

## **The Elders welcome resumption of stalled talks between North and South Korea**

26 July 2011

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

The Elders warmly welcome the resumption of official dialogue between the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) and the Republic of Korea (ROK), after a break of almost three years during which relations on the peninsula have deteriorated dangerously.

Preliminary talks took place on Saturday, 23 July, on the margins of an ASEAN regional meeting in Bali, between their respective Foreign Ministers, Pak Ui-chun and Kim Sung-hwan. A more substantive meeting was held the previous day between the two sides' chief nuclear negotiators.

Equally encouraging was confirmation that the United States Government has invited the First Vice Minister for Foreign Affairs Kim Kae-gwan, to New York for talks later this week with US officials. In the view of The Elders, these two tracks of bilateral talks should lead to sustained dialogue on all outstanding issues, and then be followed by an early resumption of the Six-Party Talks on denuclearisation of the Korean Peninsula.

Since their first visit to China and the Korean Peninsula in late April, to explore ways in which the political stalemate could be broken and to examine at first-hand the humanitarian situation in the DPRK, the Elders have continued to follow regional events closely. Last week, President Jimmy Carter wrote on behalf of his fellow Elders to donor countries urging them to respond generously to the DPRK's request for immediate food aid, to meet the needs of an estimated six million hungry people – a quarter of the population.

"I am delighted, and relieved, to see that the North and the South have overcome their recent differences and decided to return to the discussion table," said President Carter, leader of the April delegation. "I commend the statesmanship displayed by the Government of President Lee Myung-bak and the Obama Administration in responding positively to Pyongyang's offer of unconditional talks."

President Martti Ahtisaari said: "The key issue now is to not let this initiative peter out. To build confidence among all concerned, a solid agenda of priority issues for discussion needs to be drawn up."

President Mary Robinson added: "In the enthusiasm over this hopeful development, let us not lose sight of the dire humanitarian conditions in which large numbers of North Koreans

are living. I hope that, in its wisdom, the US Government will see the merits of deciding soon in favour of a substantial food aid programme; that decision in Washington is overdue. I believe that all the necessary conditions are in place to ensure this food gets to the most vulnerable sectors of the population, and meets clearly identified needs.”

#### ABOUT THE ELDERS

The Elders is an independent group of global leaders, brought together by Nelson Mandela in 2007, who work together for peace and human rights.

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.

Report: [The Elders' visit to the Korean Peninsula and China, April 2011](#)

#### MEDIA CONTACT

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