

# UN Security Council to Vote on New Sanctions against DPRK

UNITED NATIONS - The United Nations Security Council is expected to vote on a new draft resolution that would tighten sanctions against the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) in response to its ballistic missile launch last month. A Security Council meeting has been scheduled for Friday at 1:00 p.m. EST (1800 GMT). The U.S.-drafted resolution was circulated among council members on Thursday. The draft, seen by Xinhua, seeks to ban nearly 90 percent of refined petroleum product exports, including diesel and kero-



sene, to the DPRK, setting a ceiling of 500,000 barrels a year.

It also caps crude oil exports to the DPRK at 4 million barrels a year. The draft also demands the repatriation of overseas DPRK workers within 12 months. In addition, the draft resolution bans DPRK exports of food products, machinery, electrical equipment, earth and stone, including magnesite and magnesia, wood and vessels. It bans the supply of industrial equipment, machinery, transportation vehicles, and industrial metals to the DPRK. (Xinhua)

## Spain PM Willing to Talk with Catalonia Leaders

BARCELONA, Spain - Spanish Prime Minister Mariano Rajoy says he expects a "new era based on dialogue" will begin in Catalonia following a regional election that exposed the sharp divisions between citizens for and against independence. Rajoy called the election held Thursday after ousting the pro-secession government in the region, hoping to stop the movement to break away from Spain. A block of separatist parties retained their majority in the Catalan parliament. Rajoy said during a news conference Friday that the election's outcome, which

also gave the pro-Spain Ciudadanos (Citizens) party the most votes, showed a diversity of views in Catalonia that compel the new government to abide by the law. The prime minister says he will talk with the region's new leaders as long as they don't violate Spain's Constitution. The previous government held an independence referendum that Spanish courts said was unconstitutional. A prominent politician in Catalonia's left-wing republican ERC party says Spanish authorities need to accept election results that gave separatists a majority in the regional parliament. (AP)

## UK's Johnson, on Moscow Visit, Tells Moscow to Stop Meddling in Europe

MOSCOW - British foreign minister Boris Johnson told his Russian counterpart on Friday he wanted to talk about difficult subjects such as Moscow's annexation of Ukraine's Crimea and what he described as Russia's destabilizing of the western Balkans. Johnson made the comments at the start of talks with Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov during the first visit to Russia by a British foreign minister in five years. Johnson was expected to meet Kremlin critics, stu-

dents and gay rights activists later on Friday. His visit comes at a time when relations between London and Moscow are strained by differences over Ukraine and Syria as well as by allegations, which Russia flatly denies, that Moscow has meddled in the politics of various European countries and backed cyber attacks and disinformation campaigns. "Our relations with Russia cannot be 'business as usual' whilst Russia continues to attempt to destabilize European states, including



Ukraine," Johnson said in a statement released by his office before the talks. Lavrov told Johnson at the start of the talks that British-Russian relations were at a really low point, and "not due to our actions".

"You and other Western colleagues have your views on why this situation exists and prefer to set out these reasons publicly. We wanted to discuss our mutual concerns directly," said Lavrov. (Reuters)

## UN Denounces US Recognition of Jerusalem as Israeli Capital



UNITED NATIONS - The U.N. General Assembly voted overwhelmingly Thursday to denounce President Donald Trump's recognition of Jerusalem as Israel's capital, largely ignoring Trump's threats to

cut off aid to any country that went against him. The nonbinding resolution declaring U.S. action on Jerusalem "null and void" was approved 128-9 - a victory for the Palestinians, but not as big as they pre-

dicted. Amid Washington's threats, 35 of the 193 U.N. member nations abstained and 21 were absent. The resolution reaffirmed what has been the United Nations' stand on the divided holy city since 1967: that Jerusalem's final status must be decided in direct negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians. The Trump administration made it clear the vote would have no effect on its plan to move the American Embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem. And Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said afterward

that he completely rejects the "preposterous" resolution. Palestinian Ambassador Riyad Mansour called the vote a victory not only for the Palestinians but for the United Nations and international law, saying U.S. Ambassador Nikki Haley "failed miserably" in persuading only seven countries aside from the U.S. and Israel to vote against the resolution. "And they used unprecedented tactics, unheard of in the diplomatic work at the U.N., including blackmail and extortion," he said. (AP)

## Turkey, Russia Back UN's Rejection to U.S. Recognition of Jerusalem as Israel's Capital

ANKARA - Turkish President Recep Erdogan and his Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin on Friday voiced their support for the UN's rejection to Washington's recognition of Jerusalem as Israel's capital. The two leaders made the remarks in a phone conversation, stressing that the Israeli-Palestinian conflict must be resolved based on the UN resolution. They underlined that the UN resolution "displayed the illegal essence of the U.S. decision on Jerusalem." The two

presidents emphasized that the United States should stick to the UN resolution and the international law in the matter of Jerusalem, as the city was of great significance to regional peace and stability. Erdogan also expressed appreciation to Putin for his support on Thursday's UN General Assembly vote. They also agreed on forming closer relations in near future, touched upon the Astana talks on Syria, as well as cooperation on energy and defense industries. (Xinhua)

## Putin Accuses US of Violating Cold War-Era Nuclear Pact

MOSCOW - Russian President Vladimir Putin is accusing the U.S. of violating a landmark Cold War-era nuclear arms pact. Putin, speaking during Friday's meeting with the top military brass, alleged that the U.S. missile defense sites in Romania containing interceptor missiles could also house ground-to-ground intermediate-range cruise missiles in violation of the 1987 Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces (INF) Treaty. He added that U.S. launches of target vehicles as part of tests represented another violation of the pact that bans all land-based cruise and ballistic missiles with a range between 500 and 5,500 kilometers (310-3,410 miles). Washington has rejected Russian claims of perceived violations and accused Russia of breaking the pact by developing a new cruise missile, accusations Moscow has denied. Putin said the military has all the means to counter potential threats. (AP)

## U.S. Has Disqualified Itself from Mideast Peace Process: Abbas

PARIS - The United States has "disqualified" itself from the Middle East peace process due to its recognition of Jerusalem as Israel's capital, said Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas on Friday. "The United States are no longer an honest mediator in the peace process, we will not accept any plan put forward by the United States," said Abbas, speaking through a translator at a joint news briefing in Paris with French President Emmanuel Macron. Macron reiterated on Friday that France remained committed to a "two-state" solution, namely one in which Israel and Palestine peacefully co-exist side-by-side with one another. (Reuters)

## British PM Says IS "Has Been Crushed" but Still Posing Threat

NICOSIA - British Prime Minister Theresa May, on a short visit to an RAF base in Cyprus, said on Friday that although the Islamic State (IS) has been crushed thanks mostly to the strike by the base personnel, it still poses threat to the region and Britain. She said that British forces operating from the Akrotiri base, near the southern city of Limassol, conducted more than 1,600 strikes against Daesh targets and supported more than 1,450 personnel working with allies and partners in Jordan and Iraq to fight IS and prevent its re-emer-



gence. "Here in Cyprus, you are the epicenter of so much of our military activity in the region," May said, adding that the personnel of the base should be "incredibly proud" of helping to crush IS. "That so-called Caliphate has been crushed and no longer holds significant

territory in Iraq or Syria," May said. However, the British prime minister said that it is necessary to continue to deal directly with the threat they still pose in the region, but at the same time focus on training the Iraqi Security Forces so they can keep Daesh out. (Xinhua)

## Russia to Host Syria Talks in Sochi in Late January

MOSCOW - Russia, Turkey and Iran agreed Friday to hold Syria peace talks in Russia's Black Sea resort of Sochi next month, a move that the U.N. Special envoy for Syria said should be assessed based on its contribution to the mandated political process under the United Nations in Geneva. Russian news reports cited Kazakh diplomat Aidarbek Tumanov who said that during Friday's meeting in Kazakhstan's capital, Astana, the parties agreed to hold the so-called Congress for National Dialogue in Sochi on Jan. 29-30.

Earlier attempts to convene the congress were thwarted by disagreements over possible participants, primarily the involvement of the Kurds that Turkey has opposed. Russian envoy Alexander Lavrentyev told the Interfax news agency that the parties have yet to agree on the list of participants. The three countries have teamed up to help mediate a peace settlement for Syria's conflict, now in its seventh year, which has claimed the lives of 400,000 and caused the worst refugee crisis since World War II. (AP)

## Pence Says Administration Fully Cooperating with Mueller's Russia Probe

WASHINGTON - U.S. Vice President Mike Pence said Thursday that the administration is fully cooperating with the Russia probe led by Special Counsel Robert Mueller. Mueller is investigating allegations of Russian interference in last year's U.S. presidential election and collusion between U.S. President Donald Trump's campaign and Moscow.

Pence, reportedly speaking to reporters during an unannounced trip to Afghanistan, made the remarks when asked whether he would agree to be interviewed by the special counsel's team if there is a request.

"Let me just say we are fully cooperating with the special counsel and will continue to provide any and all assistance and information," Pence said. GOP critics and conservative media outlets have said the investigation is tainted with bias against Trump. Several Republican congressmen have urged Mueller to step down, while Trump said he's not considering firing Mueller. Last week, Mueller's team received tens of thousands of emails sent and received by officials from Trump's transition team before the start of the presidency. A lawyer for the transition team accused Mueller of illegally obtaining those emails, while a spokesman for Mueller defended himself against any wrongdoing. Mueller's probe entered a new phase earlier this month when former National Security Adviser Michael Flynn pleaded guilty to lying to the FBI about his contacts with Russia. (Xinhua)

## Neighbor News

### Senior CPC Leader Stresses Peaceful Development of Cross-Strait Relations

BEIJING - Senior Communist Party of China (CPC) leader Wang Yang Friday called for more efforts to promote peaceful development of cross-strait relations and achieve national reunification. Wang, a member of the Standing Committee of the Political Bureau of the CPC Central Committee and vice premier, made the remarks at the opening ceremony of the 10th national congress of Taiwan compatriots. The opening was presided over by Wang Yifu, president of the All-China Federation of Taiwan Compatriots (ACFTC). Wang Yang reviewed achievements made during the last five years and stressed new tasks given by the 19th CPC National Congress.

"Peaceful development of relations across the Taiwan Strait and the reunification of China is the shared dream and fundamental interest of all Chinese people," Wang said. Wang called on ACFTC and its local branches to study and implement the spirit of the 19th CPC National Congress, adhere to peaceful development of cross-strait ties, promote people-to-people exchanges, and strengthen its own capacity to accomplish its mission of winning over the support of Taiwan people. He called on Party committees and governments at all levels to exercise leadership and give greater support to the work of ACFTC. (Xinhua)

### Pakistan Reacts Strongly to US Vice President's Remarks

LAHORE - Pakistan has reacted to United States Vice President Mike Pence's statement, accusing Pakistan of "providing safe heavens to terrorists". "The statement is at variance with the extensive conversations we have had with the US administration," said Foreign Office spokesperson Dr Muhammad Faisal on Friday. In an unannounced trip to Afghanistan on Thursday, Pence said that US President Donald Trump "put Pakistan on notice for harbouring terrorists and providing safe heavens to them. FO spokesperson responded to the remarks saying allies do not put each other on notice, add-

ing "externalizing blame should be put on notice". "The factors responsible for an exponential increase in drug production, expansion of ungoverned spaces, industrial-scale corruption, breakdown of governance, and letting Daesh gain a foothold in Afghanistan, should be on notice," said Dr Faisal. He went on to say that focus must be on creating peace and reconciliation mechanisms. Pakistan had told US Defence Secretary James Mattis, during his visit to Pakistan last month, that if the US would not change its policy of "blame game", Pakistan would review its relationships with the US. (Monitoring Desk)

### Iran Stresses UN's Important Role in Resolving Regional Crises

TEHRAN - Iran's deputy FM Hossein Jaber Ansari and UN Special Envoy for Syria Staffan de Mistura met on the sidelines of the eighth round of peace talks aimed at ending the Syria conflict, which began Thursday in Kazakhstan's capital Astana. Astana is hosting another two-day meeting attended by representatives from Russia, Turkey and Iran, the guarantor states that brokered a cease-fire in Syria in December 2016, leading to the Astana peace talks running parallel to the Geneva talks. Iran's top negotiator in Astana meeting, em-

phasizing the need for UN's important role in resolving regional crises, outlined Iran's efforts to help resolve the Syrian crisis, especially in the field of humanitarian issues. Staffan de Mistura also presented a report on the 8th round of negotiations between Syrian government and the opposition group in Geneva and the steps taken by the United Nations to continue the Syrian-Syrian dialogue. Jaber Ansari also met with Syria's permanent representative to the United Nations and the head of the Syrian delegation Bashar al-Jaafari. (MNA)

### China, Uzbekistan Seek To Strengthen Cooperation

TASHKENT - Uzbek President Shavkat Mirziyoyev met Chinese Defense Minister Chang Wanquan in Tashkent Wednesday, expressing willingness to improve practical cooperation in various fields. Mirziyoyev said China is a close friend and reliable partner of Uzbekistan, which adheres to the one-China policy and supports the Belt and Road Initiative. Uzbekistan is ready to cooperate with China in a comprehensive way to serve the interests of both peoples and maintain regional peace and stability, said the president.

Chang said China and Uzbekistan have a long history of friendship and their relationship entered a new era in 2017, when the two countries celebrated the 25th anniversary of the establishment of their diplomatic ties. He said China is willing to work with Uzbekistan to implement the consensus reached by the two countries' heads of state and strengthen relations between the two countries and militaries, so as to contribute to a better comprehensive strategic partnership. Earlier in the day, Chang also held talks here with his Uzbek counterpart. (Agencies)