

Joint Communiqué of the 50th U.S.-ROK Security Consultative Meeting
Washington, D.C., October 31, 2018

1. The 50th United States (U.S.)-Republic of Korea (ROK) Security Consultative Meeting (SCM) was held in Washington, D.C., on October 31, 2018. U.S. Secretary of Defense James Mattis and ROK Minister of National Defense Jeong Kyeongdoo led their respective delegations, which included senior defense and foreign affairs officials. On October 25, 2018, U.S. Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Joseph F. Dunford Jr. and ROK Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, General Park Hanki presided over the 43rd U.S.-ROK Military Committee Meeting (MCM).
2. The Secretary and the Minister noted that the SCM has played a pivotal role in the development of the U.S.-ROK Alliance since the first meeting on May 28, 1968. Both sides praised the SCM's effective handling of Alliance policy coordination over the past half-century in full expectation that it will continue as the cornerstone venue to affirm national commitments designed to develop the Alliance and enhance security and prosperity in the region. To this end, both sides will hold discussions on a joint vision to further develop Alliance defense cooperation in a mutually reinforcing and future-oriented manner in consideration of potential changes in the security environment.
3. The Secretary and the Minister reviewed the current security environment in and around the Korean Peninsula and the region and discussed cooperative measures between the two nations. The Secretary and the Minister decided to strengthen coordination and cooperation towards the common objective of complete denuclearization in a final, fully verified manner and establishment of permanent peace on the Korean Peninsula. They acknowledged the constructive commitments made during the three inter-Korean summits and the U.S.- Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) Summit in Singapore. They noted the steps taken by the DPRK, such as announcing a suspension of further nuclear tests and missile launches and steps to dismantle the Tongchang-ri missile engine test site and the Punggye-ri nuclear testing site. Both the Secretary and the Minister reaffirmed that the DPRK should fulfill its commitments in the Panmunjom Declaration on Peace,

Prosperity and Reunification of the Korean Peninsula and the Joint Statement of President Donald J. Trump of the United States of America and Chairman Kim Jong Un of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea at the Singapore Summit and abide by its obligations under existing UN Security Council resolutions. They highlighted that full implementation of all UN Security Council resolutions would continue until we are confident about North Korea's complete denuclearization in a final, fully verified manner.

4. The Minister highlighted various confidence building measures the ROK is undertaking with DPRK military authorities in order to implement the Panmunjom Declaration on Peace, Prosperity and Reunification of the Korean Peninsula and the Pyongyang Joint Declaration of September 2018. The Secretary and the Minister assessed that such efforts have had a positive influence on easing tensions on the Korean Peninsula. In particular, both sides determined that the Agreement on the Implementation of the Historic Panmunjom Declaration in the Military Domain should be implemented in a way that contributes substantively to easing tension and establishing peace while ensuring combined readiness and committed to continue to maintain close coordination and cooperation between U.S. and ROK defense authorities during the process of implementation. The Secretary and the Minister assessed that United Nations Command, as the keeper of the Armistice, has helped successfully maintain peace and security on the Korean Peninsula over the past 65 years. Based on the inter-Korean and U.S.-DPRK Summit understandings, the Secretary and the Minister pledged to continue to cooperate with the international community towards diplomatic efforts aimed at building a permanent and stable peace regime on the Korean Peninsula. In addition, noting that the Northern Limit Line (NLL) has been an effective means of separating ROK and DPRK military forces and preventing military tension to date, the Minister expressed his expectation that the buffer zone in the West Sea, which was agreed upon during the inter-Korean Summit in Pyongyang, would contribute to fundamentally preventing unplanned encounters and to military confidence building in support of establishing permanent peace on the Korean Peninsula. The Secretary shared his understanding that the military confidence building measures are important for establishing peace on the Korean Peninsula.

5. The Secretary and the Minister assessed that the U.S.-ROK Alliance is stronger than ever, and reaffirmed the two nations' mutual commitment to the fundamental mission of the Alliance—to defend the ROK through a robust combined defense posture and to enhance the mutual security of both nations under the U.S.-ROK Mutual Defense Treaty. The Secretary and the Minister noted that U.S. forces in the ROK have successfully played a critical role in maintaining peace and stability on the Korean Peninsula over the past 65 years, and reaffirmed that U.S. Forces, Korea (USFK) will continue to play an important role in preventing armed conflict on the Korean Peninsula and promoting peace and stability in Northeast Asia. In addition, the Secretary reemphasized the commitment to maintain the current force level of USFK in order to defend the ROK. The Secretary reaffirmed the continued U.S. commitment to provide extended deterrence to the ROK using the full range of military capabilities, including U.S. nuclear, conventional, and missile defense capabilities. The Secretary and the Minister pledged to explore jointly measures to enhance the Alliance deterrence posture and continue to implement the Tailored Deterrence Strategy while considering the effects of changes in the security environment on the Peninsula and in the region.
6. The Secretary and the Minister expressed appreciation for U.S. and ROK service members in commemoration of the 40th anniversary of the establishment of the U.S.-ROK Combined Forces Command (CFC), which has played the central role in deterring war on the Korean Peninsula and defending the ROK since its establishment in November 7, 1978. The Secretary and the Minister reviewed preparations for the relocation of CFC Headquarters to the Ministry of National Defense (MND) compound and pledged to work together to ensure that the relocation further strengthens the current combined defense system and contributes toward a stable transition to a new combined defense system following transfer of wartime operational control (OPCON). The Secretary and the Minister also pledged to continue to maintain a robust combined defense posture during the process of easing military tension, implementing confidence-building measures, and achieving complete denuclearization of North Korea.
7. The Secretary and the Minister committed to cooperate closely to develop comprehensive

Alliance capabilities in response to common security threats. The Minister emphasized the ROK plans to continue to reinforce its defense capabilities through the ongoing Defense Reform 2.0. The Secretary expressed his hope that the ROK military's defense reform would contribute to enhancing comprehensive Alliance capabilities. In addition, the Secretary and the Minister pledged to continue cooperation in support of acquisition and development of advanced military assets by the ROK military.

8. The Secretary and the Minister reviewed the progress of relevant tasks for OPCON transition, including acquisition of Alliance capabilities and development of strategic documents. The Secretary and the Minister highlighted that there has been substantive and significant progress in preparation for OPCON transition since the June 2017 U.S.-ROK Summit commitment to enable the expeditious conditions-based transfer of OPCON. The Minister emphasized the ROK commitment to complete expeditiously the preparations necessary to exercise OPCON in accordance with the Conditions-based OPCON Transition Plan (COTP), such as by acquiring critical military capabilities, in conjunction with the ongoing defense reform. The Secretary reaffirmed the U.S. commitment to continue to provide bridging capabilities until the ROK fully acquires an independent defense capability and enduring capabilities. The Secretary and the Minister committed to evaluate jointly and continuously the necessary conditions for OPCON transition while taking into full consideration changes in the security situation.

9. The Secretary and the Minister signed the Alliance Guiding Principles which were jointly developed to ensure a strong combined defense posture following OPCON transition. The Secretary and the Minister also signed the revision of the 2015 COTP, and committed to cooperate closely to meet the necessary conditions for OPCON transition at an early date. The Secretary and the Minister endorsed the Future Command Memorandum for Record (MFR) updating the 2013 MFR as well as the Terms of Reference for Relationships between the Republic of Korea Joint Chiefs of Staff, United Nations Command, and ROK-U.S. Combined Forces Command. The Secretary and the Minister decided to maintain the current CFC structure and reaffirmed the mutual commitment that the future CFC is to have an ROK four-star general as the Commander and a U.S. four-star general as the

Deputy Commander. The two sides are to work toward initial operational capability (IOC) certification of the ROK-led combined defense posture in 2019. In addition, the Secretary and the Minister pledged to determine the specific timing of OPCON transition through regular evaluation and review of progress at the annual SCM and MCM.

10. The Secretary and the Minister received a report on the results of the U.S.-ROK MCM from the U.S.-ROK CFC Commander and expressed their satisfaction with the progress in enhancing combined defense capabilities and developing relevant operational concepts, military plans, and strategic documents.
11. The Secretary and the Minister decided to continue to strengthen cooperation in various areas, including space and cyber, in order to ensure an effective joint response against newly emerging threats and to bolster comprehensive Alliance response capabilities. The Minister committed to strengthen the ROK military's space capabilities and enhance Alliance space cooperation and praised the timely and effective cooperation of the two sides during the reentry of the Chinese space station Tiangong-1 through space situational awareness information sharing. The Secretary and the Minister pledged to continue to explore opportunities for bilateral and multilateral exercises to strengthen mutual space operational capabilities, and to build mission assurance. The Secretary and the Minister reaffirmed their commitment to strengthen Alliance cyber capabilities in light of the increasing scope of cyber security threats. They pledged to share information regarding the reorganization of their respective cyber commands in order to promote cyber security cooperation in the future.
12. The Minister and the Secretary praised advances in U.S.-ROK science and technology cooperation since the 49th SCM in 2017, highlighting expanded technology cooperation in the domains of robotics, autonomy, and directed energy. The Secretary and the Minister assessed that deepening and expanding science and technology cooperation contributes greatly to defense capabilities and the interoperability of the Alliance and resolved to continue to lean forward in identifying innovative cooperative projects to advance common interests.

13. The Secretary and the Minister concurred that promoting cooperation in the areas of research and development, defense industrial development, security assistance, logistics, and technology security are important for enhancing combined defense capabilities as well as for maintaining the Alliance's comparative technological advantage. In this regard, they committed to continue coordination and cooperation through the regular consultative bodies focused on these respective areas. The Secretary and the Minister pledged also to review jointly ways to manage more effectively the planning, coordination, and execution of these activities among the various consultative bodies in a more systematic and efficient manner.
14. The Secretary and the Minister pledged to continue and to enhance defense cooperation to address wide-ranging global security challenges of mutual interest, including through peacekeeping operations (PKO), counter-piracy operations, stabilization and reconstruction efforts, regional security cooperation initiatives, and humanitarian assistance and disaster relief. The Minister highly evaluated the effective global leadership demonstrated by the United States in response to various global security challenges. The Secretary praised the ROK's dedication and contribution to various global security efforts, including the international community's efforts against the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), counter-piracy activities in the Gulf of Aden, UN peacekeeping operations, and the Proliferation Security Initiative (PSI). The Secretary and the Minister praised the U.S.-ROK Countering-Weapons of Mass Destruction (CWMD) Committee's efforts to enhance the Alliance's combined capability to prevent WMD proliferation and mitigate WMD threats during a crisis and resolved to continue to strengthen cooperation on this front, including through the DoD Cooperative Threat Reduction Program.
15. The Secretary and the Minister concurred in the importance of U.S.-ROK-Japan trilateral security cooperation based on common security challenges. They committed to continue trilateral cooperation such as high-level policy consultations, various combined exercises, and enhanced information sharing and pledged to seek ways to expand such efforts into multilateral regional cooperation to promote peace and stability in Northeast Asia.

16. The Secretary and the Minister highlighted that USFK has effectively entered the “Pyeongtaek era” following this year’s relocation of USFK and 2nd Infantry Division (2ID) Headquarters to U.S. Army Garrison Humphreys (USAG-H) and last year’s relocation of 8th Army Headquarters. The two sides noted that USAG-H, the largest U.S. overseas military base, represents the strength of the U.S.-ROK Alliance and serves as the symbol of the strong resolve of the Alliance to safeguard the peace and stability of the Korean Peninsula and Northeast Asia. The Secretary expressed appreciation for the ROK’s support of the outstanding construction of USAG-H and the smooth relocation process.
17. The Secretary and the Minister reaffirmed that USFK’s relocation and camp returns are in the interest of both countries and pledged to work together closely on relevant issues to ensure successful transformation in accordance with the U.S.-ROK Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA). The two sides also noted that the responsibility to restore the facilities and areas should be determined pursuant to agreements between the two countries and committed to enhance transparency regarding release of relevant information. In addition, the Secretary and the Minister reconfirmed their intent to continue to discuss relevant issues through regular consultations in accordance with the SOFA. The Secretary and the Minister shared the view that ensuring sufficient and continuous training opportunities for USFK is an essential element to maintain a strong combined defensive posture and, to this end, noted that it is important for ROK MND and USFK to make joint efforts to manage civilian-military relations effectively such as by strengthening accident prevention and other measures in consideration of residents near training areas.
18. The Secretary offered his appreciation for the ROK’s contributions toward ensuring a stable stationing environment for U.S. forces in Korea and for the ROK’s contribution toward ensuring comprehensive security burden-sharing. The Secretary and the Minister noted that the Special Measures Agreement (SMA) has greatly contributed to strengthening U.S.-ROK combined defense capabilities and concurred that it is crucial to conclude the SMA in a timely manner. The two sides committed to continue to enhance the SMA framework by strengthening transparency in its execution, respecting the USFK Commander’s flexibility, promoting mutual respect, and ensuring the sound

implementation of this agreement.

19. Secretary Mattis and Minister Jeong expressed appreciation for the courtesy, hospitality, and work by both sides that contributed to the success of this year's SCM. The Secretary and the Minister affirmed that the discussions during the 50th SCM and the 43rd MCM contributed substantively to strengthening the U.S.-ROK Alliance and further enhanced the development of the bilateral defense relationship into a mutually reinforcing Alliance. Both sides expect to hold the 51st SCM in Seoul at a mutually convenient time in 2019, and committed to make efforts to hold the 5th U.S.-ROK Foreign and Defense Ministerial (2+2) meeting at an early date.