



UN strongly condemns NKorea rocket launch

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North Korea's much-anticipated rocket launch ended in failure, splintering into pieces over the Yellow Sea soon after take-off Photo: EPA

UNITED NATIONS (AP) — The U.N. Security Council strongly condemned North Korea's rocket launch Monday, announcing it will impose new sanctions and warning of further action if Pyongyang conducts another launch or a new nuclear test.

Acting swiftly, the 15-member council, including North Korea's closest ally China, adopted a presidential statement underscoring its united opposition to Friday's launch — which violated U.N. sanctions — and the military policy being pursued by the country's young new leader, Kim Jong Un.

The council directed its sanctions committee to expand the list of North Koreans entities subject to asset freezes and identify more proliferation-sensitive technology to be banned for transfer to and from the country.

"The swift and unanimous adoption of this strong presidential statement shows that the international community is united in sending a clear message to North Korea that such provocations are serious and totally unacceptable," said U.S. Ambassador Susan Rice, the current council president who read the statement at a council meeting.

While Russia and China blocked the Security Council from adopting a resolution on their ally Syria for over a year, both world powers have consistently supported tough measures against North Korea, despite their close ties.

North Korea's attempt to launch a satellite ended in failure when the rocket disintegrated over the Yellow Sea, embarrassing its new leader at what the North had planned as the centerpiece of the 100th birthday celebration of the country's founder, his grandfather Kim Il Sung. Western nations have said the launch was a cover for the testing of a long-range missile, and worries remain about North Korea's nuclear program amid reports that it may be planning another atomic test soon.

North Korea launched missiles in 2006 and 2009; in both cases, the missile tests were followed by nuclear tests.

"Clearly, the potential for that pattern to persist is one that all members of the international community are mindful of and think would be a disastrous course for the North to pursue," Rice said. "It will only lead to the North's increased isolation."

The statement expressed the Security Council's "determination to take action accordingly in the event of a further DPRK launch or nuclear test," using the initials of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, the country's official name.

It said Friday's launch, "as well as any use of ballistic missile technology, even if characterized as a satellite launch or space launch vehicle, is a serious violation of U.N. resolutions." It demanded that North Korea halt further launches using ballistic missile technology and suspend its ballistic missile program, as required by U.N. resolutions imposing sanctions after the country's nuclear tests in 2006 and 2009.

The council asked the Security Council committee monitoring sanctions against North Korea to prepare new additions for the sanctions list within 15 days, and said if it doesn't the council itself would take action within five days to expand the list.

Rice said the council intends "to designate additional North Korean entities, including companies, to be subject to an asset freeze, as well as to identify additional proliferation-sensitive technology to be banned for transfer to and from North Korea."

The sanctions committee will also take several other actions to improve enforcement of existing sanctions, she said.

The United States, Rice said, will propose "a robust package of new designations, including the names of companies responsible for North Korea's nuclear and ballistic missile programs and a list of technical items that North Korea needs to proceed with its illicit programs."

The sanctions committee will go over proposals for new additions to the sanctions list, Rice said, which "in 2009 yielded a very credible outcome, and we expect the same this time."

The Security Council proceeded as it did in 2009, adopting a presidential statement after North Korea's missile launch. In that statement, a united council also condemned the launch and asked the sanctions committee to add companies, items and technologies to the sanctions list.

"This text is stronger than the one the council adopted in 2009, both in language and in substance," Rice said.

The presidential statement, which is weaker than a resolution but becomes part of the council's record, was largely drafted by Rice and China's U.N. Ambassador Li Baodong, with South Korea, Japan and European nations consulted at different points, U.N. diplomats said, speaking on condition of anonymity because the talks were private. The final draft was sent to the entire council and there were no objections by the Monday morning deadline, the diplomats said.