

[Press Releases: On Nepal's Elections](#)

Press Statement
Heather Nauert

Department Spokesperson

Washington, DC
December 15, 2017

The United States congratulates the citizens and Government of Nepal on the peaceful conclusion of their recent provincial assembly and parliamentary elections on November 26 and December 7. This is an historic milestone for Nepal that will bring new local, provincial, and national government officials to lead the country's new federal system of government. The election of representatives at all levels of government should set the stage for responsive governance based on the principles of transparency, inclusivity, and rule of law. We look forward to working with the new government.

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[Press Releases: Recent Round of Syria Talks in Geneva](#)

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We commend United Nations Special Envoy for Syria Staffan de Mistura and his team for their efforts in the latest round of Syria talks in Geneva. We also note the constructive participation of the Syrian opposition delegation, which stands in contrast to the obstructionism and procrastination of the Syrian regime delegation. We support de Mistura's call for the regime's supporters to use their leverage to urge the regime to participate fully in tangible negotiations with the opposition in Geneva. The United States urges all parties to work seriously toward a political resolution to this conflict or face continued isolation and instability indefinitely in Syria. All parties interested in resolving the conflict must commit to Geneva as the only venue for the Syrian political process and work to ensure all Syrian participants are ready to engage constructively and substantively on implementing UNSCR 2254 as the blueprint for a political resolution. The Syrian people deserve an end to this conflict.

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[Press Releases: Press Availability at United Nations](#)

Press Availability
Rex W. Tillerson

Secretary of State

United Nations
New York City
December 15, 2017

SECRETARY TILLERSON: Well, good afternoon, all. And I do want to, again, thank the Government of Japan for using their opportunity at the chair to convene today's session on North Korea. Also appreciate Secretary Guterres' comments and framing of the situation for us.

As was the case when President Trump took office, he identified North Korea as the greatest threat to U.S. national security, and regrettably, 11 months later, not much has changed. If anything, the situation perhaps has worsened. I think in the wake, in particular, of the most recent North Korean missile test – a very dangerous test, one which was noted by others – it was a real threat to civilization's security, but again, demonstrates the total disregard North Korea has not just for the United States view on this, but for the view of the entire international community. And I think that was clearly expressed by the members of the Security Council today.

We simply cannot continue to accept the progress of North Korea's program. We will maintain the pressure campaign and, in fact, we undertake efforts to increase the effectiveness of the pressure campaign both through a combination of the sanctions regime, full implementation and compliance of the sanctions regime, as well as unilateral actions on the part of many, many countries to send the message to North Korea through diplomatic steps as well as economic steps that we do not accept the pathway you're on.

We hope that this pressure campaign will cause North Korea to alter its course, re-examine whether this truly is going to lead to a more secure – more security for the regime, and whether it is possible for them to even

sustain an economy if they continue the path they're on. We're going to continue our diplomatic efforts. Those options remain open until other things may foreclose the diplomatic option. And with that, I'll stop there and I think we can take a couple questions, perhaps.

QUESTION: Mr. Tillerson –

QUESTION: Secretary Tillerson?

QUESTION: Thank you, Secretary Tillerson. Michelle Nichols from Reuters. We have heard a lot from you this morning about North Korea. I'd like to ask you about Myanmar. As you're aware, earlier this week, two Reuters journalists were arrested and their whereabouts are unknown. What is the U.S. Government doing to pressure Myanmar for their release? And is the U.S. considering further sanctions on Myanmar over human rights abuses?

SECRETARY TILLERSON: Well, our local representatives at the mission in Myanmar, at the embassy, are expressing our concerns over the detention of individuals, demanding their immediate release or information as to the circumstances around their disappearance. We are continuing to examine the circumstances around all of the events since the August attacks that have led to the enormous migration of people out of Myanmar, and have already identified one individual, and we are examining other possible individuals to hold responsible for targeted sanctions from the U.S.

QUESTION: And how important is a free press in Myanmar? How important is a free press in Myanmar?

SECRETARY TILLERSON: Well, a free press is vital to Myanmar's transition and becoming a viable democracy, and we want Myanmar's democracy to succeed. We know it is a process that they need to work through. This particular crisis is a real test of whether they are going to be able to affect a successful journey to democracy.

MODERATOR: Conor Finnegan, ABC News.

QUESTION: Mr. Secretary, you've previously said that a precondition to talks with North Korea is the regime agreeing to give up its nuclear and ballistic missile capabilities. On Tuesday, you said that wasn't realistic. And today, you didn't even mention the issue at all, despite what was in your prepared remarks. Does it remain a precondition for the United States and are you and President Trump on the same page on whether and when to engage in talks?

SECRETARY TILLERSON: The President's policy on North Korea is quite clear, and there is no daylight at all between the President's policy and the pursuit of that policy. And the President, I think, has been very clear that we are going to lead this pressure campaign, we're going to unite the international community, and we're going to keep the pressure as much as we can and increase it where possible. Most recently, the President called President Xi personally and asked him for China to cut the oil supplies off to North Korea to increase this pressure. That is intended to lead to diplomatic talks. In the meantime, the President has been very clear:

Militarily, we are going to be prepared should something go wrong. And our military is prepared.

With respect to the talks, the pre – we are not going to accept preconditions. You heard others who have called for a freeze for freeze. We do not accept a freeze for freeze as a precondition to talks. We do not accept any relaxing of the sanctions regime as a precondition of talks. We do not accept a resumption of humanitarian assistance as a precondition of talks. So we are not going to accept preconditions for these talks, but as I indicated in my remarks, our communication channels remain open. North Korea knows they're open; they know where the door is; they know where to walk through that door when they want to talk.

Thank you.

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[Press Releases: Remarks at the UN Security Council Ministerial Meeting on D.P.R.K.](#)

Remarks
Rex W. Tillerson

Secretary of State

United Nations
New York City
December 15, 2017

SECRETARY TILLERSON: Thank you. I'd like to take a moment to respond to the statements of the DPRK permanent representative. First, I think we have heard all of these things before from this government. There is no doubt that the DPRK's pursuit of a nuclear arsenal is in clear violation of international law, directly challenges the global nonproliferation regime, and greatly threatens international peace and security. This body has unanimously made these points for well over a decade now. The international community condemns North Korea's pursuit of a nuclear arsenal, and we will never accept a nuclear North Korea.

The DPRK's unlawful acts cannot be ignored, nor can they be explained away. The DPRK must be held accountable for its actions. And in that regard, any notion that the source of tensions on the peninsula are the fault of no one party – there is but one party that has carried out illegal detonation of nuclear devices; there is but one party that continues to launch intercontinental ballistic missiles in violation of UN Security Council resolutions, overflying another sovereign nation, Japan, threatening civil aviation security because these launches are undertaken with no notification.

There is but one party that has been targeted with punishment and penalties through the most vigorous regime sanction ever enacted, and that is the Kim regime in North Korea. They alone are responsible for these tensions, they alone must take responsibility for these tensions, and they alone can solve these tensions.

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Press Releases: Venezuela: **Humanitarian Aid for the Venezuelan** **People**

Press Statement
Heather Nauert

Department Spokesperson

Washington, DC
December 15, 2017

The United States stands with the Venezuelan people, and supports their efforts to resolve the economic, political, and humanitarian crises facing their country. We remain deeply concerned that the Venezuelan people are experiencing dire humanitarian conditions, to include lack of access to affordable food and vital medicine, medical supplies, malnutrition, and a rise in malaria cases, among other harsh realities.

The United States maintains a stockpile of emergency relief supplies in the region and stands ready to provide emergency food assistance, including food and nutrition commodities or assistance, to affected populations. These provisions could be made available immediately, if only the government of Venezuela would accept international humanitarian assistance. We repeat our call on the Maduro regime to stop denying the needs of its people and to allow aid from the international community to reach them.

U.S. sanctions allow U.S. persons to provide food, medicine, and other humanitarian assistance to the Venezuelan people. U.S. sanctions are not directed at the people of Venezuela. Sanctions need not be permanent. Our sanctions can be adjusted for those who support Venezuela's return to a democratic and constitutional path. However, additional measures remain under active consideration.

If members of the Maduro regime wish to see U.S. government sanctions lifted, they must act to restore democracy and constitutional order in Venezuela. The

future of U.S. sanctions rests on the decisions and actions of the Maduro regime.

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