

November 9, 1982

**'Notes on the Secretary-General's Meeting with the
Permanent Observer of the Republic of Korea'**

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Summary:

The note briefs the discussion between the SG, Mr. Cordovez and the ROK Ambassador Kim regarding possible approaches to foster inter-Korean relations.

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CONFIDENTIAL

NOTES ON THE SECRETARY-GENERAL'S MEETING WITH THE PERMANENT OBSERVER
OF THE REPUBLIC OF KOREA

Held at Headquarters on 9 November 1982 at 1730 hours

Present:

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The Secretary-General

Mr Diego Cordovez

H.E. Dr Kyung-Won KIM,

Permanent Observer of the Republic of Korea to the United Nations □□□

□□□□

Miss Hisako Shimura

Mr Nai Sung Kim, Counsellor □□ □□

1. Ambassador Kim thanked the Secretary-General for receiving him at short notice. Referring to the Secretary-General's meeting with the Permanent Observer of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) held earlier in the day, the Ambassador remarked that newsmen who had learned of the two meetings were most curious. The Secretary-General said that it was mere coincidence that the two meetings were taking place on the same day, for Ambassador Han of DPRK had come to discuss a matter unrelated to the question between the two Koreas.

2. Ambassador Kim said that the purpose of his visit was to convey a message from his Foreign Minister to the Secretary-General. He then handed Foreign Minister Lee's Letter (attached) to the Secretary-General.

3. The Secretary-General, having read the letter, said that it was true that he had a long-standing interest in the question of Korea, having followed it since the time when he had been Under-Secretary-General. He confirmed that his good offices, or whatever assistance that might be helpful, remained at the disposal of the parties. The Secretary-General had not discussed the question recently with the North Korean side and he did not know if there were any new elements on their side that might enable him to resume his efforts. He asked whether Ambassador Kim was aware of any hint as to movement on the part of North Korea.

4. Ambassador Kim said his Government now believed that the best way was to proceed without publicity and to explore areas of possible contact in strict confidence. He had come to pledge that his Government would co-operate with the Secretary-General in any such effort and to respect its confidentiality. Such an approach might allow North Korea some freedom of action. North Korea had its stated ideological positions and its authorities were not prepared to deviate from those positions at the risk of jeopardizing the domestic situation. If the Secretary-General could approach the North Koreans and assure them of confidentiality, it might give them incentive to respond more positively. The Ambassador said that, at this initial stage, he was not proposing anything substantive. However, his Government was prepared to have dialogue with North Korea, either at a high level or at a lower level, between Prime Ministers, Foreign Ministers or Permanent Observers to the United Nations. If the Secretary-General could induce North Korea to agree to it, his Government would be grateful.

5. The Secretary-General said that the idea of a confidential approach, which had

also been raised during his meeting with Foreign Minister Lee, was an interesting one and that he welcomed the ROK Government's offer to co-operate with him in such efforts. There was, however, an element at this time which did not help. Speaking candidly and in confidence, the Secretary-General said, he did not feel that the present Permanent Observer of North Korea, Ambassador Han, could be considered a serious interlocutor. The DPRK Observer Mission was facing an unpleasant situation [\[1\]](#) and Ambassador Han's own position had been undermined because of it. The Secretary-General would instead raise the matter with the Foreign Minister of North Korea when he attended the Non-Aligned meeting in New Delhi in March 1983. At that time, he would also raise the point advanced by South Korea. The Secretary-General observed that Ambassador Han of North Korea seemed obsessed by the problem his Mission was facing and apparently felt that it could place in jeopardy the entire Mission and him personally. Also, the nature of the system in North Korea being what it was, its Permanent Observer seemed to be little more than a spokesman. For those reasons, the Secretary-General believed that New York was not the proper venue for initiating the consultations envisaged.

6. Mr. Codovez agreed with the Secretary-General's assessment. Furthermore, when one side wanted to talk, the other side was often hesitant and suspicious. Recently, there had been a similar situation involving two Central American States. To allay such suspicions, he suggested, it would help if South Korea could suggest a preliminary, incremental list of possible topics for discussion.

7. The Secretary-General referred to the different types of framework for dialogue which the United Nations had employed, including dialogue through an intermediary, as Mr Cordovez was engaged in with respect to the situation relating to Afghanistan. At the Non-Aligned meeting at New Delhi, North Korea would probably press for a paragraph on the Korean question to be included in its Final Document. This might create a difficulty vis-à-vis the Secretary-General's effort to discuss the question with North Korea. The Secretary-General agreed with Mr Cordovez that a preliminary list of topics for discussion would be helpful.

8. Ambassador Kim said he understood the points raised by the Secretary-General. He had not appreciated how seriously the recent incident was affecting the North Korean Ambassador. The Secretary-General said that Ambassador Han seemed to feel that the true object of the legal action was himself, possibly to have him declared persona non grata. Whether he stayed or was recalled by his Government, his position would be a difficult one. Mr Cordovez recalled that Foreign Minister Lee of South Korea had said that he had known Ambassador Han and that the latter was evidently an influential man. Ambassador Kim said that had been true in the early 1970s when both Foreign Minister Lee and the North Korean Ambassador were involved in South-North contact. But the Ambassador's position might have since changed. His own observation of Ambassador Han's role coincided with that of the Secretary-General.

9. The Secretary-General asked if South Korea had any communication with China or the USSR. Ambassador Kim said it had none with China and, with the USSR, only low-level contact which did not relate to the Korean question. In fact, the Chinese were extremely careful to keep a distance from the South Korean Mission in New York. The Secretary-General said that, at some time in the future, such communication might be possible; he would certainly try to encourage it.

The meeting ended at 1805 hours.

[\[1\]](#) The reference is to a legal action brought by a United States court against a member of the DPROK Observer Mission.