resolution's passage, one could safely guess that Pyongyang was as defiant and disagreeable in private as it has been in public about its sovereign right to conduct "military exercises for self-defense."

The 15 UNSC members clearly thought otherwise. In addition to demanding an end to all ballistic missile activities, the resolution also "requires" all member states to prevent missile-related goods and technology from being transferred to the North and also "requires" all member states to "prevent the procurement" of such goods from North Korea, while banning the "transfer of any financial resources in relation to DPRK's missile or WMD [weapons of mass destruction] programmes." While the terms "embargo" or "sanctions" are not used, the intent is crystal clear: no sales of missiles or missile-related technology to North Korea and no purchases of such weapons from them as well.

While the missile launches provided the catalyst for UNSC Resolution 1695, its reach is more comprehensive. It specifically addresses North Korea's nuclear weapons ambitions, "deploring . . . its stated pursuit of nuclear weapons in spite of its Treaty on Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons [NPT] and International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) safeguard obligations." It also reaffirms the May 2004 UNSC Resolution 1540, which obligates all member states, under Chapter VII, to prevent the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and associated delivery systems.

The resolution also expresses the UNSC's "grave concern about DPRK's indication of possible additional launches" and "underlines, in particular to the DPRK, the need to show

restraint and refrain from any action that would aggravate tension" For its part, Pyongyang "strongly denounces and fully condemns the UNSC resolution," calling the action "completely unreasonable and brigandish behavior." An official Foreign Ministry statement says that the DPRK "will not be bound to [UNSC 1695] in the least."

It remains to be seen if Pyongyang will make good on its threat to conduct more tests or if this surprising UNSC display of unity and resolve will have a sobering effect on the Hermit Kingdom. For its part, the resolution notes that the UNSC "decides to remain seized of the matter," suggesting that even stronger action could be forthcoming in the face of future acts of provocation by North Korea. For the moment at least, the UNSC appears willing to take a firm, unified stand on a serious proliferation issue, sending a message not only to Pyongyang but perhaps to Tehran as well.

The resolution also calls for the resumption of the Six-Party Talks and "strongly urges" the North to return to the Talks "without preconditions." There has been talk in diplomatic circles about the convening of an "informal" session of the talks to address the latest crisis, with the understanding that North Korea's much sought-after direct discussions with the U.S. could take place along the sidelines of such a meeting.

If China and the other members of the six-party process – South Korea, Japan, Russia, and the U.S., in addition to the DPRK – are serious about using this incident to kick-start the broader denuclearization process, then Beijing should set a date for an informal six-party session and the others should commit to coming, regardless of whether Pyongyang agrees to attend. It would then be up to North Korea to decide whether it wants to participate in the solution or simply remain the problem.

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