

Russia Says North Korea Ready to Restart Nuclear Talks

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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President Vladimir Putin (R) and North Korea's new Ambassador Kim Hyun-joon (2nd L) attend a ceremony to hand over credentials at the Kremlin in Moscow, Nov. 19, 2014

Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said Thursday North Korea was ready to resume stalled international talks on its nuclear program.

North Korea's ambassador to the United Nations said in Geneva last month that it was prepared to resume the six-party talks but must maintain its readiness in the face of joint U.S.-South Korean military exercises.

Russia's Lavrov told a news conference on Thursday: "We got assurances from the high representative of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea that Pyongyang is ready for the restart of six-party talks, without preconditions."

He said a special envoy of North Korean leader Kim Jong Un met President Vladimir Putin this

week to deliver a letter promising "cooperation in solving problems that are now lingering on the Korean peninsula."

The visit to Moscow by envoy Choe Ryong Hae comes as Pyongyang is trying to counter a resolution by a United Nations' human rights body urging the referral of North Korea to the International Criminal Court for alleged crimes against humanity.

Russia voted against the resolution and Lavrov criticized it on Thursday as "confrontational" and "counterproductive."

North Korea, South Korea, Japan, China, Russia and the United States began talks in 2003 to rid the Korean peninsula of nuclear weapons but they were suspended after Pyongyang tested nuclear devices in 2006 and 2009.

The United States says Pyongyang must take meaningful steps toward denuclearization and refrain from provocative acts before talks could resume.

But the North Korean envoy to the United Nations said last month he believed Washington would have already attacked his country had it given up its nuclear program.

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