



Sustaining peace on the Korean Peninsula and the role of international organizations: a secondary publication

Young-Ju Oh^{1†}, Eun Mee Kim²

¹Institute of Foreign Affairs and National Security, Korea National Diplomatic Academy, Seoul, Korea

²Ewha Womans University, Seoul, Korea



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Corresponding author

Eun Mee Kim
Ewha Womans University, 52,
Ewhayeodae-gil, Seodaemun-gu, Seoul
03760, Korea
Tel: 82-2-3277-2114
E-mail: emkim@ewha.ac.kr

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[†] At the time of the original publication, Ms. Young-Ju Oh was working at the Institute of Foreign Affairs and National Security, Korea National Diplomatic Academy, Seoul, Korea. She is now currently working at the Ministry of SMEs and Startups (MSS), Sejong, Korea.

Keywords

United Nations; Sustainable development; International cooperation; Republic of Korea (ROK); Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK)



The Republic of Korea's potential role in the peacebuilding process on the Korean Peninsula is explored, with the Democratic People's Republic of Korea's earnest efforts to denuclearize and become a normal country. The paper focuses on the United Nations (UN) agencies in the peacebuilding process, considering the UN's engagement in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea during the sanction years with humanitarian assistance, the UN's legitimacy as an impartial international organization for assisting developing countries in forging peace and prosperity, and recently-adopted resolutions on sustaining peace and the Sustainable Development Goals. Policy recommendations are for the Republic of Korea to actively cooperate with the UN's development and humanitarian agencies, conduct a thorough preparatory review and conduct research, and work towards expanding its engagement and role within key UN agencies.

Introduction

The international community has shown great interest and expectation in the possibility of establishing sustained peace on the Korean Peninsula as the peace process appears to manifest itself with the 2018 inter-Korean summits and the 2018 U.S.-Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK, North Korea) Summit in Singapore. Peace on the Korean Peninsula has been a key agenda in the past for international peace and security, which had been focused on the security balance in Northeast Asia and international non-proliferation regime due to the DPRK's determination to develop and possess nuclear weapons.

If the DPRK moves forward with dramatic progress in its complete denuclearization and transition to a normal country, the international community's interest in the Korean Peninsula could expand beyond the elimination of security threats toward establishing sustained peace. The international community will be interested in exploring various ways to engage with the DPRK's transition toward a normal country. A "normal country" is defined as a nation that has developed democracy and achieved progress in reforming the way it operates, as well as being economically advanced and open [1-3]. For the DPRK, many scholars argue that it would mean that the DPRK will join the international community through reform, openness, and denuclearization, including embracing the Joint Declaration on the Denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula, and will respect

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the resolutions of the United Nations (UN) Security Council [4,5].

Establishing peace on the Korean Peninsula will mainly depend on bilateral relations between the two Koreas and the relationship with four neighboring countries—the US, China, Japan and Russia. However, once the DPRK moves forward with its reform and opening, there will be more room for other international actors, such as the UN and international financial institutions (IFIs) to engage in bilateral and multilateral relations with the DPRK [5–7]. This projection is based on the assumption that the UN sanctions would be lifted as a result of earnest efforts by the DPRK for denuclearization and transition toward a normal country. Additionally, UN member states and other international organizations must also agree to provide assistance to the DPRK, especially for economic assistance. Although the UN has been criticized for its role in peacebuilding efforts in other parts of the world, there is no other multilateral format that can provide support to the DPRK when the sanctions are lifted. Thus, we need to review the potential role of the UN in the peacebuilding process, including its recent reforms to address criticisms about its peacebuilding mechanism. The role of the private sector and businesses will also be enhanced with the DPRK's reform and opening.

This paper starts with the premise that the Republic of Korea (ROK, South Korea) should play a proactive and important role in denuclearization and building sustained peace on the Korean Peninsula [8–12]. The ROK needs the capacity to lead and coordinate diverse international actors to promote lasting peace on the Korean Peninsula, which includes a thorough understanding of relevant international actors' backgrounds, interests, and potential contributions to the peacebuilding process. This preparation will require a firm commitment, time and effort for preliminary research, and proactive engagement with relevant key agencies. This will be a time-consuming process that requires continued commitment, and thus, it is important that research and preparatory work begin as soon as possible.

Since the 2018 historic inter-Korean Summits and US-DPRK Summits, there is growing interest for the expansion of inter-Korean economic cooperation and the role of international actors in normalizing relations between the US and the DPRK. However, there has been relatively little attention on how the UN and UN agencies can engage in this process. We note that the UN and IFIs have played an important role in advancing global peace and security by supporting developing countries and countries in transition, and we can assume that they could play a crucial role in the DPRK's reform and opening.

Although it is premature to determine the actual roles that the UN and international organizations will perform in establishing peace on the Korean Peninsula, we can learn from their past role in the DPRK during the sanction years. We can also presume that the UN activities for the DPRK will increase when the conditions are ripe for such a transformation, considering the UN's mandate and activities for international peace, security, and development.

IFIs such as the World Bank (WB) and International Monetary Fund (IMF) could actively join efforts to support the DPRK given their extensive experience in supporting transition economies and developing countries. Cooperation between the UN agencies and the World Bank Group has also increased in developing countries with the adoption and implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) since 2016. We assume that there will be close multi-lateral cooperation between the UN and IFIs for the DPRK's reform and opening when the time comes.

This paper focuses on the role of the UN among international organizations in the peacebuilding process on the Korean Peninsula, including the DPRK's reform and opening. This paper focuses on how the UN can be involved in the DPRK's reform and liberalization after the conditions for such support have been created, and not on the conditions for lifting UN

sanctions. In particular, we will explore the ROK's potential role in this process and provide policy recommendations.

Brief overview of the Republic of Korea's peacebuilding efforts on the Korean Peninsula

The Korean Armistice Agreement was signed on July 27, 1953, ceasing all hostilities of the Korean War. It was signed by the United Nations Command represented by the US, the DPRK, and China. However, the Armistice was not a peace treaty, but a cease of fire on the Korean Peninsula. There have been many attempts at reaching peace on the Korean Peninsula for decades with ups and downs, as well as negotiations for eliminating nuclear weapons in the DPRK. The sudden death of Chairman Kim Il-sung in July 1994 happened just days after the US and the DPRK opened talks in Geneva about the DPRK's nuclear programs, and only a few weeks before the first-ever Inter-Korean Summit to take place on July 25, 1994. The Inter-Korean Summit did not take place in 1994, and it was not until 2000 when ROK President Kim Dae-jung and DPRK Chairman Kim Jong-il met in Pyongyang for the first time since the Armistice.

The Six-Party Talks among the ROK, the DPRK, the US, China, Japan, and Russia took place since 2003 after the DPRK withdrew from the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty. This multilateral meeting was an effective method to have a region-wide discussion about the DPRK's development of nuclear capabilities [13]. The meetings took place in Beijing, China, and went through six rounds of talks. However, these meetings discontinued after the DPRK declared that it would pull out of the Six-Party Talks and resume its nuclear enrichment program. The ROK's engagement with the Six-Party Talks and other nuclear negotiations was at times limited as the DPRK and the US often took the lead in the negotiations.

President Kim Dae-jung's (1997–2002) "Sunshine Policy," which signaled a dramatic departure from past ROK Presidents' hard-line policies against DPRK, thawed the relationship between the two Koreas. Several important cooperative projects began, including the Kumgang Mountain tour (1998–2008) and the Kaesong Industrial Park (2004–2016) during the ROK's Roh Moo-hyun (2003–2008) government. The Kumgang Mountain tour was the first joint venture between the two Koreas and brought hard currencies to the DPRK with guided tours. Although President Kim Dae-jung was credited for building a constructive relationship between the two Koreas, and allowed the ROK to have a greater voice in discussions with the DPRK, his soft-line policies were criticized by the conservatives for having aided the DPRK's nuclear program. The Kumgang Mountain tour was halted in 2008 when a ROK civilian was shot dead during a tour. The Kaesong Industrial Park was conceived by President Roh Moo-hyun and Chairman Kim Jong-il, and it began production at the end of 2004 as a symbol of inter-Korean cooperation. This was not without criticisms similar to those against the Kumgang Mountain; after periods of tension, it has been shut down since 2016. President Roh Moo-hyun visited Pyongyang in 2007 for the second Inter-Korean Summit.

A return to a more conservative party in the ROK with Presidents Lee Myung-bak (2008–2013) and Park Geun-hye (2013–2017) ushered in a period of more restrictive policies and programs toward the DPRK. They enjoyed support from the conservative constituents who continued to argue that the Sunshine Policy bolstered the DPRK's nuclear programs, while the progressive constituents argued that the two Koreas were in a more peaceful period with less military provocations. The impeachment of President Park Geun-hye in 2017 and election of President Moon Jae-in (2017–2022) of the progressive party has renewed the ROK's interest in the peace

process on the Korean Peninsula with the ROK playing a more decisive role. President Moon Jae-in and Chairman Kim Jong Un signed the Panmunjom Declaration at the Inter-Korean Summit on April 27, 2018 in Panmunjom. This declaration included transforming the Armistice Agreement of 1953 into a peace treaty with the cooperation of the US and China. As a follow-up, during the 2018 US-DPRK Summit, US President Trump and Chairman Kim Jung-un signed a joint statement that reaffirmed the Panmunjom Declaration [14]. There have been three Inter-Korean Summits since 2018 to help with the Peace Process on the Korean Peninsula, but these Summits have been suspended. The DPRK-US Summits have also been suspended since the second summit in Hanoi, Vietnam on February 27–28, 2019, which was cut short due to disagreements on the issue of easing all or some sanctions against the DPRK.

While there may be some disagreement about the stance toward the DPRK within the ROK, there is a general agreement that peace on the Korean Peninsula should be led by the ROK. With the growing prowess of the ROK in terms of its economic development and growing international presence, South Koreans believe that they should be able to manage and have a greater voice in the peace process on the Korean Peninsula [14]. The recent Moon Jae-in government has been the most active among the ROK presidents, with three Inter-Korean Summits and the DPRK-US Summits. Chairman Kim Jong Un has also been active in engaging with the ROK, the US, and China, and hopes remain that the two Koreas will return to a more active period of summits and negotiations in the near future.

This paper will discuss the role of the ROK in the peacebuilding process on the Korean Peninsula with a special focus on how it may better engage with the UN and IFIs, which are likely to play important functions in the peace process once sanctions toward the DPRK are lifted.

Sustaining peace on the Korean Peninsula and the United Nations

United Nations's view on peace: sustaining peace

While the ROK and the DPRK are central to the peace process on the Korean Peninsula, the UN has been involved in affairs on the Korean Peninsula as an international platform for the DPRK's nuclear and human rights issues as well as a key channel to provide humanitarian assistance. The UN Charter's commitment to international peace, security, and human rights provided the basis for the UN's involvement in the DPRK.

If the DPRK carries out adequate measures for its reform and opening, the international community would agree that the UN, which enjoys legitimacy across the world, should be involved in the transition of the DPRK into a normal country. Thus, it will be important to understand the current discourse and a new approach at the UN for peace and peacebuilding, since it will provide the foundation for the UN's engagement with the DPRK.

There has been growing criticism that the UN should change its approach to peace since its ambitious deployment of UN peacekeepers in the last decade has not led to the elimination or even reduction of war and conflict around the world (Report of the High Level Panel on Peace Operations 2016). Against this backdrop, in 2016 the UN adopted the concept of, and resolution on, "sustaining peace" after much deliberation. The concept of "sustaining peace" first clarifies that peace is a clear and strategic policy objective for all countries regardless of whether they are currently beset in conflict, and that the UN's peace operations aim to sustain peace in all UN member states. By separating the concept of peace from conflict, "sustaining peace" emphasizes that the UN peace efforts should also focus on preventing conflict rather than

merely responding once conflict has occurred. This means that UN peacebuilding activities, which were confined to activities in post-conflict situations, can now be expanded to include a wider range of activities including conflict prevention. Thus, an interface has been created to link various peacebuilding efforts and activities of member states to those of the UN's peace and security activities.

The UN General Assembly and Security Council in 2016 have both adopted a resolution on "sustaining peace" [15,16]. These resolutions were adopted in order to find a new approach to sustaining peace and to redefine the UN's role and function in a rapidly-changing international peace and security context. In 2015, the UN, led by former Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon, reviewed three aspects of the peace and security system (peace activity; peacebuilding; and women and peace reflected in the UN Security Council Resolution 1325) in order to respond to the rapidly changing international security environment, including the spread of terrorism and extreme violence, and international concerns arising from a complex set of issues including poverty, natural disasters, health security, refugees, and immigration. The UN led a process to reexamine the UN process for peace and security by a group of experts, and the report recommended that the UN use the concept of "sustaining peace" to deal with new challenges to peace and security. Many countries, including the ROK, which was a main champion from the beginning, spearheaded the adoption of the resolution [15].

The UN's discussions on peace and security have centered on the UN's method of engagement in war, conflict, and peacebuilding, which are reflected in the UN Security Council's agenda [16]. The UN engages in international peace and security issues in the form of dispute resolution, managing peacekeeping operations, and participating in the post-conflict peacebuilding process through the Peacebuilding Commission. Over eighty percent of recent UN Security Council discussions have focused on dispatching and managing peacekeeping operations in conflict-affected countries in three stages of conflict: (1) occurrence of conflict; (2) restoration and maintenance of peace; and (3) post-conflict peacebuilding [16].

The resolution for "sustaining peace" argues, first and foremost, that the UN's three pillars of peace and security, development, and human rights must be interlinked in order to achieve sustained peace. Furthermore, the resolution states that the UN must innovate its activities conducted under the UN's three pillars toward an integrated and mutually reinforcing manner for sustaining peace. After the adoption of the resolution on "sustaining peace," measures to link the concept to activities of the UN are being actively discussed, and various reform plans have been proposed and adopted. The UN held high-level talks on sustainable development and sustaining peace to strengthen the peace-development nexus (January 2017), reform of the United Nations Peace and Security System and Development System (2017–19) was conducted, and the UN has reviewed measures to strengthen the role of women and young people in peacebuilding ("Seven-Point Action Plan on Gender-Responsive Peacebuilding") [17,18]. Although some member states have expressed reservations about the expansion of the concept of lasting peace, the UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres has emphasized that sustainable development is the best guarantee for sustaining peace (United Nations Secretary-General's Report on "Peacebuilding and Continuing Peace"; A/72/707, January 2018, available at <https://www.un.org/peacebuilding/policy-issues-and-partnerships/policy/sg-reports>) and has developed practical strategies to link peace and development in an integrated way [19].

The resolution on "sustaining peace" also calls for strategic partnerships with various international actors beyond the UN system—in particular, IFIs, bilateral donors and the private sector—in an effort to enhance the ownership of member states in achieving sustained peace.

When the time comes for the UN to engage with the DPRK in its transition to a normal country, it is plausible that the UN will consider its engagement through the lens of sustaining peace and sustainable development. This means that the UN will be likely to use the concept of “sustaining peace” in its internal discussions to provide support the DPRK for UN’s “sustaining peace” resolution.

Sustaining peace, sustainable development, and the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea

Discussions within the UN about the concept of “sustaining peace” were partly inspired by the Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development, which was adopted at the 2015 UN Summit. The 2030 Agenda clearly states that there is no peace without sustainable development and vice versa, and argues that peace, justice and strong institutions are key for sustainable development as presented in SDG 16. Furthermore, development gains would be reversed without sustained peace, and inequalities will increase without inclusion and access to justice for all [20]. In January 2017, the UN Secretary-General, Antonio Guterres, emphasized the UN’s action to prevent war and sustain peace in the context of SDG 16 [15,21]. Although the primary responsibility for peace will lie with the nations themselves, the UN system and international partners should assist in building resilient capacities for sustaining peace [15,21]. After the adoption of the SDGs and the resolution on “sustaining peace,” there has been a clear acknowledgement within the UN that sustainable development is an important outcome of peace and is also an enabler of sustaining peace (UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, High-Level Dialogue on “Building Sustainable Peace for All: Synergies between the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and Sustaining Peace” (January, 2017); available at https://www.un.org/pga/71/wp-content/uploads/sites/40/2016/12/Sustainable-Peace-and-2030-Agenda_Concept-note_FINAL.pdf).

In other words, the achievement of the SDGs is meaningful in itself, but it is also important for international cooperation as an investment for peace.

Thus, it is reasonable to expect that the UN will consider the SDGs an important means to achieve sustaining peace on the Korean Peninsula and the normalization of the DPRK. Supporting the implementation of the SDGs in the DPRK will be the UN’s first step in playing an important role in establishing peace on the Korean Peninsula. Since sustaining peace is a shared responsibility that needs to be achieved by the DPRK government and other national stakeholders, active cooperation between the UN and the DPRK will be vital [15]. It will be important to critically assess the UN system supporting the implementation of the SDGs. In addition, a review of UN agencies’ current assistance to the DPRK will help us better project possible UN engagement with the DPRK.

Implications of the United Nations support system for the Sustainable Development Goals for future United Nations engagement with the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea

Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development, or the SDGs, has 17 goals and 169 targets and has been recognized as a groundbreaking and innovative initiative that expands the current discourse on development cooperation and provides a framework for international cooperation fit for the 21st century.

The key features of the SDGs are: (1) a human-centered approach in line with the motto, “Leave No One Behind” in the process of achieving the SDGs; (2) incorporation of the needs of both the current and future generations; (3) integration of peace, security, and human rights as the foundation for sustainable development; (4) innovative partnership among all international actors (e.g., nation-states, the UN, IFIs, and the private sector); and (5) a set of universal goals that

apply not only to developing countries, but to all 193 UN member states to achieve by 2030.

Since 2015, the UN has put international cooperation for the SDGs as one of its top priorities. The UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres carried out a sweeping reform of the UN Development System to reorganize the support system for partner countries with a focus on SDGs implementation. They included: (1) strengthening the function of the Resident Coordinator, who oversees UN projects in developing countries; (2) better coordination and reduction of redundancies among the UN projects in developing countries by strengthening the UN Country Team, which is a coordinating body for the UN development and humanitarian agencies; and (3) renaming the UN Development Framework as the UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF), which is designed to be the primary instrument for planning and implementation of the UN development activities at the country level in support of the SDGs implementation [22]. The reform aims to build an integrated UN Development System that is more focused on delivery on the ground with capacities and resources better aligned with the SDGs.

When the UN Development System can actively work with the DPRK, the UN would consider the following to be the first-order priority in accordance with comprehensive reform of the UN Development System: (1) establish the UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework for the DPRK to support the DPRK's efforts to achieve the SDGs; (2) empower the Resident Coordinator in the DPRK; (3) secure funding for development programs in the DPRK; and (4) establish partnerships with other international actors operating in the DPRK.

We note that the DPRK has been working with the SDGs since they were announced in 2015. On September 25, 2015, Mr. Tapan Mishra, the UN Resident Coordinator with the Co-Chair Mr. Rim Yong Chol, Division Director of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the DPRK, presented the SDGs in Pyongyang [23]. Additionally, the DPR Korea Needs and Priorities 2019 outlines the funding agencies working in the DPRK in order to support 3.8 million people in the DPRK [24]. The DPRK has announced that it will present its voluntary national report for the SDGs at the 2020 High-Level Political Forum for Sustainable Development at the UN [25]. Thus, the DPRK appears to be ready for further UN engagement once the sanctions are lifted.

The United Nations's current humanitarian assistance to the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and implications for future engagement

The UN is actively supporting developing countries to achieve the SDGs through the UN Funds & Program agencies. The UN Development System is the largest multilateral development actor, which provided US\$ 33.7 billion in 2017 for assisting developing countries to achieve the SDGs, and these resources largely constitute grant aid from member state donors [26]. The UN Development System reform was based on the UN resolution A/72/279 ("Repositioning of the UN Development System," 2018 <https://undocs.org/Home/Mobile?FinalSymbol=a%2Fres%2F72%2F279&Language=E&DeviceType=Desktop&LangRequested=False>). However, the DPRK has not benefited from the UN's development assistance during the last decade due to the UN Security Council's sanctions against the DPRK's nuclear program, the most complex in history. A limited number of humanitarian assistance projects have been delivered without a break even under the UN sanctions, since the resolutions do not explicitly prevent humanitarian assistance to the DPRK. According to 2018 UN statistics, a total of US\$ 25.9 million in humanitarian assistance was provided to the DPRK through five agencies (WFP, UNICEF, WHO, FAO, and UNFPA). The amounts of aid were, according to the UNOCHA Website as of February 2019: (1) WFP: \$14.8 million; (2) UNICEF: \$5 million; (3) WHO: \$3.5 million; (4) FAO: \$2 million; and (5) UNFPA: \$600,000. A total of six UN offices are currently stationed in the DPRK, which include

the above five agencies and the UNDP.

Most of the current projects in the DPRK are focused on improving nutrition, providing food security, and improving the basic health environment for the most vulnerable people, such as women and children [24]. UNOCHA estimates that approximately 10.9 million people, or 43% of the DPRK's total population, need basic humanitarian assistance, and it is estimated that of these, 3.8 million people are the most vulnerable (2019 DPRK Needs & Priorities; <https://dprkorea.un.org/en/10164-dpr-korea-needs-and-priorities-2019>).

The DPRK was among UNOCHA's 44 most vulnerable humanitarian crisis countries in 2018, but it actually received the least support compared to its need [27]. The required amount for assistance was \$111.2 million, and the actual disbursement of assistance was \$25.9 million. This amounts to a coverage of 23.4%. This implies that the international community has great reservations for the DPRK's development needs, but also for its humanitarian needs due to the DPRK's nuclear program. Although the UN sanctions allow for humanitarian assistance to the DPRK, there is very little assistance to the DPRK since there are no banks to handle remittances and there is the perception of difficulty in passing through the UN Sanctions Committee. Although the UN's support for the DPRK has been very limited and small in scale, it offers several implications for future UN engagement with the DPRK. First, the UN's assistance to the DPRK will be an important element in the future when sanctions against the DPRK are lifted, with positive transformations in the DPRK and the Korean Peninsula. Since sanctions against the DPRK have been strengthened, bilateral assistance has continued to decrease, and only a few Nordic countries including Switzerland and Finland have provided limited humanitarian assistance to the DPRK. We assume that the UN agencies, which have worked in the DPRK during the sanction years, have accumulated up-to-date and evidence-based data, albeit limited, for the DPRK's development environment and have established channels of cooperation within the DPRK government [24,28].

Since the biggest obstacle to the UN agencies' humanitarian assistance is not only a lack of sufficient resources, but a lack of reliable data, the above UN agencies have been sharing limited information and data collected during project implementation, monitoring and evaluation, or through surveys that each agency conducts on a limited scale [28]. A 2017 survey by UNICEF, "The 2017 DPR Korea Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey," focused on women and children in households [28]. A total of 8,500 households participated in this survey and provided important data on infant and child mortality, and the researchers developed indicators for child health, nutrition and education [28]. The decade-long experience of the UN agencies in collecting data related to development and humanitarian programs in the DPRK could give them a comparative advantage versus international actors when the international community is ready to assist the DPRK.

Second, many donor countries prefer to utilize multilateral assistance when the partner country is perceived to have great uncertainty for development cooperation projects, particularly in terms of impact delivery. The DPRK will fall into this category, and it is likely that many donors will consider multilateral rather than bilateral support for the DPRK, since the former is considered better for project effectiveness, transparency and monitoring of results. Since many donor countries provide about 30% of their official development assistance budget to developing countries through international organizations or, multilaterally, there will be room for support for the DPRK in this format. Thus, when the international community is ready to consider development cooperation with the DPRK, it is likely that donors would consider multilateral channels, especially through the UN system given the UN's mandate and past experience in the DPRK.

Third, the UN agencies' humanitarian assistance has utilized the DPRK's internal system. The

current UN engagement in the DPRK puts the DPRK's central and local government at the center to take full control of the entire project, logistics, distribution and storage of supplies (WFP, "DPRK Interim Country Strategic Plan 2019-21." https://docs.wfp.org/api/documents/WFP-0000103512/download/?_ga=2.222563483.1645215501.1706314546-1188378543.1706314546) [24,29].

In spite of the UN's final authority to determine the project location, beneficiary group, and the method and size of the project, the UN agencies have ensured the DPRK government's self-reliant participation (ownership) through the use of its internal system for the project's full cycle including planning and implementation. For example, the WFP's project, "Project Improving Nutrition and Micronutrient Intakes" produces and distributes super-cereal and biscuits to improve nutrition of pregnant women and children under seven [30]. Under the UN sanctions against the DPRK, the WFP has secured raw materials from China near the border with the DPRK, shipped them to the DPRK, produced cereals and biscuits at its factories in the DPRK, and distributed them through the DPRK's public organizations (local health centers, day-care centers, and schools) [30]. The production, distribution, and storage of biscuits are calculated by in-kind contributions of the DPRK government's plans, using its government system [30]. Thus, the working relationship built between the DPRK government and the UN agencies, and the data collected by the UN agencies while working in the DPRK, would be valuable when UN agencies are able to work at full-scale after the sanctions are lifted.

Fourth, the UN agencies have special advantages in the monitoring and evaluation of development cooperation projects in the DPRK. Monitoring and evaluation would be a key concern for donors, especially for grant aid. The UN agencies operating in the DPRK have noted that project monitoring and evaluation have improved significantly in the last few years [24]. The UN agencies have noted that the DPRK government has recognized the importance of monitoring and has been much more cooperative in providing support for monitoring. We assume that such efforts by the DPRK government will be a positive factor for development cooperation with donor countries and donor agencies when full-scale international assistance can be provided. The UN agencies that have accumulated relevant experience in monitoring aid projects in the DPRK will be sought after as development partners by donor countries.

The UN agencies will be important players when the DPRK is ready for development cooperation with various donors and when earnest changes take place in the DPRK for reform and opening. This is due to the UN's experience that has been accumulated over the years with humanitarian assistance to the DPRK, its changing concept of "sustaining peace," and the crucial nexus between development and peace as recognized in the SDGs.

Prospects for the United Nations's engagement in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea: its roles and sectors for support

The UN's sectoral support to the DPRK will be finalized through an agreement with the DPRK government when "the UN Sustainable Development Framework for the DPRK" is created. The UN adopted "the UN Sustainable Development Framework" on a five-year basis to support the SDGs of recipient countries. The adoption of the framework document is expected to be discussed as a top agenda item if the UN decides to expand its assistance to the DPRK since the DPRK has not yet adopted the SDGs framework. It is plausible that the UN's future engagements with the DPRK for development cooperation will be in line with the SDGs, and in particular with social development targets aimed at improving education, health, poverty, gender equality, and nutrition. Social development will be the first-order priority towards achieving the SDGs since human-centered social development is the foundation for sustainable development

with the SDGs' motto, "Leave No One Behind." Investment in health and education is also an important priority for economic development.

Since the UN agencies have continued to implement humanitarian assistance projects in the DPRK related to social development, it is likely that social development will be an important field of support in the future due to the need for that sector and to take advantage of the accumulated expertise in the DPRK. The UN will work towards mobilizing various international financial resources including grant aid from donors to support the DPRK's social development. There have been many global efforts to establish funding mechanisms in the health and education sectors, and these will become central parts of UN-led multilateral support. As noted above, many donors would prefer UN-led multilateral support for the DPRK, at least in the initial stage of the DPRK engagement.

The UN will be the most important actor for advising the DPRK for its early stage of reform and normalization since it has been performing such functions for many other developing countries especially during the early stage of development and opening. The UN-led international cooperation system on social development will be established in the DPRK, including the formation of a group of donor countries along with the UN agencies for the implementation of SDGs and sustaining peace. When international assistance to the DPRK begins, the UN will have to first expand, reorganize, and strengthen the UN offices in the DPRK starting with the Resident Coordinator, which oversees and coordinates the UN support in the DPRK. The UN DPRK Resident Coordinator has been vacant since September 2019 (before the reform of the UN Development System in 2018, the UNDP's DPRK office director concurrently served as a coordinator in the DPRK). The UN offices in the DPRK will be the focal point of the multilateral development cooperation platform for the UN agencies, donors, and private sector actors.

The Democratic People's Republic of Korea's sustainable development and international financial institutions

Sustainable development in the DPRK will depend on achieving social development goals as well as repairing social infrastructure including railways, roads and energy facilities. SDGs 7, 8, and 9 are in this category. SDG 7 is "ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all"; SDG 8 is "promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all"; and SDG 9 is "build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation." Social infrastructure will require more time, sophisticated strategies, international cooperation, and larger funding compared to social development. Resources for social infrastructure can be mobilized from the ROK's Inter-Korean Cooperation Fund, bilateral cooperation funding from donors (concessional loan), multilateral cooperation funding led by IFIs, and private sector funding [31]. The Inter-Korean Cooperation Fund was established to promote inter-Korean cooperation and contribute to the recovery of the national community by securing necessary funds for inter-Korean cooperation projects. It has various forms and methods to comprehensively support human, physical exchanges and other cooperation. Recent social infrastructure projects in China, Vietnam, and Mongolia suggest that a large volume of resources is needed, and that IFIs would lead the process, which will be the likely scenario in the DPRK. In the process of reform and opening, Vietnam received \$3.2 billion in total for 30 projects over 8 years (1994–2001), which accounted for 17% of the total amount, from the International Development Association (IDA) regarding building of social infrastructure. The IFIs refer to

the IMF and five multilateral development banks, including the World Bank Group, the African Development Bank, the Asian Development Bank, the Inter-American Development, and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development [32]. The IMF and the World Bank Group provide services to their members throughout the world, while the latter regional banks focus primarily on their own region (Ibid.). The World Bank Group and regional banks provide important support for developing countries' economic development. Additionally, developing countries must first become members of the IMF in order to qualify for World Bank loans [33]. Thus, IMF membership will signal that the country can gain membership to relevant regional banks.

The IFIs have mobilized private capital through public-private partnership projects and blended financing when investing in developing countries' social infrastructure projects. The IFIs have also supported former socialist countries in their transition toward a capitalist market system [34]. IFIs' active engagement with the private sector can provide opportunities for the private sector actors to engage in the DPRK. However, there are major challenges in order for this to happen including gaining membership to the IFI by the DPRK. The UN agencies first worked with the IFIs in order to provide technical assistance and policy advice as a first step for further engagement with the private sector in Vietnam [35]. The UNDP and IMF participated in technical assistance and policy advice for finance and macroeconomic management for Vietnam in the late 1980s.

Thus, the DPRK needs to gain membership in the IMF before it can be assessed for loans from global and regional IFIs. If the DPRK gains membership with a commitment to conform to these banks' guidelines for market management, structural reform and investment conditions, it is likely that the DPRK can be eligible for 200–400 million USD in concessional loans per year (Ibid.). IFI support includes technical assistance and more long-term development assistance. The latter will require formal membership to the IMF and other IFIs, and thus, would take longer, while the former can be provided more quickly, as in previous cases of IFI support [36].

The DPRK began active engagement with the IMF in 1997 when IMF sent a delegation to the DPRK for a review, which resulted in the DPRK Fact-Finding Report in 1997 [34]. The DPRK has not gained IMF membership, and is not eligible for support from the IMF or other IFIs. However, many experts argue that it will be important to move from humanitarian assistance during times of crisis toward development cooperation once the sanctions are lifted. Considering the know-how for economic transition and sheer volume of capital that can be mobilized by the IFIs, it will be critical for the DPRK to engage with the IFIs [34]. On the other hand, there remains concern that routine and transparent reporting of the macro-economic conditions and the operation of the financial sector would not be easy in the DPRK [37]. It is also important to note that membership to the IFIs would depend on other member nations' approval and support for the DPRK [37,38].

Conclusion

Peace and security on the Korean Peninsula are important not only for the two Koreas, but for the world since it will bring dividends of peace and other benefits to the region and the world. Sustaining peace and the normalization of the DPRK should proceed with the participation and support of the international community for sustainable and irreversible peace.

The ROK and the neighboring four major powers will most likely play important roles in the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula and the normalization of the DPRK. The ROK needs to fully understand the capacity of international actors, especially the UN agencies and IFIs, and develop the strategic capability to lead a constructive process for sustaining peace on the

Korean Peninsula in order to play a catalytic role in the peacebuilding process on the Korean Peninsula. The UN agencies and IFIs are important for resource mobilization and implementation of development cooperation projects.

The UN has been the most important international multilateral institution for peace in the world, but it has also had its shortcomings. Thus, the UN has been engaged in reforming its mandate on peacebuilding and agreed on the resolutions on “sustaining peace” in order to respond to some of the criticisms. These reforms have paved the way for the UN to play an important role in the DPRK once the sanctions are lifted since individual nations will take time to become more fully engaged with the DPRK. In particular, the UN can potentially play a significant role in the peacebuilding process on the Korean Peninsula through the SDGs. The UN Development System will most likely lead global efforts for supporting the DPRK’s social development in the initial stage due to the following: (1) the UN’s legitimacy as a universal and impartial international organization; (2) accumulated experience working in the DPRK; and (3) established support mechanism for the SDGs implementation.

The ROK needs to proactively explore ways to lead and coordinate the UN-led international support for the DPRK in the coming years. If the UN becomes the main coordinating body for international support for the DPRK, the ROK should be ready with preliminary research on multilateral support. This will prepare the ROK to negotiate with major actors, and coordinate the ROK’s bilateral support for the DPRK and the UN-led multilateral support. In the short term, the ROK should strengthen its cooperation with the UN agencies currently operating in the DPRK, and broaden its working relationship with the UN’s development and humanitarian assistance agencies. These efforts will help to amplify the ROK’s voice and enhance its role within the UN system. The ROK’s strategic expansion in the UN’s development and humanitarian assistance agencies, which have worked (or will work in the future) in the DPRK, will be critical. The ROK needs to actively participate in UN discussions on peace and development, and in particular in the UN development agencies. Gaining membership in the IFIs in the long term and receiving technical assistance in the short term would be critical for the DPRK’s development. The ROK can play an important role in assisting the DPRK with preparation for membership to the IFIs, as this will be the first step towards DPRK being eligible for concessional loans from global and regional IFIs, including the IMF, the World Bank Group and the Asian Development Bank [37–39].

Support for the DPRK will likely continue for a long duration once it begins, as has been the case of the UN and IFI engagement with former transition countries. Thus, the ROK needs to build a strong network of personnel who are well-versed in dealing with the Korean Peninsula and place more Koreans in high-ranking decision-making positions in various UN agencies to facilitate such an engagement with the DPRK. Establishing a close working relationship with the UN Secretariat will enhance the ROK’s role in the peacebuilding process on the Korean Peninsula and support for the DPRK. In conclusion, it is imperative for the ROK to strengthen its constructive relationship with the UN, conduct a thorough preparatory review and conduct research, and enhance its capability, in order to lead and coordinate the sustaining peacebuilding process on the Korean Peninsula.

ORCID

Young-Ju Oh: <https://orcid.org/0009-0004-3613-5019>

Eun Mee Kim: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1649-0759>

Authors' contributions

Conceptualization: Oh YJ, Kim EM

Formal analysis: Oh YJ, Kim EM

Investigation: Oh YJ, Kim EM
 Methodology: Kim EM
 Project administration: Kim EM
 Writing – original draft: Oh YJ, Kim EM
 Writing – review & editing: Oh YJ, Kim EM

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