

**The Elders urge immediate delivery of humanitarian assistance to DPRK  
and early resumption of dialogue on all outstanding issues**

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The Elders say that their visit to Beijing, Pyongyang and Seoul to discuss security, nuclear and humanitarian issues shows that all parties need to resume dialogue, but there is no sign of an imminent breakthrough, especially on inter-Korean relations.

“We came to the region to listen, learn and to encourage a more positive approach to dialogue,” said delegation leader, former US President Jimmy Carter. “I believe that our visit has contributed to greater understanding, but it will be up to those directly involved to make real progress.”

During a 48-hour visit to the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea, the four-member Elders’ delegation met senior political and military officials, UN representatives and diplomats. They also visited sites outside Pyongyang to better understand food, education and health issues.

In Seoul they have met with senior officials. The Elders now plan to brief US and European governments on their findings.

President Carter said: “We will urge the international community to be generous in sending food aid to the DPRK as a matter of urgency. On relations between North and South Korea, there are no quick fixes to security and nuclear issues, and progress will require greater flexibility, sincerity and commitment from all parties.”

Mary Robinson, former President of Ireland, emphasised that “food is a basic human right, but because of serious weather problems and donor cutbacks, the amount of food being distributed to families is well below what is needed, leading to a hidden crisis. Food aid levels must be raised significantly and urgently. Donors should be reassured by the DPRK’s recent agreement with the World Food Program to improve transparency and monitoring of food distribution.”

Former Norwegian Prime Minister Gro Brundtland, who was also Director-General of the World Health Organisation, said: “Food security is one of a number of health issues that need to be addressed. One third of North Korean children’s growth is stunted due to a poor diet and one in five children is underweight. Stunting affects brain development, posing serious risks to future generations. There is also chronic diarrhoea and respiratory disease, especially among children.

The DPRK needs to invest in water and sanitation systems, medical services and the provision of basic medicines to deal with these health problems.”

Former President of Finland Martti Ahtisaari said, “After my first visit to the DPRK, I believe that peace is possible, but the parties are unlikely to make much progress by demanding unilateral action of each other. Having witnessed many conflicts, a solution can only be found through an early resumption of dialogue on all outstanding issues.”

## MEDIA CONTACT

For media inquiries and updates please email us at [media@theElders.org](mailto:media@theElders.org)

## ABOUT THE ELDERS

The Elders is an independent group of eminent global leaders, founded by Nelson Mandela, who work together to support peace-building and human rights. Members of The Elders no longer hold public office and are independent of any government.

Nelson Mandela announced the formation of The Elders in Johannesburg, South Africa in July 2007 on his 89th birthday. Today he continues to inspire the work of The Elders, but has retired from public life and no longer takes an active role in Elders’ initiatives.

The Elders are Martti Ahtisaari, Kofi Annan, Ela Bhatt, Lakhdar Brahimi, Gro Brundtland, Fernando Henrique Cardoso, Jimmy Carter, Graça Machel, Mary Robinson and Desmond Tutu (Chair). Nelson Mandela and Aung San Suu Kyi are honorary Elders.

In their peace-building work the Elders have identified the following as priority areas: promoting peace and human rights in Burma/Myanmar and Sri Lanka, inter-communal dialogue in Cyprus, improving inter-Korean relations, Sudan’s referendum and implementation of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement, supporting a human rights-based approach to peace in the Middle East, and encouraging democratic progress in Zimbabwe. Gender equality and respect for universal human rights are core themes of all their activities.

Their work involves public and private consultation, engagement with the media and reaching decision-makers at the highest level. The Elders encourage the view that everyone can make a positive contribution in their community, much as they have done throughout their lives.

For biographies of the Elders, blogs, photos, videos and more information about their work please go to [www.theElders.org](http://www.theElders.org)

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