

WRAP-UP SESSION SUMMARY: MAIN THEMES AND PROPOSALS

Chaired by
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Editorial Note: The seminar concluded with a wrap-up discussion of the many issues that were raised during the previous sessions. In compiling these proceedings, the editor found it to be more useful to summarize these key themes, in lieu of issuing a transcript of the wrap-up session itself.

1) ABACC Model of Nuclear Rapprochement Provides Valuable Lessons for the Korean Peninsula. The creation of the Brazilian-Argentine Agency for Accounting and Control of Nuclear Materials (ABACC) in 1991 marked the fruition of a decade-long process to eliminate the nuclear competition between Brazil and Argentina. The rich history of ABACC's creation and implementation of bilateral safeguards provides valuable lessons to the Korean peninsula.

The security situations between the Korean peninsula and Latin America are fundamentally different. Argentina and Brazil lacked a recent history of armed conflict, whereas the Korean peninsula is still technically in a state of war. There was no threat of military action between Argentina and Brazil, whereas the Korean peninsula is beset with security threats. Nonetheless, seminar participants agreed that several key lessons could be drawn from ABACC's experience of nuclear rapprochement.

Participants recognized that several factors inherent to the Korean situation made bilateral inspections truly functional for this region. First, the two Koreas already have a solid foundation with which to begin their discussions, as there are preexisting agreements in place for a bilateral inspection authority and a denuclearized peninsula. Second, unlike Argentina and Brazil, the two Koreas share the same language and culture. These bonds can only facilitate the cooperative process. Third, as the two Koreas begin this process, they have the added benefit of being familiar with ABACC's experience.

The core lesson to take from the ABACC experience is that bilateral inspections are possible and can be implemented in a regional setting. The ABACC experience demonstrates that an incremental approach is the best way to move forward throughout the implementation process. ABACC used small gestures such as creating bilateral declarations and agreeing to commitments about the peaceful intent of their nuclear programs as steppingstones to more elaborate agreements. These actions conveyed strong political will and provided assurances to the public.

Expanding cooperation to each other's commercial industries, via the exchange of goods and services, is another lesson that can enable the two parties to increase working level relationships. As each country becomes more dependent on these linkages, it often provides an added incentive to continue good relations and business cooperation. ABACC participants also stressed the importance of respecting one's counterpart and recognizing the capabilities of the other country as an equal dialogue partner.

An exchange of visits by political leaders to the other's nuclear installations is desirable. ABACC participants noted that Argentina and Brazil exchanged both presidential-level and technical-level visits to sensitive nuclear facilities. These visits illustrated the importance of political actions to bolster the bilateral relationship.

ABACC participants noted that negotiations are necessary in order to build trust and confidence between the parties, especially before any presidential visits to nuclear sites. Without dialogue between the two Koreas, seminar participants did not believe that a presidential visit to Yongbyon was possible at this time. Others felt that Chairman Kim Jong-il's promised visit to Seoul was a prerequisite for any future visits to nuclear sites. However, the possibility that such visits could take place at a ministerial level was suggested. While presidential visits carry the most political value, ABACC participants noted that that was only one aspect of their incremental process. In fact, confidence actually increased dramatically following the visits by lower-level technical officials.

It was also noted that ABACC is a regional organization, and Argentina and Brazil are permanent, separate states. In the Korean case, any future inspection regime would be viewed as a temporary entity, since the ultimate political goal is Korean reunification.

2) Bilateral Inspections are Necessary for the Korean Peninsula. Participants unanimously agreed that applying the ABACC experiences to the Korean peninsula is feasible, desirable, and worth trying, while noting that the inspections be complimentary to the IAEA's task as mandated under the Agreed Framework.

Participants acknowledged that while IAEA safeguards can significantly reduce suspicions and increase transparency, it is desirable for the two Koreas to directly access each other's nuclear facilities. From the Korean perspective, it is important for Seoul and Pyongyang to conduct reciprocal inspections, thereby establishing the principle that problems on the Korean peninsula can be resolved by the Koreans themselves, instead of relying on others.

Bilateral inspections can erase suspicions and be mutually beneficial economically and technologically. If cooperation increases, the two Koreas may find it easier to achieve the eventual unification of the two Koreas' science and technology fields, including the nuclear area. Combining separate systems will likely also improve efficiencies in various industries and solidify the relations between the scientists.

The majority of participants recommended that bilateral inspections should be sought as a means to speed up the IAEA verification process, rather than wait until after the IAEA starts its rigorous inspection process. Starting a bilateral inspections process earlier could increase the chance that the IAEA would succeed. In the event that IAEA inspections failed, bilateral inspections could serve as a backup.

3) Starting a Bilateral CBM Approach: Methods and Structure. The methods and structure of confidence building on the Korean peninsula should follow Argentina and Brazil's example. Thus, it was agreed that a complementary, step-by-step approach, focused on North-South nuclear projects and inspections, should be considered.

For more than a decade, South Korea has nurtured the bilateral inspections idea and has demonstrated its sincere commitment to beginning the process as soon as it is feasible. This motivation to push ahead provides an ideal environment for confidence building. Moreover, participants agreed that confidence-building measures proceed more smoothly if the countries involved possess the political will to see the measures through to their fruition.

TCNC participants noted that in its early efforts at North-South nuclear arrangements, too much emphasis was placed on creating inspection arrangements before any confidence building had taken place. No one wanted to repeat that mistake. Participants recognized that small steps are useful and necessary to foster an improved political climate before more elaborate steps are taken.

Participants noted that South Korea risked failure if it made unreasonable demands in its confidence-building approach to the North. Instead, the goals should be small. Participants agreed that difficult questions—“How much plutonium do you have? Do you have undeclared nuclear sites?”—should be initially avoided. Dialogue at the beginning should concentrate on more modest endeavors in the nuclear area. In any case, politics should be avoided in order to develop a relationship based on technical collaboration.

Participants raised the question of how to interest North Korea in cooperative measures of this type. They argued that it is important to create an incentive structure that can solicit smaller concessions. Incentives could include North Korea’s desire for economic cooperation, humanitarian aid, and energy upgrades. Bilateral inspections at specific facilities could be exchanged for something tangible. A series of small deals or projects could be created that would lead to country-wide bilateral inspections. Depending on progress, a more significant agreement could be offered that involved adequate bilateral inspections and significant electrical energy assistance to North Korea. Participants noted that achieving bilateral inspections does not have to take years, if the political will exists on both sides.

Participants recognized that a bilateral approach should complement an IAEA approach tied to the KEDO project timeline. Before the delivery of the key nuclear components, North Korea must comply with its safeguards agreement. In any case, the IAEA will have to certify that North Korea is in compliance with its safeguards agreement. In discussion, participants noted that good relations between a North-South bilateral approach and the IAEA were critical.

The importance of the Joint Declaration on the Denuclearization of the Korean peninsula was emphasized. Despite its non-implementation, the proposal was signed and the document is considered still valid in both Koreas. Its binding nature should not be underestimated. It is still a long-term goal for the two Korea’s to denuclearize the Korean peninsula, and the Declaration would create greater security in the region.

In the longer-term, participants recommended a multilateral approach. Japan, China and perhaps other regional actors should take part in discussions. One participant noted that while bilateral inspections were important and were easier to initiate, they did not deal with the discrimination between the Korean peninsula and others in the region. As a longer-term objective, “ASIATOM” or another multilateral system should be considered, again as a goal of an incremental process aimed at enhanced regional transparency.

4) North-South Scientific and Technical Cooperation. Several ideas for collaborative nuclear work were mentioned. Many ideas were related to the KEDO LWR project. For example, South Korea could more broadly share its experiences on establishing an adequate nuclear infrastructure, as North Korea is still developing its regulatory system. Soon North Korea will be responsible for two state-of-the-art LWRs; South Korea could play a valuable role in providing the training that North Korea will need. It was also noted that the IAEA stands ready to assist North Korea with full-scope Technical Cooperation projects once North Korea reinstates its membership to the Agency.

Participants noted other possible projects, including the exchange of technical articles; international technical conferences or workshops; an atomic or nuclear dictionary; a North-South cooperative nuclear center; the supply of radioactive isotopes; and the sharing of equipment. In addition to the safety-related training programs currently underway, KAERI could also offer education and training to North Korea, such as helping North Korea dismantle its 5MWe reactor, or cooperating on a program for radioactive waste management and disposal, or exchanging academic personnel.