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United States Senate

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The Honorable Donald J. Trump
President of the United States
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Ave NW
Washington, DC 20006

Dear Mr. President:

On the eve of your meeting with Chinese President Xi Jinping during his visit to the United States, you have an opportunity to maximize this important moment to help dramatically reduce the North Korean nuclear threat. For years, China has urged the United States to negotiate with North Korea, while the United States has urged China to tighten sanctions on Pyongyang. I encourage you to present President Xi with a proposal for coordinated Sino-American action, in which the United States agrees to engage in direct talks with North Korea, while China makes clear that Pyongyang's failure to negotiate in good faith will result in a drastic escalation in the severity of Chinese sanctions. This coordinated initiative could force North Korea to make real denuclearization concessions, while providing a win for both China and the United States.

Over the past several years, the United States has sought to increase pressure on North Korea by tightening both U.S. and multilateral sanctions. While China has agreed to several United Nations Security Council Resolutions imposing sanctions on North Korea, it has turned a blind eye toward North Korean front companies and their enablers in China that have helped Pyongyang evade sanctions, and continued to trade with Pyongyang in blatant defiance of the very sanctions it has voted for. Because North Korea relies overwhelmingly on China for resources and trade, Chinese unwillingness to impose sanctions on North Korea's economy has blunted the impact of the international sanctions regime.

At the same time, China has demanded for years that the United States engage in direct talks with North Korea. Your administration, like your predecessor's, is refusing to do so until North Korea demonstrates its willingness to give up its nuclear arsenal. However, that approach has led to years of stalemate, during which North Korea has dramatically advanced its nuclear weapons program and its ballistic missile capabilities.

President Xi's visit provides you with an opportunity to break this impasse by pursuing a coordinated Sino-American initiative involving a U.S. offer of direct talks with North Korea guaranteed by a firm Chinese commitment to increase pressure if Pyongyang refuses to negotiate in good faith. This initiative would not only satisfy the Chinese goal of reviving a diplomatic process, but it would also provide the United States with an opportunity to strengthen the international sanctions regime if North Korea proves too obstinate to talk.

Coordinated action would also provide both the United States and China with a clear diplomatic victory, while significantly reducing the threat of devastating military escalation on the Korean Peninsula. Given the danger and futility of a military solution to the North Korean nuclear threat, a diplomatic process brokered by the United States and China represents one of the few remaining chances to halt and eventually roll back North Korea's nuclear and missile progress.

Sincerely,



Senator Edward J. Markey
Ranking Member, Subcommittee on East Asia, the Pacific,
and International Cybersecurity Policy
Senate Foreign Relations Committee