

**Congress of the United States**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

April 15, 2021

The Honorable Joseph R. Biden  
President of the United States  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW  
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Biden,

We are encouraged that Secretary of State Anthony Blinken and Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin included Korea as part of their first overseas trip. This underscores the importance of the U.S.-South Korea alliance and the strategic importance of the Korean Peninsula. The views and diplomatic engagement of allies and partners in the Indo-Pacific, especially South Korea, are vitally important as we work towards denuclearization with North Korea.

As your administration plans to conduct a North Korea policy review, we urge you to consider a secure and sustainable path forward for U.S.-North Korea relations. We hope your administration will consider this review as an opportunity to pursue a new approach that prioritizes peace in ways that will meaningfully advance U.S.-North Korean relations, and reduce nuclear risk where other approaches have failed. We appreciate your attention to this critical issue.

The Fiscal Year (FY) 2020 National Defense Authorization Act included a sense of Congress that diplomacy is essential in order to ensure denuclearization, and that a formal end to the Korean War plays a critical role toward that goal. We strongly urge you to focus on the hard work of sustained diplomacy with North Korea alongside our partners and allies in the region.

While active hostilities between the United States and North Korea ended 67 years ago with the Armistice Agreement, there was never a formal end to the War. This unresolved state of war causes tensions that must be addressed for meaningful progress with North Korea. A peace agreement would remove North Korea's public justification for its nuclear weapons program. A future peace agreement will not undermine the U.S.-South Korea alliance, or have a legal effect on the Mutual Defense Treaty. Furthermore, as General Abrams, Commander – U.S. Forces Korea stated in the House Armed Services Committee on March 10, 2021, an end of war declaration, a key step toward a peace agreement, would not raise any immediate military concerns. Such an agreement would reduce tensions, build trust, and improve our ability to engage on issues with North Korea that align with our interests and values, including human rights and denuclearization.

We also encourage you to embrace a gradual, reciprocal and verifiable process. This means that we cannot realistically expect the North Korean regime to unilaterally disarm before providing any sanctions relief or other incentives. At the same time, we note with alarm the recent ballistic missile test by North Korea in violation of several UNSC resolutions and encourage North Korea to eschew provocation. However, an “all or nothing” approach will not move us closer to

advancing peace and security on the Korean Peninsula, and will likely keep us at an unacceptable status quo.

There are several interim steps that your administration can take as confidence building measures and to reduce tensions. Reaffirming past commitments which called for new relations based on peaceful coexistence and denuclearization, including in the 2018 Singapore Joint Declaration is a good first step. We also urge you to facilitate reunions between long-divided North Korean and American families by reversing the previous administration's policy of restricting US citizens from traveling to North Korea. It is an unfortunate fact of time that the opportunity to reunite divided Korean families is rapidly closing. As of November 2019, the average age of South Korean divided family members was 81, and more than 60 percent of the 133,370 applicants who applied for the lottery for inter-Korean family reunions since 1988 have already died.

We also support lifting the travel ban to improve humanitarian access, including for the repatriation of remains for U.S. service members, facilitating people-to-people exchanges, and expanding sanction exemptions for humanitarian activities. These efforts should not undermine efforts to hold North Korea accountable for violating UNSC resolutions, including their most recent ballistic missile test. Instead, they should be part and parcel of a comprehensive U.S. policy towards North Korea, which shines light on human rights and humanitarian concerns. Most importantly, we must work hand-in-hand with our allies and partners in the Indo-Pacific especially, South Korea, to advance peace and to ensure that we are supporting each other's diplomatic efforts.

Finally, studies have shown that including women and more diverse voices at the negotiation table result in more durable peace agreements. We encourage the administration to include the views and recommendations of women, youth, and other members of civil society who are most impacted by policy changes as it reviews policy towards North Korea.

The world looks to the U.S. for global leadership. As your administration completes the policy review regarding North Korea, we urge you to embrace this chance to build trust, bring peace and move toward denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula in support of our interests and our treaty ally, South Korea.

Thank you for your consideration and we look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Marilyn Strickland', written in a cursive style.

Marilyn Strickland  
Member of Congress

/s/  
Nikema Williams  
Member of Congress

/s/  
Sara Jacobs  
Member of Congress

/s/  
Ro Khanna  
Member of Congress

/s/  
James P. McGovern  
Member of Congress

/s/  
Karen Bass  
Member of Congress

/s/  
Jake Auchincloss  
Member of Congress

/s/  
Raúl M. Grijalva  
Member of Congress

/s/  
Mark Pocan  
Member of Congress

/s/  
Jim Costa  
Member of Congress

/s/  
Grace Meng  
Member of Congress

/s/  
Jan Schakowsky  
Member of Congress

CC: Secretary Antony Blinken  
CC: Secretary Lloyd Austin