

The 2012 Seoul Nuclear Security Summit and Beyond

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Organizing Institution: Korea National Diplomatic Academy

Speakers: Jun Bong-Geun, Korea National Diplomatic Academy (moderator)
Han Yong Sup, Korea National Defense University
Kenneth Luongo, Partnership for Global Security
Corey Hinderstein, Nuclear Threat Initiative
Hahn Choong-hee, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, ROK

Panel Short Summary

Sung-Yeon Kweon, Korea University
Sunkyo Hong, Korea University

“We are going to discuss the Seoul Nuclear Security Summit and see what kind of homework and tasks are ahead of us.” Having thus defined the panel topic, moderator Jun Bong-Geun turned the discussion to the panelists.

The Seoul Nuclear Security Summit (NSS) took place on March 26 – 27, 2012. As South Korea’s Sous-Sherpa, Hahn Choong-hee was happy to report the Summit’s three pillars of achievement. First, over 30 countries had met more than 70 commitments made at the 2010 Washington NSS. Secondly, many new commitments were made at the Summit, including almost 100 specific commitments on an individual nation basis and sets of collective gift baskets, which involve cooperation among groups of like-minded countries on areas such as information security and counter-smuggling. Third, the Seoul NSS communiqué outlines 11 specific tasks each with a specific action plan. To build on the momentum of the Summit’s success in nuclear security, it is necessary to set standards and establish mechanisms.

Han Yong Sup spoke of South Korea’s successful role in the 2012 Nuclear Security Summit. The country played an important role as an honest broker and facilitator in the agenda of the globalizing world. Moreover, the government reached out to enhance the awareness of nuclear security issues among the public. During the Summit, the Korean government made almost 100 commitments and exhibited creativity in adding relevant items to the Summit agenda. Three problems remain, however, according to Professor Han. The

Summit has faded in the public's memory, so effort must continue to be put forth. Russia and the U.S. should take the leading role in the future NSS since the two countries possess most of the world's nuclear materials. Finally, while the NSS has dealt with the supply side of nuclear security, the demand on the side of terrorists must be addressed.

For Kenneth Luongo, the 2012 Summit was successful because of the participation of more than 50 states and the broadening of the scope of nuclear security with the inclusion of the safety-security interface and radiological issues. Unfortunately, despite its importance, the issue of what the nuclear security regime is and should be was not included on the agenda. Nuclear security governance is underdeveloped, and the problem lies in an imbalance between sovereignty and global responsibilities in favor of sovereignty. A rebalancing requires promoting transparency of action, improving regime cohesion and standards, and building international confidence in the nuclear security regime.

Corey Hinderstein offered three points. First, the Seoul Summit made more progress than recognized, moved backward in the area of transparency, and exposed some of the weaknesses of the process. Second, she offered three suggestions to realistically improve the process between now and the planned 2014 NSS. These were to broaden the scope of nuclear security to include diversion and sabotage; to introduce a process to effectively integrate the diplomatic, industry, and expert communities; and to specifically define a purpose for the centers of excellence that the United States, China, India, Japan, and South Korea committed to establish to train nuclear site personnel. The final point was to improve transparency, public education, and to build capacity in states to deal with the nuclear security issue.

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