

Russia, China, North Korea call for review of sanctions against Pyongyang

The United Nations Security Council should reconsider its sanctions against Pyongyang, deputy foreign ministers of Russia, China and North Korea said in a joint communique released after their consultations in Moscow on Wednesday.

"Taking into account the important steps towards denuclearization made by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, the sides believe the UN Security Council should start in due time revising the sanctions against the DPRK," Igor Morgulov, Kong Xuanyou and Choe Son-hui said in the communique, according to TASS.

The high-ranking diplomats confirmed their stance against unilateral sanctions against North Korea.

The sides share stance that there is no alternative to settling the problems of the Korean Peninsula by peaceful and diplomatic means.

They praised the efforts by the involved countries on promoting dialogue in the interests of this settlement.

The diplomats also called for holding talks between Pyongyang and Washington, and also between Pyongyang and Seoul "to alleviate mutual concerns and normalize ties."

The deputy foreign ministers confirmed the sides' aspiration to achieve denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula and create there a mechanism of peace. "There is general understanding that this process, the priority goal of which is to establish mutual trust, should be of a step-by-step and synchronized character and accompanied by reciprocal steps of the involved states."

Russia, China and North Korea consider that the Korean Peninsula's denuclearization process should be step-by-step and synchronized, and it requires

reciprocal steps by the involved countries, according to the joint communique.

The diplomats discussed in detail the

need to enhance bilateral and multilateral coordination with the goal of setting up a mechanism of a lasting peace on the Korean Peninsula.

Hurricane Michael could become strongest on record to strike Florida Panhandle



RAMON ESPINOSA/AP

Hurricane Michael rapidly gained strength in the warm waters of the Gulf of Mexico on Tuesday night and continued to intensify Wednesday morning, threatening to become the most intense hurricane on record to strike the Florida Panhandle.

The dangerous Category 4 hurricane has winds up to 145 mph. It would be the first time a Category 4 hurricane strikes the Florida Panhandle since records began in 1851, The Washington Post reported.

As the storm rapidly gained strength, the National Hurricane Center warned its effects would be "potentially catastrophic."

Both the Florida Panhandle, from Pensacola to Apalachicola, and the Big Bend area are forecast to be hardest hit. Water levels are already rising rapidly and the storm is poised to push ashore a "life-threatening" surge of ocean water that could inundate more than 325 miles of coastline.

The storm also will bring destructive

winds and flooding rain and conditions were rapidly deteriorating Wednesday morning as the storm's outer bands began lashing the Panhandle.

Population centers that could witness some of the most severe hurricane effects include Fort Walton Beach, Destin, Panama City Beach and Apalachicola.

"Michael will make new history for central Panhandle, Big Bend," tweeted Rick Knabb, the Weather Channel's hurricane expert. "Some of you could get water and wind worse than ever before."

The surge, or the rise in ocean water above normally dry land along the coast, could reach 9 to 14 feet, inundating roads, homes and businesses. The National Weather Service warned many buildings could be completely washed away and that "locations may be uninhabitable for an extended period" after the storm.

As tropical storm conditions swelled over the Florida Peninsula Wednesday

morning, Florida Gov. Rick Scott said it was no longer safe to evacuate and advised people to stay put.

Forecasters on Twitter described feelings of sickness and dread as the storm grew ever stronger. "Hurricanes that intensify overnight just before reaching land are the worst nightmare of forecasters and emergency managers," tweeted Weather Underground's Bob Henson.

While the most severe hurricane conditions are expected along the coast, devastating hurricane effects are forecast to expand considerable distances inland.

"A potentially catastrophic event is developing," wrote the National Weather Service forecast office serving Tallahassee and surrounding areas. The office warned of "widespread power outages, downed trees blocking access to roads and endangering individuals, structural damage to homes and businesses, isolated flash flooding and the potential for a few tornadoes."

Kenya bus crash kills 51



GETTY IMAGES

Kenyan emergency personnel and security forces inspect the wreckage of a bus at the site of an accident in Kericho, western Kenya, on October 10, 2018.

Fifty-one people were killed when the bus they were traveling in overturned and its entire roof was ripped off in an accident in western Kenya early Wednesday, police said.

"It is unfortunate that we have lost 51 people," Kenya's Police Chief Joseph Boimnet told Capital FM radio.

According to police, the bus was traveling from Nairobi to the western town of Kakamega and carrying 52 passengers, AFP reported.

The Kenyan Red Cross wrote on Twitter that it had overturned. However more details on the cause of the accident were not available.

Footage from the scene showed the faded red bus lying on its side, the seats and mangled bits of metal exposed to the air with the torn-off roof lying at a distance.

Dozens of people milled around the accident site and goods were strewn over a large area.

Official statistics show that around 3,000 people die annually in road accidents in Kenya, but the World Health Organization estimates the figure could be as high as 12,000.

In December 2017, 36 people died in a head-on collision between a bus and a lorry.

In 2016 more than 40 people died when an out-of-control fuel tanker ploughed into vehicles and then exploded on a busy highway.

WTO chief calls on supporters to defend trade body as attacks mount

Roberto Azevêdo, the head of the World Trade Organization, called on defenders of the multilateral trading system to "raise their voices" to help it survive as it faced pressure from protectionist governments and growing public skepticism of the benefits of global trade.

Azevêdo made the appeal flanked by Christine Lagarde, the head of the IMF, Jim Yong Kim, the president of the World Bank, and José Ángel Gurría, who leads the OECD — a joint event that highlighted their preoccupation with the deterioration in trade relations in recent months, ft.com reported.

The remarks by all four chiefs of the world's top institutions of economic governance in Bali, at the annual meeting of the IMF and World Bank, marked an effort to push back against skepticism of the benefits of global trade and its rules. The comments amounted to implicit criticisms of Washington's trade policies, even though the US was not named.

"Let me be clear, the trading system is not perfect, we never said it was. But it represents the best efforts of governments around the world working together for 70



wto.org

years to find ways to co-operate on trade issues," Azevêdo said.

"It took a lot of people and a lot of time to push the boulder this far up the hill and even keeping it in place requires constant effort."

This week, the IMF issued a downward revision of its forecast for global growth on the back of the escalating trade disputes between the US and China, which resulted in tit-for-tat tariffs covering \$360bn of products.

The WTO itself has been undermined by criticism from US President Donald Trump,

who has threatened to pull out of the Geneva-based trade body unless it is reformed, and has resisted appointing new judges to a key dispute settlement panel. Cecilia Malmström, the EU trade commissioner, warned the panel was at risk of "collapse" in an interview with the Financial Times this week.

Lagarde, the head of the IMF, had already warned of the danger posed by protectionism, but said in some areas there had been progress at easing tension, including in the recent deal inked by the US with Canada and Mexico.

"Let us use that momentum to turn tension into rapprochement," Lagarde said. "We know that trade has helped transform our world — by boosting productivity, spreading new technologies and making products more affordable," she added.

While trade had also lifted many people out of poverty, particularly in the developing world, all four leaders said more attention needed to be paid to those people and communities left behind by globalization, with an emphasis on job retraining and expanded social safety nets.

But Gurría said these concerns were no reason to resort to protectionism.

"Do we dump it all and then suddenly start putting tariffs on each other? No," said Gurría. Multilateral solutions are slower but the ownership is much greater and in the end it sticks," he said.

OPINION

Merkel right person to revive Germany's political power

By Hossein Ziaee*

When the far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD) incredibly surged to become the second political party, no one would have thought that Chancellor Angela Merkel, after being in power for 13 years, says that she wants to take back her now diminished political power instead of acknowledging defeat.

In her recent speech at youth wing of Christian Democratic Union (CDU), the Junge Union Deutschlands (JU), Merkel said she would take key and decisive decisions to end the political infighting within her party and government in a bid to revive German government's political power again — comments that were welcomed by the crowd.

Echoing that view, Merkel had told the Augsburg Allgemeine Zeitung daily that she would put in a great deal of effort to carry out her activities, both in the government and CDU, until the end of her chancellorship.

Germany's Iron lady is paying for her successful efforts in a host of global issues, like preserving and expanding of the European Union, standing up against Trump's unilateralism, preserving the international accords like Paris Agreement, the JCPOA, as well as refugee crisis. She has now focused her efforts on her country's internal issues and reviving her political power.

This is while Merkel's exceptional capabilities in international arenas have turned her into one of the most leading world leaders, placing her atop among the five top world leaders.

A recent survey by the Pew Research Center which polled respondents from 25 countries found that Merkel has the highest approval rating among the leaders of five major world economies — China's Xi Jinping, Russia's Vladimir Putin, France's Emmanuel Macron and US's Donald Trump.

In Germany, 76 percent of those polled said that they had faith in Merkel's foreign policy decisions. But she enjoyed even greater support in France, where 84 percent said they viewed the chancellor's work abroad in a favorable light. In Britain, she enjoys the support of 53 percent.

By contrast, Donald Trump is the least trusted to do the right thing when it comes to world affairs. Overall, a global median of 74 percent express no confidence in the US leader, while only 22 percent express confidence in him.

Merkel is the political legacy of the former German chancellor Helmut Kohl, who had the helm of German chancellorship for sixteen years from 1982-1998, and is more resilient to give up to the novice far-right politicians which are regarded as a threat for Germany.

What is obvious is that Merkel has achieved a lot for Germany, both in national and international matters, in her 13-year tenure as the leader of Europe's first economy by relying on her inborn capabilities and political wisdom in pulling together different parties and weather her country out of crises, something that we shall soon witness again in Germany's internal and foreign policies.

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Turkish newspaper names 15 Saudis..

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According to Hurriyet daily, nine Saudis who arrived in Istanbul on the same day that the journalist vanished, had bought luggage at the Grand Bazaar. However, a police search revealed that they did not take the luggage on their return.

Turkey has said Saudi authorities gave officials the green light to search the consulate but it has not yet taken place.

As pressure increases on Washington to intervene on the issue, US Defense Secretary Jim Mattis said the US was following the situation "very closely."

US President Donald Trump expressed concern about the case while US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo previously called for a thorough investigation.

In his last interview three days before his disappearance, Khashoggi said that he did not think he would return to Saudi Arabia.

"When I hear of the arrest of a friend who did nothing that [deserved being] arrested, it makes me feel I shouldn't go," he told the BBC.

Reporters Without Borders (RSF), which ranks the kingdom 169th out of 180 on its World Press Freedom Index, said in a statement that between 25 and 30 professional and non-professional journalists are currently detained in Saudi Arabia.

RSF said that at least 15 Saudi journalists and bloggers have been arrested since September 2017.

Reuters and AFP contributed to this story.