

Moon urges US Move

Formal Ending Korean War. Says N Korea willing to abolish all nuke weapons.



South Korean President Moon Jae-in yesterday called on the United States to move towards the nuclear-armed North's demands for a declaration the Korean War is over, as the allies pursue increasingly different approaches towards Pyongyang.

Washington has shied away from a formal announcement that the 1950-53 conflict, when hostilities ceased with an armistice rather than a peace treaty, has ended, saying that the North must first take more steps towards giving up its atomic arsenal.

For its part Pyongyang — which long insisted it needed nuclear weapons to defend itself against a possible US invasion — has pledged only to work towards denuclearisation “of the Korean peninsula”, demanding simultaneous moves by Washington in return, with a peace declaration its first priority.

Moon emphasised North Korean leader Kim Jong Un's resolve to abandon nuclear and missile programmes, that the North pursued in defiance of UN Security Council resolutions, and focus on the economy if regime security is guaranteed.

“The North has stopped all nuclear and missile tests, dismantled its only nuclear test site and is now dismantling its missile engine test facilities, and is promising to take steps toward dismantling its Yongbyon nuclear complex if the US takes corresponding measures,” Moon told the BBC.

“Declaring the end of the war is a political declaration that the US would end decades of hostile relations with the North,” he said.

“Moving towards such a process is the corresponding measure the US should take,” he added, according to a transcript released by the presidential Blue House.

The comments, made ahead of Moon's departure Saturday for a tour of European capitals, emphasise the increasing differences between Seoul and Washington, which has 28,500 troops stationed in the South to defend it from its neighbour.

Experts say the offers made by the North will have little impact on its military capabilities, and Pyongyang itself has said it has no further need to test its weapons.

US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo has expressed “discontent” with an inter-Korean military pact reached during last month’s summit in a rare sign of disagreement between the allies.

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