

Press Releases: Press Availability in Manila, Philippines

Press Availability
Rex W. Tillerson

Secretary of State

Sofitel Hotel
Manila, Philippines
August 7, 2017

SECRETARY TILLERSON: Good morning. Good morning, all. How's everybody's jet lag? Well, I thought I'd take a few minutes out of the series of events and give you a little bit of an oversight of what has already occurred and kind of what's coming.

Obviously, high on the agenda in the time that we've been here has been the situation with the DPRK and North Korea. And I think the strong UN Security Council resolution unanimously approved, working in coordination with China and Russia both to put out a statement from the Security Council that I think is quite clear in terms of there being no daylight among the international community as to the expectation that North Korea will take steps to achieve all of our objectives, which is a denuclearized Korean Peninsula. I think there should be no question in anyone's mind as to the common view held by everyone on that Security Council as that being the ultimate objective.

I think we also – as you well know, ASEAN released a – what I consider to be a very strong statement as well demonstrating their commitment as well to support a denuclearized Korean Peninsula – I think a statement that's probably stronger than any we've ever seen from ASEAN in terms of a view on this particular issue.

So I think two very important actions taken to hopefully send a strong message that North Korea understands the expectation of the rest of the international community going forward.

So the next steps obviously are to see that the Security Council resolution sanctions are enforced by everyone. We will be monitoring that carefully and certainly having conversations with any and all that we see who may not be fully embracing not just the spirit of those sanctions but the operational execution of those sanctions.

And we hope, again, that this ultimately will result in North Korea coming to

the conclusion to choose a different pathway, and when the conditions are right that we can sit and have a dialogue around the future of North Korea so that they feel secure and prosper economically.

We had also some very constructive conversations with our ASEAN colleagues in the U.S.-ASEAN meeting yesterday, I think, again, just continuing the strong commitment from both an economic and security standpoint but also continuing the cultural and people-to-people exchanges that exist today through a number of educational programs and other efforts that we think are important for drawing our peoples closer together.

I did have the opportunity yesterday for an exchange of views with our Chinese counterparts, and we really went through a bit of reflection on the relationship since the first summit between the two presidents at Mar-a-Lago, the creation of the four high-level dialogues between our two countries, two of which are already actively meeting – the Diplomatic and Security Dialogue and the Economic and Trading Dialogue. Both of those are very active. The two remaining dialogues that we hope to convene in the next several weeks are the Law Enforcement and Cyber Security Dialogue and the Cultural or People-to-People Dialogue. I think all four of these dialogues, which are conducted at a very high level, are really advancing our two countries' understandings of the nature of this relationship between the U.S. and China and how we should strive to strengthen this relationship so that it benefits both of our countries from an economic prosperity standpoint but also benefits the world in terms of maintaining a secure world absent of conflict.

I also had the opportunity to sit and exchange views with our Russian counterparts, Sergey Lavrov. We discussed several issues during the course of that meeting. We also had some exchange of views about the nature of the relationship between our countries, and a lot of work, obviously, that has to be done in that regard. I told the foreign minister that we had not made a decision regarding how we will respond to Russia's request to remove U.S. diplomatic personnel. We had – I asked several clarifying questions just to ensure I understood kind of their thinking behind that diplomatic note we received, but told him we would respond by September the 1st.

Later today we'll be attending, of course, the East Asian Ministers Meeting, and I intend to outline steps we'd like to see the region take on a number of emerging issues, most particularly the fight against terrorism, counterterrorism, and the recognition now of the emergence of ISIS fighting forces in the region, most particularly here in the Philippines. I think there are a number of areas of cooperation in terms of information sharing so we can track individuals, border security so that hopefully we can keep these individuals from returning, cooperation around extremists and terror financing networks and creating safe havens for terrorists. So I think, again, a significant amount of work to do within the East Asian Ministers discussions as well.

We'll also be calling for adoption of a maritime cooperation pillar within the East Asia Ministerial Meeting, and this is really to better coordinate maritime activities in this region both from the standpoint of security, but again, border patrols in areas of illegal fishing and ensuring that we're

coordinated in terms of ensuring that fishing regulations and norms are being followed, and then an environmental effort around the significant amount of plastic debris, obviously, that litters the oceans and how we can better coordinate a response to that challenge as well.

I do want to express my appreciation to the Philippines, the Government of the Philippines, for hosting this series of ASEAN meetings and the opportunity for some very useful and productive bilaterals. Again, I think these annual sessions serve a really important platform for all of us to convene here in Southeast Asia and the Pacific and exchange views on a number of issues, obviously, of mutual interest.

So let me stop there, and I'm happy to take questions.

MODERATOR: Josh.

QUESTION: Thank you, Secretary Tillerson, for doing this. On North Korea, I'm wondering if you can discuss more specifically what the exact preconditions are for the U.S. to engage in the type of talks that you said we'd ultimately would like to have with them. And given that these new sanctions are going to take a while for them to have a desired economic effect and we're under a time crunch with North Korea's rapid development of this technology, how can you be confident that these sanctions will change North Korea's calculus before it's too late?

SECRETARY TILLERSON: Well, the best signal that North Korea could give us that they're prepared to talk would be to stop these missile launches. We've not had an extended period of time where they have not taken some type of provocative action by launching ballistic missiles. So I think that would be the first and strongest signal they could send us is just stop, stop these missile launches. Obviously, we have other means of communication open to them, to certainly hear from them if they have a desire to want to talk.

In terms of these most recent round of sanctions, I think your point is well taken that when do these actually have a practical bite on their revenues. I think perhaps the most – the more important element of that is just the message that this sends to North Korea of how unacceptable the entire international community finds what they're doing to be. And I think also it sends a strong message to two parties that we think can have some influence on how the North Koreans come to grips with the reality of what they're facing, that being China and Russia. So I think their – again, their support for the Security Council resolution itself I think also sends a message. But I think the world is also expressing a view to China and Russia that we do have an expectation that you will do everything you possibly can to help North Korea understand the reality of the future as well and bring them to the negotiating table.

MODERATOR: Carol.

QUESTION: Mr. Secretary, you've been very supportive of the talks with Russia saying two nuclear-powered superpowers must work together. How would you respond to critics who say that you are appeasing the Russians and despite

their past attacks and ongoing attacks on Western democracy and you are seeking cooperation instead of deterring it?

SECRETARY TILLERSON: Well, it's a combination of both. And I think the question, in our view, is one of, again, being very pragmatic about the situation where you have the two largest nuclear powers in the world that do have a number of issues between us, obviously. And Russian meddling in the elections is – was certainly a serious incident. We talked about it in the discussion we had with Minister Lavrov yesterday and trying to help them understand just how serious this incident had been and how seriously it had damaged the relationship between the U.S., the American people, and the Russian people, that this had created serious mistrust between our two countries and that we simply have to find some way to deal with that.

Now, having said that, we also have very important national security interests in the Middle East, in Syria. We have important national security interest in Afghanistan and that region of the world. And we have serious needs to begin to address the situation in Ukraine. The Russians have indicated some willingness to begin to talk with us about a way forward on Ukraine. As you well know, we've appointed a special envoy to engage with Russia but also coordinating with all of the parties so that this is full visibility to all the parties, that we're not trying to cut some kind of a deal on the side that excludes their interests in any way.

So I think we're just – we view the relationship from a very pragmatic point of view. And the fact that we want to work with them on areas that are of serious national security interest to us while at the same time having this extraordinary issue of mistrust that divides us, that's just what we in the diplomatic part of our relationship are required to do. And so I don't think it is useful to just cut everything off over one single issue. I think, again, these are two very large countries, and we should find the places that we can work together. Let's try to work together. The places we have our differences, we're going to have to continue to find a way to address those.

MODERATOR: Kylie.

QUESTION: Secretary, you said earlier to Josh that preconditions for North Korea would be stopping missile launches. So how long do they need to stop those missile launches for in order to have conversations? And do they need to dismantle – say that they're going to dismantle their nuclear program?

And then one question on the Philippines here. You have said that you support the Philippines in fighting ISIS, but how do you do that without endorsing the human rights abuses of President Duterte in his war on drugs?

SECRETARY TILLERSON: With respect to the North Korean missile launches, we'll know it when we see it. We're not going to give someone a specific number of days or weeks. This is really about the spirit of these talks, and they can demonstrate they're ready to sit with a spirit of finding a way forward in these talks by no longer conducting these missile tests. So this is not a give me 30 days and we're ready to talk. It's not quite that simple. So it is all about how we see their attitude towards approaching a dialogue with us.

With respect to the assistance we're providing the Philippines Government to respond to ISIS, there is – there really is no, I think, contradiction at all in the support we're giving them in the fight down in Marawi and Mindanao. As you know, most of what we're providing them is information, some surveillance capabilities with some recent transfers of a couple of Cessnas and a couple of UAVs to allow them to have better information in which to conduct the fight down there. We're providing them some training and some guidance in terms of how to deal with an enemy that fights in ways that is not like most people have ever had to deal with.

So it is – it's a tragic situation down there. We think they are beginning to get that situation under control, but the real challenge is going to come with once they have the fighting brought to an end how to deal with the conditions on the ground and ensure it does not re-emerge. And so I think our – bringing our knowledge of having dealt with this enemy in other parts of the world is useful to them, and I think that is also in our national security interest as well. But I see no conflict, no conflict at all in our helping them with that situation and our views of other human rights concerns we have with respect to how they carry out their counternarcotics activities.

MODERATOR: Our last question, Dave.

QUESTION: Thank you very much, Mr. Secretary. On the situation in Afghanistan, obviously, the administration is reviewing its policy. Where are we on that now?

SECRETARY TILLERSON: We've had now three sessions within the National Security Council exploring a full range of options. And when I say a full range of options, I mean the entire landscape. And I think it's – I think this is reflective of the deliberations that we want to undertake. The President is asking, I think, some very, very pointed questions, and they are good questions. They were the right questions that he should be asking, and perhaps these are questions that no one's been willing to raise in the past.

And so with his – with the questions that he's asked us, we want to give him good, thorough answers and good, thorough analysis to go with that, a very clear-eyed view, a very realistic view of what the future is likely to look like. And I think that's a lot of what the President and the Vice President – and I want to – I also want to acknowledge the Vice President has taken a very active role in these discussions as well with the Security Council, and he'd been very helpful in helping the Security Council navigate what are some really tough questions that have been put to us.

And I think we want to take the time to do the analysis, a fully integrated analysis from the Intel Community to the military planners to the diplomatic channels as to how does this all play out and where does this go. It's one thing to say we're just going to keep fighting because we're – there is no other option. There are always other options.

And so that's what the President has asked us to fully explore, and I think the fact that we're taking our time to try to come to a solution that is realistic, is – takes a clear view of what we're dealing with on the ground,

and being very honest with ourselves about expectations of the future, I think that is – that serves the American people’s interest well. This is a very, very – as you know, a tough area, 16 years, 17 years we’ve been at it now. To just say we’re going to keep doing what we’ve been doing, the President is not willing to accept that, and so he is asking some tough questions, and the Security Council is working diligently to give him the best answers we can.

MODERATOR: Thank you, everybody. Thank you very much.

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[Press Releases: Australia-Japan-United States Trilateral Strategic Dialogue Ministerial Joint Statement](#)

Media Note
Office of the Spokesperson

Washington, DC
August 6, 2017

Following is the text of a joint statement issued at the conclusion of the Australia-Japan-United States Trilateral Strategic Dialogue Ministerial:

Begin text:

The Minister for Foreign Affairs of Australia, Julie Bishop, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Japan, Taro Kono, and the Secretary of State of the United States, Rex Tillerson, met in Manila, the Philippines, on August 7, 2017, for the seventh ministerial meeting of the Trilateral Strategic Dialogue (TSD). The ministers reaffirmed the importance of the trilateral strategic partnership among these three countries to ensure a free, open, peaceful,

stable, democratic, and prosperous Asia-Pacific and Indian Ocean region and world, based on the rule of law, and reiterated their enduring commitment to further deepening coordination and cooperation to achieve this goal. The ministers noted that the partnership, which is founded upon the robust Australia-U.S. and Japan-U.S. Alliances, rests on the unshakable foundation of shared interests and values, including a commitment to a rules-based international order, respect for international law, open economies, and the peaceful resolution of disputes.

The ministers condemned in the strongest terms North Korea's unlawful pursuit of a nuclear weapons program and unprecedented ballistic missile activity since last year, including the launches of intercontinental ballistic missiles on July 4 and July 28, 2017. These actions blatantly violate multiple United Nations Security Council (UNSC) resolutions and clearly demonstrate that North Korea increasingly poses new levels of threat to regional stability and global security. In this regard, the ministers welcomed the unanimous adoption of UNSC Resolution 2371 on August 5 which imposes a total ban on certain North Korean exports. The ministers called on the international community to implement strictly UNSC resolutions and impose additional diplomatic and economic measures to address the Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD) threat posed by the North Korean regime and its destabilizing behavior, and to make further efforts to urge North Korea to abandon its current threatening and provocative path and immediately take steps to denuclearize. The ministers reaffirmed their commitment to strong autonomous sanctions measures on North Korea and will coordinate these sanctions and capacity building measures, including in the area of export control to detect and disrupt North Korean WMD proliferation networks. The ministers also urged ASEAN member states to maximize pressure on North Korea. The ministers called on North Korea to immediately and fully comply with relevant UNSC resolutions and the Joint Statement of the Six-Party Talks of September 2005. The ministers also called on North Korea to end its systematic human rights violations and abuses and to immediately release all foreign nationals being held in North Korea, including Japanese abductees and American citizens.

The ministers underscored the importance of upholding the rules-based order, called on all states to respect freedom of navigation and overflight and other internationally lawful uses of the seas, and reiterated that the three countries will continue to fly, sail, and operate wherever international law allows. The ministers expressed serious concerns over maritime disputes in the South China Sea (SCS). The ministers voiced their strong opposition to coercive unilateral actions that could alter the status quo and increase tensions. In this regard, the ministers urged SCS claimants to refrain from land reclamation, construction of outposts, militarization of disputed features, and undertaking unilateral actions that cause permanent physical change to the marine environment in areas pending delimitation. The ministers called on all claimants to make and clarify their maritime claims in accordance with the international law of the sea as reflected in the 1982 United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) and to resolve disputes peacefully in accordance with international law. The ministers called on China and the Philippines to abide by the Arbitral Tribunal's 2016

Award in the Philippines-China arbitration, as it is final and legally binding on both parties. The ministers noted the significance of the UNCLOS dispute settlement regime and the Tribunal's decision in discussions among parties in their efforts to peacefully resolve their maritime disputes in the SCS. The ministers urged ASEAN member states and China to fully and effectively implement the 2002 Declaration on the Conduct of Parties in the South China Sea (DOC). The ministers acknowledged the announced consensus on a framework for the Code of Conduct for the South China Sea (COC). The ministers further urged ASEAN member states and China to ensure that the COC be finalized in a timely manner, and that it be legally binding, meaningful, effective, and consistent with international law.

The ministers welcomed the development of trilateral cooperation on capacity building for maritime security and safety in Southeast Asia. The ministers resolved to advance and build on this cooperation through ongoing exchanges of information and dialogue on regional needs. The ministers reiterated the commitment of the three nations to continue coordinating their respective assistance programs and to identify ways they can more closely collaborate in the future.

The Ministers expressed strong opposition to any coercive or unilateral actions that could alter the status quo and increase tensions in the East China Sea and will remain in close communication about developments in the area.

The ministers discussed ways to work together to counter terrorism and violent extremism. The ministers reaffirmed their commitment to the counter-terrorism-specific trilateral strategic dialogue to enhance coordination and programming. The ministers noted the importance of increasing engagement in regional and multilateral organizations such as the Global Counterterrorism Forum and the Global Coalition to Defeat ISIS. The ministers expressed support for the Global Community Engagement and Resilience Fund and the UN Secretary General's Plan of Action to Prevent Violent Extremism and called for its implementation. The ministers resolved to continue to support internally displaced persons and to coordinate on protecting soft targets and countering terrorist financing. The ministers also resolved to advocate for and strengthen existing information sharing mechanisms, such as those provided by the International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL), and to combat the flow of foreign terrorist fighters both to and from conflict areas. The ministers reiterated their commitment to continue coordinating their respective assistance programs and to identify ways to collaborate in the future. The ministers expressed their concerns regarding the recent attacks by the ISIS-affiliated groups in Marawi, the Philippines, the loss of life, and the displacement of local populations. The ministers urged increased cooperation in the region to counter such terrorist activity and pledged their continued support for these efforts.

The ministers underscored the importance of advancing cybersecurity, and committed to supporting the strategic framework for international cyber stability based on the application of existing international law; adherence to voluntary, non-binding norms of responsible state behavior in cyberspace in peacetime; and the implementation of confidence building measures,

supported by coordinated capacity building programs. The ministers affirmed their mutual commitment to promote operationalization of voluntary, non-binding norms of responsible state behavior recommended by the report of the 2015 UN Group of Governmental Experts on Developments in the Field of Information and Telecommunications in the Context of International Security. The ministers supported the establishment of a new ASEAN Regional Forum Inter-Sessional Meeting on Security of and in the Use of Information and Communications Technologies (ARF ISM on ICTs) as a dedicated international forum for advancing cyber cooperation among member states.

Congratulating ASEAN on its 50th Anniversary, the ministers noted the central role ASEAN has played in the development of the Asia-Pacific regional architecture and its contribution to the region's stability and prosperity. The ministers resolved to work together to strengthen regional ASEAN-centered organizations, especially the East Asia Summit (EAS). The ministers stressed the value of the EAS as the premier Leaders-led forum in the region to address political and strategic issues and reiterated the importance of strengthening it in accordance with the 2015 Kuala Lumpur Declaration on the Tenth Anniversary of the East Asia Summit. The ministers recognized the complex challenges facing the Pacific Island Countries, and underscored the importance of further trilateral cooperation to enhance economic resilience, sustainable development, and regional peace and security.

The ministers recognized the importance of ensuring free and open sea-lanes as well as enhancing regional connectivity, including through quality infrastructure development.

The ministers resolved to continue to work closely together and with their partners to promote strong, sustainable growth and prosperity, including by supporting good governance, the rule of law, and human rights.

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[Press Releases: 10th Ministerial Meeting of the Lower Mekong Initiative: Joint Statement](#)

Office of the Spokesperson

Washington, DC

August 6, 2017

Following is the text of a joint statement issued at the conclusion of the 10th Lower Mekong Initiative Ministerial Meeting:

Begin text:

On August 6, 2017, the Foreign Ministers of Cambodia, Lao PDR, and Thailand, the Deputy Prime Minister of Viet Nam, the Minister of State for Foreign Affairs of Myanmar, the Secretary of State of the United States, and the Secretary-General of ASEAN met in Manila for the 10th Lower Mekong Initiative (LMI) Ministerial Meeting. The Ministers of the Mekong countries welcomed Secretary Tillerson's chairmanship of the Lower Mekong Initiative.

The Secretary and Ministers re-affirmed their commitment to LMI as a primary driver of Lower Mekong sub-regional economic integration and sustainable development, pledging to continue their collaborative efforts toward peace, stability and prosperity in Southeast Asia. The Secretary and Ministers lauded the on-going work under each of LMI's six Pillars – Agriculture and Food Security, Connectivity, Education, Energy Security, Environment and Water, and Health, and charged the Pillars to redouble their efforts to advance regional priorities most effectively and successfully implement the LMI Plan of Action 2016 – 2020. The Ministers also emphasized the need for the LMI to work in tandem with and complement other country and regional plans of action, including ASEAN 2025: Forging Ahead Together.

The seven participants praised the effective implementation of the Sustainable Infrastructure Partnership, announced at the 2016 LMI Ministerial, noting its success in equipping LMI member states in the management and development of regional infrastructure projects. Through the Partnership, the United States committed to further practical cooperation with the Friends of the Lower Mekong and more unified and sustainable engagement with the LMI members.

The Secretary and Ministers congratulated the progress of the LMI Education Pillar, and its engagement among young scientists and academics to identify areas of regional cooperation in education and establish national focal points to coordinate joint scientific research projects, which will contribute to prosperous and sustainable development in the Mekong sub-region.

The Ministers applauded the new Mekong Water Data Initiative proposal and hailed it as an important step in developing science-based decisions of their shared river system. The Ministers concluded that enhancing the Mekong River

Commission's technical capabilities would help to facilitate data gathering and sharing in the region and requested their respective ministries to coordinate efforts to implement the Water Data Initiative effectively. The LMI members pledged to continue their close collaboration with the Friends of the Lower Mekong and the Mekong River Commission to support inclusive, sustainable and environment-responsible growth in the Mekong river basin.

The LMI partners determined to continue discussions on the restructuring of the LMI Pillars at the upcoming Regional Working Group meeting in Laos and committed to work together to improve efficiencies, reflect evolving priorities in the sub-region, and devise a results-oriented way forward.

The Secretary and Ministers arranged to reconvene for the 11th LMI Ministerial meeting in 2018 in Singapore.

Heads of Delegations:

H.E. Prak Sokhonn, Senior Minister, Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of the Kingdom of Cambodia

H.E. Saleumxay Kommasith, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lao People's Democratic Republic

H.E. Kyaw Tin, Minister of State, Republic of the Union of Myanmar

H.E. Don Pramudwinai, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Thailand

H.E. Rex Tillerson, Secretary of State, United States of America

H.E. Pham Binh Minh, Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam

H.E. Le Luong Minh, Secretary-General of ASEAN

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[Press Releases: Jamaica Independence Day](#)

Press Statement

Rex W. Tillerson

Secretary of State

Washington, DC

August 5, 2017

On behalf of the United States, congratulations to the Jamaican people on the 55th anniversary of your independence on August 6.

Jamaica plays an important role as a regional leader, most recently with its efforts on economic reform. We look forward to strengthened collaboration between our countries on security, prosperity, diplomacy, energy, education, and health – as underscored in the United States-Caribbean Strategic Engagement Act.

We deeply appreciate our relationship and congratulate all Jamaicans on the occasion of your Independence Day.

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[Press Releases: Bolivia Independence Day](#)

Press Statement

Rex W. Tillerson

Secretary of State

Washington, DC

August 5, 2017

On behalf of the United States Government, congratulations to the people of Bolivia on the anniversary of your independence on August 6.

The United States and the people of Bolivia enjoy a deep and lasting relationship based on mutual respect. We take pride in our partnership with the Bolivian people to advance entrepreneurship and education initiatives that help Bolivians realize their full potential. The United States is one of Bolivia's most important trading partners and we are committed to promoting mutually beneficial trade. We will continue to cooperate to protect and preserve Bolivia's rich cultural heritage. We welcome the prospect of future collaboration based on mutual benefit and mutual respect.

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