



Mutual trust is extremely important

O RYONG IL, Secretary General of the Korean National Peace Committee of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea answers to 9 Questions. O Ryong Il was in Mongolia recently for the Ulaanbaatar Process round table on peace and security in Northeast Asia and this is his second visit to this country.

What do you think of the Ulaanbaatar (UB) Process?

The UB Process is a channel for civil societies to share ideas and opinions on certain political topics, especially problems on the Korean Peninsula as well as nuclear-weapons-free zone in the region. The UB Process gives us a really good opportunity to know what other countries think about the issues on the Korean Peninsula and what needs to be done to ease tensions in the region. So through these frequent exchanges I think we can come up with solutions on how to solve the many security problems that we are facing today.

What are your expectations from the UB Process?

Last year when I attended the roundtable for the first time, we came up with 8 main points of discussion with the key one focusing on the Korean Peninsula. The second issue was nuclear-weapons-free zone. Both of them are closely inter-related. Recently the situation on the Korean Peninsula has been getting much more tense, and so I wanted to find out from the UB Process if there is another solution to the issues on the Korean Peninsula. At the government level their approaches and their interests are different, and so I am looking for an alternative solution from this forum of civil societies, which is the UB Process.

But North Korea's nuclear program is blamed for the tensions on the Korean Peninsula?

This tense situation did not start today, it was there since 1945 when the country was not only liberated from Japanese colonialists but also divided into two with the landing of the US troops there. Our side has been always saying that the Korean problem should be solved solely by the Korean people themselves and we have been always demanding the withdrawal of US troops from South

Korea and Japan as well. But the United States has been continuously building up its alliance and has been conducting military exercises threatening the sovereignty of our country. So we had to develop our nuclear deterrence.

What needs to be done to reduce tensions on the Korean Peninsula?

Last year our government proposed the United States to stop joint military exercises and in January this year our Marshall said that North Korea is prepared for talks provided all threats against it are removed and military exercises discontinued. But in response the United States and South Korea waged another military exercises in January and continued them until April. All this does not contribute to reducing tensions on the Korean Peninsula.

What solution is North Korea providing to solve these problems?

We are asking the United States as well as South Korea to stop their joint large-scale military games without which there cannot be any success in dialogue. The DPRK has even said it is ready to temporarily suspend nuclear test provided the war games are suspended too. They have to trust us. But under the so-called 'strategic patience' policy, the United States does not respond to our proposals, instead it says it wants a dialogue. I hope this proposal is genuine and in the future there will be some dialogue. South Korea should also stop their joint military exercises with foreign forces. They need to have the political will to address the Korean Reunification problem.

Regarding reunification there was a high-level summit in 2000. What was its outcome?

The summit recognized that there are no obstacles, issues and problems that cannot be overcome provided both North and South agree on reunification. This will help solve tensions and also

contribute to the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula.

What is denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula?

This proposal on denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula has been offered by our President. We do not have any intention to threaten other countries with nuclear weapons. They are only for deterrence purposes, to defend our national sovereignty. If the US genuinely wants to solve the Korean nuclear problem with the DPRK then other problems on the Peninsula can be easily solved.

Apart from the UB Process, there is also the UB Dialogue initiative.

What do you think of these two initiatives?

The UB Process started in 2007 when GPPAC started the Blue Banner here. So I think conceptually the UB Process is to encourage civil society participation in reducing tensions in the Northeast Asian region, the Korean Peninsula, nuclear-weapons-free zone issues, other territorial disputes, issues in the region between China and Japan, Russia and Japan, and also China and other East Asian countries. This is a venue where civil societies and NGO can get together frequently to discuss topical issues.

What about the Ulaanbaatar Dialogue?

I think the Ulaanbaatar Dialogue is about using Mongolia as a dialogue 'window' mostly at the government level. Both the UB Process and the Ulaanbaatar Dialogue are dealing with mostly similar issues and problems such as peace and security in North East Asia, tensions on the Korean Peninsula. Their approaches to issues are different, but on the whole both initiatives can complement each other and contribute in their own unique way to reducing tensions and building trust and strengthening security in NEA. ■