

Panmunjom Declaration: North and South Korean leaders promise 'lasting peace' for peninsula

Saturday 28 April 2018, by [FARRER Martin](#), [HAAS Benjamin](#), [LEE Wooyoung](#), [McCURRY Justin](#), [SMITH David](#), [TISDALL Simon](#) (Date first published: 27 April 2018).

Kim Jong-un and Moon Jae-in pledge denuclearisation and end to decades of hostility after summit.

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The leaders of North and South Korea have promised after a landmark summit to bring “lasting peace” to the peninsula with a commitment to denuclearisation and to ending decades of hostilities.

Speaking at the end of an extraordinary day that began with a lingering handshake across the demarcation line separating their countries, the North Korean leader, Kim Jong-un, and the South Korean president, Moon Jae-in, issued a joint statement that was short on detail but offered cause for optimism as the world looks ahead to a summit between Kim and Donald Trump.

The US president, in his first comments on the declaration, tweeted: “Good things are happening, but only time will tell!” He later added: “KOREAN WAR TO END!”

Speaking at the White House, Trump warned that the US was “not going to be played” by North Korea, later the US president said he was getting close to choosing a venue for talks with Kim. “We’re setting up meetings now,” he said. “We’re down to two countries... and we’ll let you know what that site is.”

At a joint press conference with Angela Merkel, Trump said: “Maximum pressure will continue until denuclearisation occurs. I look forward to our meeting, which will be quite something.”

The Panmunjom declaration, named after the truce village that hosted the talks on Friday, committed the two Koreas to seek the “complete denuclearisation” of the peninsula.

“South and North Korea confirmed the common goal of realising, through complete denuclearisation, a nuclear-free Korean peninsula,” it said. “South and North Korea shared the view that the measures being initiated by North Korea are very meaningful and crucial for the denuclearisation of the Korean peninsula, and agreed to carry out their respective roles and responsibilities in this regard.”

The statement did not specify what Pyongyang expected in return for abandoning its nuclear

weapons - the regime's best deterrent against what it regards as a hostile US.

Speaking outside the peace house on the southern side of the border that has divided the Korean peninsula for 65 years, the leaders also pledged to push for talks with the US, and possibly China, to formally end the 1950-53 Korean war with a peace treaty to replace the uneasy truce that stopped hostilities.

Noting that more than a decade had passed since the countries' leaders last met, Kim and Moon agreed to talk regularly by phone and meet more often, starting with a summit in Pyongyang in autumn.

They vowed to work more closely on a host of bilateral issues, including reuniting families divided by the Korean war and improving cross-border transport links.

Months after relations between the two countries sank to their lowest level following North Korean missile launches and its sixth nuclear test, Moon said he and Kim were aware that the hopes of 80 million North and South Koreans rested on their shoulders.

"We were able to stand together today and agree that we should denuclearise the Korean peninsula," Moon said, according to a translation provided by South Korea's Arirang TV.

With Kim standing nearby behind a separate podium, he said. "To completely denuclearise, we declare that we will cooperate to bring about an everlasting peace on the peninsula."

Moon applauded Kim's "courage and determination" and vowed that "there will be no going back" to an era of tension and provocation that has occasionally brought the neighbours to the brink of conflict. "We are giving a great present to the citizens of the two Koreas," he said.

The goodwill measures would begin with a halt to "all forms of hostility" on land, at sea and in the air, the declaration said. The demilitarised zone - the heavily armed border separating the two countries - and the western maritime border will be turned into "peace zones".

From Tuesday, both countries will suspend all loudspeaker propaganda broadcasts and dismantle broadcasting equipment. They will also stop sending propaganda leaflets across the border.

Kim said: "We hope we will not repeat the mistake of the past. I hope this will be an opportunity for the Korean people to move freely from North to South. We need to take responsibility for our own history.

"We have waited for this day for a very long time. We are tied by blood and cannot be separated - we are the same country, the same people, and should not be separated by hostility.

"We hope we can open a new road towards a new future, and that is why I crossed the demarcation line today. We hope for a new era of peace, and we have reaffirmed our commitment to that."

Duyeon Kim, a senior fellow at the Korean Peninsula Future Forum, said the wording of the statement was encouraging, as Kim prepares for his summit with Trump in late May or early June.

"It's good that the nuclear language is in there, and including 'complete denuclearisation' is a win for Moon," she said. "It's really aimed at setting up the meeting with Trump."

But she said it would have been easy for Kim to agree to the statement since "it reiterates what their position has been all along", and from Pyongyang's perspective, denuclearisation would include

significant concessions from the US on its military presence in South Korea.

“In the grand scheme of things, this declaration is continuing the spirit of the 2007 agreement, and much of what we see in this declaration has been agreed to before,” she said. “But it’s still a long and complicated road ahead.”

Earlier, the two leaders signed the joint statement before standing to shake hands. At Moon’s instigation, they joined hands and raised their arms aloft, ending the exchange with an embrace and more of the broad smiles that were a feature of their joint public appearances throughout the day.

International reaction to the summit was largely positive. China, the North’s main ally and its biggest economic partner, described the leaders’ handshake as a historic moment.

“We applaud the Korean leaders’ historic step and appreciate their political decisions and courage,” Hua Chunying, a foreign ministry spokeswoman, told reporters. “We hope and look forward to them taking this opportunity to further open a new journey of long-term stability on the peninsula.”

The White House said in a statement that it was “hopeful that talks will achieve progress toward a future of peace and prosperity for the entire Korean peninsula ... [and] looks forward to continuing robust discussions in preparation for the planned meeting between President Donald Trump and Kim Jong-un in the coming weeks”.

The UK foreign secretary, Boris Johnson, sounded a more cautious note. While “very encouraged” by the summit, he said: “I don’t think that anybody looking at the history of North Korea’s plans to develop a nuclear weapon would want to be over-optimistic at this point. But it is clearly good news that the two leaders are meeting. Absolutely.”

Virginie Grzelczyk, a senior lecturer at Aston University, said: “This is a very long game, and confidence-building will take a lot of time. I am not sure a meeting between Kim Jong-un and President Trump would add anything to this particularly good development in inter-Korean relations today, and it might be that this would blur the line.”

Benjamin Haas in Goyang, South Korea, Justin McCurry in Tokyo and David Smith in Washington

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Bonhomie on Korean peninsula puts pressure on bellicose Trump

Moon and Kim’s evident mutual goodwill contrasts sharply with Trump’s aggressive stance.

The joint declaration by Kim Jong-un and Moon Jae-in, the fruit of Friday’s unexpectedly warm, fraternal summit, represents a big political and diplomatic triumph for both Korean leaders. It will gratify China’s government too, and relieve people around the world worried about nuclear war. But it could be a big problem for Donald Trump.

The measures announced at the end of a day of talks will be enthusiastically welcomed by Koreans

on both sides of the border. They included denuclearisation of the Korean peninsula, a possible peace treaty, military confidence-building measures, regular bilateral summits and increased people-to-people contacts.

For Koreans and their Japanese neighbours, who spent much of 2017 fearing nuclear Armageddon, Kim's pledge on paper to permanently halt North Korea's development of nuclear weapons and missiles, desist from further provocations and halt hostile propaganda – and in effect move towards normalised relations – is a great boon.

But the vagueness of Kim's reported commitment to denuclearise will do nothing to assuage American suspicions that, as in the past, North Korea is playing a double game – promising to engage in a long-term, essentially meaningless disarmament process while exploiting its newfound status as a nuclear weapons state to extract concessions.

Nothing happened at the summit to suggest Kim is prepared to reduce, let alone dismantle, his nuclear arsenal in the foreseeable future. And that is a big worry for the Americans. The US wants unconditional, irreversible, verifiable North Korean disarmament, which is still a long way off.

An immediate difficulty for Trump as he plans his own summit with Kim in the next few weeks is that his South Korean allies have, in effect, pulled the carpet from under him.

Moon and Kim's evident mutual goodwill, the raft of new measures intended to build detente and co-prosperity, and their dangling of the tantalising prospect of eventual Korean unification contrast sharply with Trump's aggressive and occasionally bellicose stance.

If Trump tries to play hardball with Kim, he risks looking like a warmonger and a bully whose policies are inimical to Korean interests, north and south. Intentionally or otherwise, Moon, a lifelong advocate of detente with personal connections to North Korea, has spiked Trump's guns.

This sudden outbreak of bonhomie may now place Trump under growing pressure from US allies to tone down his rhetoric, pull back his military forces in the region and make concessions of his own. Many have tried and failed to make Trump act nice. Kim may have found a way.

What Moon called Kim's courage in making a break with the past may stem in part from the influence and support of the North Korean leader's smart-as-tacks sister, Kim Yo-jong. She played a key role in breaking the ice at the Winter Olympics this year and has become one of North Korea's very few international celebrities. She was at Kim's side again on Friday.

The summit outcome will please Beijing, which Kim visited in preparation for the summit. China's cooperation in enforcing UN sanctions on North Korea, especially its cuts in fuel oil exports and coal imports, have had a big impact. But China does not want any excuse for further US encroachment in its backyard.

When Kim met Xi Jinping, China's president, he was reportedly strongly advised to de-escalate military tensions and concentrate instead on restoring North Korea's ailing economy. The Panmunjom agreements appears to reflect what is being termed Kim's "new strategic line".

As much as anything, the summit was a personal triumph for Kim. Derided by Trump as "little rocket man" and almost universally condemned as the cruel dictator of the world's most backward country, he appeared on Friday as a half-reasonable, even likeable sort of chap.

Treading South Korean soil for the first time, Kim may have reflected on having dreamed of this moment all his life. Confidently offering his hand to Moon, he stepped out of the dark shadow cast by

his dad, Kim Jong-il, and his granddad, his country's grim founding eminence, Kim Il-sung.

Chummy Kim ended a 65-year-old jinx. He broke the spell and changed the mood. He has conjured new hopes of peace.

Simon Tisdall

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Korea summit: leaders vow to 'write new chapter' in peninsula's history

Kim Jong-un and Moon Jae-in shake hands and step across concrete border line in Panmunjom, then enter Peace House for talks.

The leaders of North and South Korea have vowed to "write a new chapter" in their peninsula's troubled history at the start of a summit that has raised hopes for a resolution over Pyongyang's nuclear and ballistic missile programmes.

On a bright spring morning Kim Jong-un and his South Korean counterpart, Moon Jae-in, reached across a simple concrete slab marking the border between their countries and shook hands for more than 20 seconds.

After an exchange of words and broad smiles, Kim became the first North Korean leader to set foot in South Korea since the end of the 1950-53 Korean war, planting a foot over the military demarcation line watched by dignitaries from both sides and millions following live TV coverage.

Then came the first unscripted moment of the summit: a suggestion by Kim, dressed in his trademark black Mao-style suit, that both men step back across the border into North Korea after Moon reportedly asked him: "When do I get to visit the North?"

After a brief moment on the northern side, they returned to pose for photos with schoolchildren who had presented Kim with a bouquet of flowers. As they inspected a guard of honour, a military band played Korean folk songs familiar to people on both sides of the border and South Korea's version of Hail to the Chief.

In early accounts of the closed morning session given by South Korean officials, Kim told Moon that he "won't interrupt your early morning sleep any more" with ballistic missile tests. Moon said there had been "very good discussion today".

After entering the Peace House, the venue for the talks, Kim wrote in the guestbook: "New history starts from now, at the historic starting point of an era of peace."

Moments later, in an adjacent meeting room, he said he wanted to hold "heartfelt, sincere and honest" talks, and hoped the summit would produce a "good outcome". "I hope to write a new chapter between us, this is the starting point for us. We will make a new beginning," added Kim, seated next to his increasingly influential sister, Kim Yo-jong.

"It has taken 11 years for this historic moment to happen. Walking here, I wondered why it has taken so long.

"Through today's meeting, I hope we won't go back to square one again and that there won't be a repeat of the non-implementation of what we agree," he added, referring to failed past deals on nuclear weapons and inter-Korean co-operation. "I hope we can live up to people's expectations."

Earlier a North Korean security team conducted a sweep for explosives and listening devices, as well as spraying what appeared to be disinfectant in the air, on the chairs and on the guest book, according to Reuters.

More substantive talks got under way behind closed doors in a room that was specially refurbished in anticipation of Kim's visit. The two leaders sat exactly 2,018 millimetres apart - in a nod to the year of their historic summit - on opposite sides of a specially designed table with gentle, rounded edges. They sat on chairs with backrests that feature a Korean peninsula design.

In a lighthearted moment, Kim acknowledged the interest being shown in the North Korean noodles he had brought with him to be served at an evening banquet. After initially saying it had been hard to bring them all the way from Pyongyang, he turned to his sister and joked: "Maybe I shouldn't have said [Pyongyang] was far."

Kim's wife, Ri Sol-ju, will join her husband, Moon and his wife, Kim Jung-sook, for the dinner after the talks have ended, South Korean officials said. Ri, a former singer who was recently given the title of first lady, will be making her second appearance at a leadership summit, having accompanied Kim on his trip last month to Beijing, where they met the Chinese president, Xi Jinping.

Moon, a left-leaning liberal who has long supported engagement with the North, said the whole world was paying attention to the "spring" that had arrived on the Korean peninsula, and described their meeting as both an "opportunity" and a "burden".

"People around the world have high hopes," said Moon, who was elected president last May promising to defuse the growing nuclear crisis on the peninsula. "Your visit makes the military demarcation line a symbol of peace, not division. I thank you very much for your courage. Our dialogue and talks today will be very frank. We will finally have the dialogue we haven't been able to have for the past decade."

The details of their talks will not be clear until later on Friday, and some analysts predicted the meeting, while highly symbolic, would produce little of substance on denuclearisation and a formal peace treaty to replace the armistice that brought a halt to the Korean war 65 years ago.

"It's high on symbolism and definitely exciting, but you have to ask yourself what does the symbolism amount to?" said Van Jackson, a former policy adviser to the US secretary of defence who focuses on Asia. "Both men have a strong desire to make this look good, but I don't see anything coming out of this except building momentum for a Kim-Trump meeting."

Kim wants to be a normal, upstanding and respected member of the international community, but wants to do that while having nuclear weapons, Jackson said, adding any meeting with Trump would aid in furthering that goal.

"It's great to have good vibes going into the Trump summit, but you need to put emotion aside and wonder what this means on the question of nukes, which is not much," he said. "Kim says he wants peace and denuclearisation, but what that means to him won't be acceptable to South Korea or the US."

Other countries welcomed the first meeting between the countries' leaders for more than a decade. The White House said in a statement: "We wish the Korean people well. We are hopeful that talks will achieve progress to where a future of peace and prosperity for the entire Korean peninsula. The US appreciates the close coordination with our ally, the Republic of Korea and looks forward to continuing robust discussions in preparation for the planned meeting between President Donald J. Trump and Kim Jong-un in the coming weeks."

Japan's defence minister, Itsunori Onodera, said Tokyo hoped the summit would lead to demonstrable progress on North Korea's missile and nuclear programmes, and a resolution of the regime's cold war abductions of Japanese nationals. "Japan will be watching closely for signs that North Korea is taking action on these issues," he said.

Kim Chang-su from the Korea Institute for Defence Analyses, said the leaders' greeting made him optimistic about the summit. Referring to the leaders' brief moment on North Korean soil, he said: "It's very surprising, but that's a sign of harmony, rather than just one side forcing these talks on the other. It was a bold gesture by Kim Jong-un."

"So far these seem to be very open minded discussions, a sign that we are heading to a new era of peace."

Benjamin Haas in Goyang, South Korea and **Justin McCurry** in Tokyo

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_'Why has it taken us so long': five things we've learned from Korean summit

Kim Jong-un said he wondered to himself why he had not met the South's leader before, and then appeared to promise an end to missile tests.

1. Reasons to be cheerful

The mood of the summit appeared genuinely optimistic and the two leaders seemed to strike up a convivial relationship from the start. The first sign was Kim Jong-un's unscripted invitation for Moon Jae-in to step over to the North when they first met, apparently in response to Moon's question: "When do I get to visit the North?" They chatted throughout their walk to the House of Peace and were all smiles and handshakes inside as they got down to business. Their opening remarks were suitably epoch-making, talking about "new beginnings" and a "new history". Kim even said that he wondered to himself while walking to the meeting "why it had taken so long". Kim also told Moon that he was willing to visit him in Seoul "any time if you invite me".

2. 'No more tests'

Kim is reported to have promised Moon that there would be no more nuclear missile tests. "I heard that you had early morning sleep disturbed many times because you had to attend the national security council meetings because of us," he told his counterpart from the South. "I will make sure that your morning sleep won't be disturbed," he added in an apparent promise to stop the tests. It repeated a pledge he made when officials from the South visited Pyongyang earlier this year but it

remains to be seen how firm the promise will turn out to be.

3. Kim's sister is his key ally

Kim's sister, Kim Yo-jong, was by his side throughout as formalities were conducted at the House of Peace. She handed him a pen to sign a guestbook, she took the schoolchildren's flowers from his hand and sat next to him scribbling notes at the start of the talks with Moon.

4. The voice

Although we've heard Kim's speaking voice a few times in speeches, we've never heard him in conversation until today. Kyung Bok-cho, a Bloomberg journalist, said Kim didn't sound like he had much of an accent and "wouldn't sound that out of place in the middle of Seoul". Kim's smiling swagger as he walked towards Moon at the border also spoke volumes.

5. Tension remains

Despite the upbeat feel, there's still a great deal of scepticism about what it all means for peace on the peninsula. Robert Kelly of Pusan national university in South Korea warned that Pyongyang "hasn't really changed, and it hasn't offered a meaningful concession yet", adding there were still "huge" strategic and political divisions between the North on one hand, and the South and the US on the other. "We have had false dawns before on the Korean peninsula," Australian prime minister Malcolm Turnbull warned rather gloomily. Donald Trump said overnight that he didn't even know if his proposed meeting with Kim "would even take place", so there was an unspoken focus on that future summit with neither Kim nor Moon saying anything about it. So, still tense times on the peninsula.

Martin Farrer and Justin McCurry

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<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/apr/27/why-has-it-taken-us-so-long-five-things-weve-learned-from-korean-summit>

Inter-Korea summit: What do Koreans think?

Residents from both sides of the border share thoughts on the first talks between leaders of both Koreas since 2007.

Seoul, South Korea - South Koreans, and the world, will be watching a historic handshake when leaders from both sides of the Korean border start off the first inter-Korean summit in more than a decade.

President Moon Jae-in and Kim Jong-un will sit down for talks and a dinner at Friday's summit, parts of which will be broadcast live.

The event, the first inter-Korean summit since 2007, takes place at the Peace House in the border village of Panmunjom.

"This summit will focus more on denuclearisation and securing of permanent peace than anything else," South's presidential chief of staff, Im Jong-seok, told a media briefing.

"I feel North Korea is sending their key military officials to the summit as they too, believe denuclearisation and peace are important."

The North Korean leader will be accompanied by nine officials, including his sister Kim Yo-jong, who led the North's delegation to the Pyeongchang Winter Olympics in South Korea in February.

But on the eve of the talks, expectations have grown among North and South Koreans for an improvement in cross-border ties, including easing the military tension amid nuclear threats and the continuation of talks past the day-long summit.

Scepticism among many is also brewing. Some critics are wary of North Korea's surprising move for disarmament and dialogue.

They remain concerned about whether the summit would be fruitful or not.

Al Jazeera speaks to people from both sides of the border to see what the general mood is and whether they think the talks will be fruitful or not.

Kim Ju-hong, South Korean, barber

"I welcome the talks and hope they work out well. South Koreans are concerned about both sides making the previous mistakes and that's why a lot of people don't trust the talks. But I do." "I still have doubts about Kim's promise of denuclearisation, but I hope he keeps his word."

"I think we need to leave unification out for now and go with a two-country system. Later we can unify when there is a shared feeling on this matter and when circumstances are right for it."

Lee Min-bok, North Korean, activist

"I back the engagement but not the style. The South Korean administration has a submissive attitude. President Moon said he is treating the matter like a piece of glass. Is that necessary?" "North Korea has come out because it has no choice. Even Russia and China are pressuring North Korea."

"Kim needs to show us proof that he has halted the nuclear tests. Until then, the sanctions must continue. If the summit leads to ending sanctions, that would be a big mistake."

Son Jeong-wook, South Korea, student

"We have been having more dialogues than before and that's why we can definitely develop our relations with the North. But I don't think North Korea would stick to its promise of denuclearisation because it will reduce its power and strength if it does." "In the summit, the first thing they need to discuss is ensuring North Korea stops its violent provocations to the South. I think it's important to get their promise not to attack us again." **Choi Sung-guk, North Korean, webtoon artist** "Kim has been cornered so he's desperate and what he needs is time to wait for US President Donald Trump to step down."

"The upcoming summit is buying time for Kim. Even though he said he will stop nuclear tests, it doesn't change the fact that North Korea has nuclear weapons." "I'm glad the summit is happening because I hope it gives the world the chance to finally see how stubborn and uncooperative the Kim regime is."

"North Korea under Kim will never change. What North Korea needs to change is its leadership. For that, the North Korean people need to step up, see the light."

Suh Hyung-lim, South Korean, consultant

“Success of this summit will depend on whether the two sides are able to focus on actual measures for denuclearisation.” I had doubts about North Korea’s pledges in the past because none of them were kept. But I expect it to be different this time.

“The fact that Kim Jong-un will be walking to Panmunjom for the talks shows a change in attitude. A lot of people talk about unification but I think they are looking too far ahead. Many steps are required before the two Koreas agree to unify.”

Kim Yong-hwa, North Korean, activist

“As an activist for North Korean human rights, I’m critical of the summits and engagement in general. South Korea is not just sacrificing something small, it’s crushing the rights of the people.” If the summit leads to humanitarian aid, that’s good. But will that aid give hope to the people?

“Nothing concrete has come to fruition but South Korea is making leaps, swayed by superficial gestures.” North Korea is a country that violates human rights and by the talks, President Moon is making the North look like a country that is advocating peace. **“Koh Sang-beom, South Korean, designer”** I’m sceptical of whether North Korea would give up its nuclear arms. It said it would stop the test. But that also means it doesn’t need any more tests.

“What use would the peace agreement have if North Korea still provokes and attacks like it did on Yeonpyeong island a few years ago?” Signing on a piece of paper is just a formality. What matters most is the de-escalation of military tension. The peace agreement is meaningless if soldiers are still guarding the heavily armed border. **“Park Jung-oh, North Korean, educational activist”** I don’t think engagement is a good idea. Kim is weak now and is using South Korea’s invitation for peace as a last resort. Kim won’t give up nuclear weapons.

“We aren’t asking for a suspension on nuclear weapon production but for the nuclear weapons to be eliminated.” Still, President Moon wants to sign a peace treaty so that South Korea can reduce its dependence on US military power.

“I expect the summit will end up being Moon just going along with Kim’s wishes. North Korea isn’t really planning to change.”

Captain Yeon, North Korean, defector and former lieutenant

“For North Korea, engagement is the only choice. North Korea has depended on China until now but that’s not possible any more.” The reason why North Korea volunteered to stop nuclear weapon production is probably because Kim can’t gain legitimacy in the eyes of the people when they’ve starved and suffered long enough to know the economy is dead.

“I think that possibly another reason is that Kim has reached the very best nuclear weapons he can produce.” The summit is the best he can do right now. But not the summit nor any other engagement will change the political structure because if the socialist system ends, Kim Jong-un ends.”

Wooyoung Lee

Additional reporting by Hae Ju Kang and Faras Ghani.

* AL JAZEERA NEWS. 26 Apr 2018:

<https://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/inter-korea-summit-koreans-180426080217311.html>

