

Historic meeting between North and South Korean leaders sets the stage for peace

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North Korean leader Kim Jong Un (left) and South Korean President Moon Jae-in cross the military demarcation line to the South side at the border village of Panmunjom in the Demilitarized Zone on April 27, 2018. Kim made history that day by crossing over the world's most heavily armed border to greet Moon for talks on North Korea's nuclear weapons. Photo by: Korea Summit Press Pool via AP

GOYANG, South Korea — At a historic summit, the leaders of North and South Korea vowed Friday, April 27, to seek a nuclear-free Korean Peninsula and work toward a formal end to the Korean War this year. However, their meeting concluded with few specifics on how they will reach those goals.

North Korean leader Kim Jong Un and South Korean President Moon Jae-in set aside a year that saw them seemingly on the verge of war. They grasped hands and strode together across the cracked concrete marking the Koreas' border.

Possibility Of Cooperative Future

The sight, inconceivable just months ago, may not erase their failure to provide any new measures on a nuclear standoff that has terrified millions. Still, it allowed the leaders to step forward toward

the possibility of a cooperative future. They acknowledge a difficult past and the skepticism that, after decades of failed diplomacy, things will be different this time.

On the nuclear issue, the leaders merely repeated a previous vow to rid the Korean Peninsula of nuclear weapons, kicking one of the world's most pressing issues down the road to a much-anticipated summit between Kim and U.S. President Donald Trump in coming weeks.

Leaders Step Over Border Together

Still, the summit produced the spectacle of two men from nations with a history of hostility grinning after Kim walked over the border to greet Moon. Kim became the first leader of his nation to set foot on southern soil since the Korean War. Both leaders then briefly stepped together into the North and back to the South.

The summit marks a swing in relations for the countries, from nuclear threats and missile tests to signs of peace and cooperation. Perhaps the change is best illustrated by geography: Kim and Moon's historic handshake and a later 30-minute conversation at a footbridge on the border occurred within walking distance of a spot with a darker history. A North Korean soldier fled south in a hail of gunfire there last year, and North Korean soldiers killed two U.S. soldiers there with axes in 1976.

Vow To Achieve Nuclear-Free Korean Peninsula

Standing next to Moon after the talks ended, Kim faced cameras beaming his image live to the world and declared that the Koreas are "linked by blood as a family." The leaders also vowed to achieve "a nuclear-free Korean Peninsula," something they've said before.

The latest declaration between the Koreas, Kim said, should not repeat the "unfortunate history of past inter-Korean agreements that only reached the starting line." And which then became derailed.

What happened Friday should be seen in the view of the last year. The United States, its ally South Korea and North Korea threatened and raged as the North unleashed a torrent of weapons tests. It should also be seen in light of the long, destructive history of the rival Koreas, which fought one of the 20th century's bloodiest conflicts and now occupy a divided peninsula that's still technically in a state of war.

Pushing Jointly For Talks With U.S.

Trump tweeted Friday, "KOREAN WAR TO END!" and said the United States "should be very proud of what is now taking place in Korea!" Both Koreas agreed to jointly push for talks this year with the United States and also potentially China to officially end the Korean War. It stopped with an armistice that never ended the war.

Many will judge the summit based on the weak nuclear language. North Korea's nuclear and missile tests last year likely put it on the threshold of becoming a true nuclear power. The North, which has spent decades doggedly building its bombs despite near-constant international criticism, claims it has already risen to that level.

Conservatives Skeptical Of Clear Commitment

South Korean conservative politicians criticized the joint statement. They said it lets North Korea off the hook by failing to secure a clear commitment to nuclear disarmament. Liberty Korea Party Chairman Hong Joon-pyo denounced the summit as a "show camouflaged as peace."

However, the Koreas made progress on other points of friction between them. Moon agreed to visit Pyongyang, North Korea's capital, sometime in autumn, and both leaders said they'd meet on a regular basis and exchange calls via a recently established hotline.

Western Sea Border Designated A Peace Area

They agreed to settle their disagreement over their western sea border by designating it as a peace area. Fishing activities are to be secured for both countries. They said they would open a communication office in the North Korean border town of Kaesong and resume temporary reunions of relatives separated by the 1950-1953 Korean War.

Kim acknowledged the widespread skepticism over their summit. "There are skeptical views on whether the meeting today will yield meaningful results," Kim said. "If we maintain a firm will and proceed forward hand in hand, it will be impossible at least for things to get worse than they are now."

South Korean Residents Are Hopeful

During their talks, Kim joked that he would make sure not to interrupt Moon's sleep anymore, a reference to the North's early-morning missile tests last year, according to Moon's spokesman, Yoon Young-chan. Kim also referred to South Korea's Yeonpyeong Island that North Korea attacked in 2010, killing four people. He said its residents, who have been living in fear of North Korean weapons, have high hopes the summit will help heal past scars. Kim said he'd visit Seoul's presidential Blue House if invited.

The historic greeting of the two leaders, which may be the images most remembered from the summit, was planned to the last detail. However, the multiple border crossings may have been unplanned.

Unexpected Crossing Between Two Countries

As thousands of journalists, who were kept in a huge conference center well away from the summit, except for a small group of reporters at the border, waited and watched, Moon stood near the Koreas' dividing line. He moved forward the moment he glimpsed Kim appearing in front of a building on the northern side. They smiled broadly and shook hands, with the border between them. Moon then invited Kim to cross into the South, and, after Kim did so, Moon said, "You have crossed into the South, but when do I get to go across?" Kim replied, "Why don't we go across now?" and then grasped Moon's hand and led him into the North and then back into the South.

Moon then led Kim along a red carpet into South Korean territory. Two fifth-grade students from the Daesongdong Elementary School greeted the leaders and gave Kim flowers. An honor guard stood at attention, with a military band playing traditional Korean folk songs beloved by both Koreas.

They then took a photo inside the Peace House, where the summit took place, in front of a painting of South Korea's Bukhan Mountain. Kim's sister, Kim Yo Jong, was by Kim's side throughout the

ceremony, handing him a pen to sign a guestbook, holding the children's flowers and scribbling notes.

Past So-Called Breakthroughs

Expectations were generally low on the nuclear issue. Past so-called breakthroughs on North Korea's weapons have collapsed amid charges of cheating and bad faith.

Some, however, say the only way to get a deal is to do what the Koreans tried: Sit down and see what's possible.

The White House said in a statement that it is "hopeful that talks will achieve progress toward a future of peace and prosperity for the entire Korean Peninsula."

Quiz

- 1 According to the article, the summit between Kim Jong Un and Moon Jae-in is historic.
Which paragraph BEST supports the idea outlined above?
- (A) On the nuclear issue, the leaders merely repeated a previous vow to rid the Korean Peninsula of nuclear weapons, kicking one of the world's most pressing issues down the road to a much-anticipated summit between Kim and U.S. President Donald Trump in coming weeks.
 - (B) Still, the summit produced the spectacle of two men from nations with a history of hostility grinning after Kim walked over the border to greet Moon. Kim became the first leader of his nation to set foot on southern soil since the Korean War. Both leaders then briefly stepped together into the North and back to the South.
 - (C) Many will judge the summit based on the weak nuclear language. North Korea's nuclear and missile tests last year likely put it on the threshold of becoming a true nuclear power. The North, which has spent decades doggedly building its bombs despite near-constant international criticism, claims it has already risen to that level.
 - (D) However, the Koreans made progress on other points of friction between them. Moon agreed to visit Pyongyang, North Korea's capital, sometime in autumn, and both leaders said they'd meet on a regular basis and exchange calls via a recently established hotline.
- 2 Is the author of the article suggesting that Kim Jong Un believes that this summit is the first step in creating better relations between the two Koreas? Which selection from the article BEST supports your answer?
- (A) No; The latest declaration between the Koreas, Kim said, should not repeat the "unfortunate history of past inter-Korean agreements that only reached the starting line." And which then became derailed.
 - (B) Yes; Kim acknowledged the widespread skepticism over their summit. "There are skeptical views on whether the meeting today will yield meaningful results," Kim said. "If we maintain a firm will and proceed forward hand in hand, it will be impossible at least for things to get worse than they are now."
 - (C) No; During their talks, Kim joked that he would make sure not to interrupt Moon's sleep anymore, a reference to the North's early-morning missile tests last year, according to Moon's spokesman, Yoon Young-chan. Kim also referred to South Korea's Yeonpyeong Island that North Korea attacked in 2010, killing four people.
 - (D) Yes; Moon then invited Kim to cross into the South, and, after Kim did so, Moon said, "You have crossed into the South, but when do I get to go across?" Kim replied, "Why don't we go across now?" and then grasped Moon's hand and led him into the North and then back into the South.
- 3 Which of the following people quoted in the article would be MOST LIKELY to agree with the idea that the recent meeting between North and South Korea is a sham?
- (A) Kim Jong Un
 - (B) Moon Jae-in
 - (C) Donald Trump
 - (D) Hong Joon-pyo
- 4 HOW does the article introduce the idea that the border location of the summit is significant?
- (A) by contrasting positive scenes of unity between the two Korean leaders with more horrific events that happened in the same location in the past
 - (B) by describing the Peace House that rests on the South Korean side of the border along with the positive feelings that the two leaders experienced
 - (C) by explaining that it was important to find a middle ground where both North Korea and South Korea could feel safe to express their opinions
 - (D) by showing how Moon Jae-in forced an unexpected crossing over to the North Korean side of the border and describing Kim Jong Un's reaction

