

Joint Statement in Commemoration of the 50th Security Consultative Meeting

On October 31, 2018, Republic of Korea (ROK) Minister of National Defense Jeong Kyeongdoo and U.S. Secretary of Defense James Mattis will co-host the 50th Annual ROK-U.S. Security Consultative Meeting (SCM). The SCM has played a critical role in deterring war on the Korean Peninsula and developing the ROK-U.S. Alliance for the past half-century, and thereby has become a symbolic annual security consultative body between the two governments.

The SCM originated in 1968 as the “Annual ROK-U.S. Defense Official Meeting” which focused on mutual defense issues amid heightened tensions on the Korean Peninsula caused by North Korea’s seizure of the USS Pueblo. Since the 4th Meeting in 1971, the status of the SCM was raised to an annual government-level security consultative body with participation from foreign affairs officials, and the name of the meeting was changed to the ROK-U.S. Security Consultative Meeting. This year marks its 50th anniversary.

Over the past 50 years, the SCM has played a central role in maintaining peace and stability on the Korean Peninsula while reinforcing the ironclad ROK-U.S. Alliance. An important achievement of the SCM was that it mutually decided to establish the ROK-U.S. Combined Forces Command (CFC) at the 10th SCM in 1977 and established the CFC in the subsequent year. Additionally, the SCM created the Military Committee Meeting (MCM) in 1978. This laid the foundation of the systematic and efficient combined defense system whereby the SCM, MCM, and CFC realize directives given by each country’s national command authority. The CFC is the most robust and seamlessly-integrated combined defense system in the world and celebrates its 40th anniversary this year. The MCM is the highest military consultative body presided over by the two countries’ respective chairmen of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, and the 43rd MCM was held on October 25, 2018.

The SCM is the main consultation channel for future development of the ROK-U.S. Alliance, and its work has greatly added to the development of a robust Alliance. Amid the ever-changing security situation on the Korean Peninsula, at every SCM, the two countries reaffirm the ironclad U.S. commitment to the defense of the ROK and facilitate mutual cooperation for their respective security interests. The SCM has served as a forum to discuss the future of the Alliance by providing strategic direction, set forth in documents such as the “Joint Vision for ROK-U.S. Alliance (2006),” “Guidelines for ROK-U.S. Defense Cooperation (2010),” and the “U.S.-ROK Tailored Deterrence Strategy (2013).” Such efforts have helped shape a relationship built on mutual trust and shared values of freedom, democracy, human rights, and the rule of law.

The SCM builds independent operational capabilities of the ROK armed forces and mutual defense capabilities of the Alliance. In the 1970s, the U.S. provision of support for small arms factory construction in Korea and of foreign military sales loans laid the groundwork for the ROK military’s modernization and capacity-building for independent defense capabilities. During the 1980s and 1990s, the two nations produced more tangible results at the SCM as they signed the “Mutual Logistics Support Agreement” and agreed to expand their defense industry cooperation, strengthening alliance sustainment capabilities and giving a significant push for the development of the ROK defense industry and defense science and technology. In the past two decades, much of the SCM’s efforts have been focused on strengthening the ROK’s independent capabilities as well as the Alliance’s response

capabilities. In particular, the SCM provided the necessary momentum for key policy decisions on operational control (OPCON) transition and its implementation. In 1994, armistice operational control of forces was successfully transferred back to the ROK, and the Alliance has since focused its efforts on attaining relevant preconditions for wartime OPCON transition.

The SCM has helped deepen and expand the level of cooperation between ROK and U.S. forces. The SCM is a key forum that strengthens bilateral cooperation and a concerted international response to counter global security threats. Some of the efforts include counter terrorism, United Nations Peace Keeping Operations, stabilization and reconstruction, counter piracy operations, and humanitarian assistance and disaster relief. Moreover, the SCM helps extend bilateral cooperation in newly emerging security areas, including cyber and space. To strengthen the Alliance's comprehensive security capabilities, the SCM oversees future-oriented cooperation in diverse areas ranging from defense science and technology to defense industry and technology protection.

In the past 50 years, the SCM has grown into the symbol of the ROK-U.S. Alliance; an irreplaceable consultative mechanism that has ensured security on the Korean Peninsula. With the SCM at the center of the Alliance effort, we are able to wisely manage any emerging security challenge. Today, the security environment on the Korean Peninsula, the Asia Pacific region, and around the globe faces a turning point. We live in a volatile security environment which is why the SCM and the ROK-U.S. Alliance are more important today than ever before. Looking forward, the SCM will continue to seek ways to help bring complete denuclearization in a final, fully-verified manner and lasting peace to the Korean Peninsula. It will also take part in the effort to provide a future vision for mutually reinforcing and future oriented development of the Alliance. The SCM, as the highest ROK-U.S. bilateral security consultation body, will continue to shape the Alliance and provide a direction towards the common goal of peace and security on the Korean Peninsula.