

UNITED NATIONS SECURITY COUNCIL

Formal Background Guide and Position Sheet

Emergency Session, 2026

Topic: Escalation on the Korean Peninsula

Committee Type	United Nations Security Council
Format	Crisis Committee
Freeze Date	18 March 2026, 08:00 KST (fictional scenario)
Voting Members	15 current Security Council members in 2026. Other countries party to the crisis will be present and can vote on procedural matters.
Intended Use	Delegate background guide, dais reference, and country position sheet

Note to Delegates

This guide presents a fictional 2026 crisis scenario created for educational Model UN use. Real-world institutional details, including Security Council membership and procedure, are based on official UN sources current for 2026.

1. Committee Mandate and Agenda

The United Nations Security Council bears primary responsibility under the UN Charter for the maintenance of international peace and security. In this committee, delegates must respond to an emergency crisis in which the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK, commonly referred to as North Korea) has moved military forces into and across major portions of the Korean Demilitarized Zone (DMZ), displaced long-standing monitoring arrangements, and triggered a fast-moving regional security crisis.

The central task of the committee is not to restate general policy preferences but to decide what the Council will do under time pressure. Delegates should be prepared to debate ceasefire language, withdrawal demands, monitoring arrangements, sanctions, humanitarian access, cyber escalation, alliance deterrence, nuclear signaling, and the political limits created by veto power.

Primary agenda item: Escalation on the Korean Peninsula Following the DPRK's Seizure of the DMZ.

2. The Security Council in 2026: Membership and Procedure

The Security Council is composed of five permanent members and ten non-permanent members. For 2026, the Council's membership is as follows.

Category	Member State	Voting Note
Permanent	China	Veto power
Permanent	France	Veto power
Permanent	Russian Federation	Veto power
Permanent	United Kingdom	Veto power
Permanent	United States	Veto power
Elected	Bahrain	No veto
Elected	Colombia	No veto
Elected	Democratic Republic of the Congo	No veto
Elected	Denmark	No veto
Elected	Greece	No veto
Elected	Latvia	No veto
Elected	Liberia	No veto
Elected	Pakistan	No veto
Elected	Panama	No veto
Elected	Somalia	No veto

States directly affected by the dispute, including the following, are being invited to participate without a vote on directives under the Council's provisional rules of procedure. However, these states are allowed to vote on procedural matters (such as the length of the speaker's time and whether to motion for a moderated or unmoderated caucus):

1. Republic of Korea (commonly referred to as South Korea): South Korea is the country most at risk by North Korea's aggressive actions. Its capital, Seoul, lies just thirty miles south of the DMZ, and is well within range of North Korean artillery.
2. Democratic Republic of Korea (commonly referred to as North Korea): North Korea is the aggressor nation as it has seized the DMZ which had been treated as neutral ground since the 1950's. Note that this action represents an unprecedented escalation in the 73 years since the end of the Korean War.
3. Japan: Japan has also been threatened in the past by North Korea, including the kidnapping of Japanese civilians, the launch of North Korean missiles over Japan, and nuclear threats from the North Korean regime. However, South Korea and Japan have had a historically complicated relationship as a result of lingering animosity from World War II and territorial disputes regarding certain small islands, such as Tsushima Island and the Liancourt Rocks.
4. Australia: Australia is a major regional ally of South Korea and the USA. Australian forces served together with the USA and South Korea during the Korean War, and it is skeptical of Chinese intentions as well as North Korea. It is expected to strongly back the USA and South Korean response.
5. Iran: Iran has recently been attacked by the USA, and is aware that Russia has been its strongest major geopolitical ally, and that Russian and North Korean troops have been fighting together in the Ukrainian War. Thus Iran is going to likely take North Korea's side in the dispute to the greatest extent possible, while bearing in mind that its own position remains precarious, due to the ongoing tensions in the Middle East and conflict around the Strait of Hormuz.
6. India: India is the world's most populous country. Though it is not particularly close geographically speaking to the Korean Peninsula, it has been invited to the deliberations as affairs in East Asia can impact South Asian and Indian interests. It is wary of appearing either too close to the USA and South Korea in their response, or to China, which it sees as its primary security threat.
7. Indonesia: Indonesia is the second most populous country in East Asia, and is being invited as a potential mediator nation. Traditionally non-aligned in most international affairs questions, it has no particular adversarial relationship with North Korea, but it is wary of being seen as too supportive of the Chinese response to the aggression on the Korean Peninsula.
8. Philippines: The Philippines are located relatively close to the Korean Peninsula, and have been a major US ally. The US maintains an expeditionary presence of a small number of troops in the Philippines, and routinely conducts military exercises with Philippine forces. The Philippines is expected to strongly back the US and South Korea in response to North Korea's seizure of the DMZ.
9. Vietnam: Vietnam has sought a middle ground between the USA and China in its recent politics. Though nominally communist, it is not particularly close to North Korea. Still, it favors a measured approach to resolving the crisis, and is not expected to advance a particularly aggressive response with the committee discussions.

Basic procedural reminders

- Any substantive resolution requires at least nine affirmative votes and no veto from a permanent member.
- Presidential statements and press elements may be politically easier to negotiate but are often weaker than a binding resolution.
- Delegates should distinguish between Chapter VI language (recommendatory, diplomatic, de-escalatory) and Chapter VII language (binding enforcement or sanctions language).
- In a crisis committee, the Council may also request urgent reports from the Secretary-General, fact-finding mechanisms, observer arrangements, and humanitarian coordination structures.

3. Historical Background to the Korean Peninsula

3.1 Armistice, division, and deterrence

The Korean War ended in 1953 with an armistice rather than a peace treaty. That distinction remains foundational. The Korean Peninsula is still, in a formal sense, an unresolved conflict space governed by armistice arrangements rather than a final political settlement.

The DMZ functions as both a military buffer and a legal-symbolic line dividing two states with incompatible political systems, competing claims to legitimacy, and radically different security alignments. Although called a demilitarized zone, it sits within one of the most heavily militarized regions in the world.

The modern security environment on the peninsula has repeatedly combined conventional deterrence, missile tests, nuclear signaling, cyber activity, maritime confrontation, and periodic diplomacy. The result is a system in which a single tactical incident can have strategic consequences far beyond the immediate battlefield.

3.2 Why the DMZ matters

- It is the geographic expression of the armistice line.
- It separates forward-deployed military forces and reduces the probability of surprise attack.
- It is embedded in command-and-control assumptions for both Koreas and for U.S.-ROK planning.
- It has immense symbolic meaning: any unilateral seizure of the DMZ can be read as a challenge to the post-1953 security order itself.

3.3 Why this crisis matters internationally

A Korean crisis immediately affects great-power relations, alliance credibility, refugee planning, global supply chains, shipping insurance, energy and financial markets, and nuclear deterrence norms. For the Security Council, the issue therefore combines classic interstate aggression questions with humanitarian, economic, cyber, and escalation-management concerns.

4. The 2026 Crisis Scenario

This committee uses a fictional 2026 crisis scenario: on 18 March 2026, the DPRK launches a coordinated operation to seize and administer major portions of the Korean DMZ. Pyongyang declares that the previous armistice mechanisms have become void due to hostile encirclement and that a new 'security buffer authority' will be run by the Korean People's Army.

DPRK units rapidly move into multiple sectors of the DMZ, occupy former observation areas, interfere with communications, and physically alter existing border arrangements. The Republic of Korea and the United States characterize the move as a grave armistice breach and a direct attempt to change the status quo by force. China and Russia call for restraint, but stop short of endorsing the seizure. Civilian alert levels rise in South Korea, while regional markets and military commands react sharply.

4.1 Timeline to freeze date

Date / Time	Event
10-14 March 2026	DPRK media sharply escalates rhetoric against U.S.-ROK exercises; satellite imagery suggests unusual force concentration near the border.
15 March 2026	Pyongyang declares that several military constraints associated with prior arrangements are no longer recognized.
16 March 2026	Small-arms incidents and electronic-warfare activity are reported in central DMZ sectors.
17 March 2026	Drone overflights, jamming, and tactical movement are observed; ROK and U.S. forces increase alert posture.
18 March 2026, pre-dawn	DPRK engineer and infantry units move into multiple DMZ sectors, seize roads and observation points, and announce temporary administrative control.
18 March 2026, 08:00 KST	Freeze date: the Security Council convenes in emergency session.

5. Freeze-Date Situation Report

At the start of committee, the following conditions are assumed to exist:

Military

- DPRK forces hold newly occupied positions across major DMZ sectors.
- No confirmed general ground invasion south of the broader forward line has yet occurred beyond the seized areas.
- ROK forces are mobilized but remain under tight political control to avoid inadvertent general war.
- U.S. Forces Korea and Indo-Pacific Command have raised readiness and surveillance posture.
- Japan has heightened missile-defense alert status.

Diplomatic

- South Korea and its major allies (including the United States, United Kingdom, and France) favor strong condemnation and withdrawal demands.
- China prioritizes de-escalation and resists language that could justify military escalation or regime destabilization.
- The Secretary-General calls for immediate de-escalation, humanitarian protection, and restoration of communication channels.
- Russia argues that the crisis reflects a broader security breakdown and opposes one-sided punitive language.
- The Secretary-General calls for immediate de-escalation, humanitarian protection, and restoration of communication channels.

Humanitarian

- Civilians near the northern outskirts of the Seoul metropolitan area are subject to evacuation planning and panic buying.
- Hospitals and emergency authorities in the Republic of Korea have shifted to contingency status.
- Aid organizations warn that any artillery exchange could generate rapid displacement.

Economic

- Regional markets are sharply lower and shipping insurance costs have risen.
- Manufacturing and semiconductor firms have activated contingency protocols.
- Energy prices and broader geopolitical risk premiums are trending upward.

6. Core Issues Before the Council

Issue	Questions for Delegates
Legal characterization	Must the Council describe the DPRK move as aggression, a breach of the armistice, a threat to international peace and security, or some combination of the three?
Withdrawal and status quo ante	Should the Council demand immediate return to pre-18 March positions, or leave room for a monitored interim arrangement?
Escalation management	How can the Council deter further DPRK advances without triggering a broader war involving artillery, missile launches, or nuclear signaling?
Sanctions and enforcement	Are new sanctions politically feasible? If so, should they target finance, logistics, military procurement, or specific officials?
Verification	Can the Council establish a fact-finding mission, observer arrangement, or Secretary-General reporting mechanism?
Humanitarian access	What immediate language is needed on civilian protection, medical evacuation, emergency corridors, and infrastructure protection?
Cyber and information warfare	Should the Council address cyberattacks, jamming, and disinformation as part of the crisis response?
Role of major powers	How should the Council manage the positions of China, Russia, and the United States while preserving Council unity?

7. Country Position Sheet for Security Council Members

The following position notes are intended as a concise starting point for delegate research and in-committee strategy. They are not substitutes for deeper preparation. Delegates should speak from their state's perspective, not from these summaries alone.

China (Permanent, has veto power)

Strategic Interests: Prevent war on the peninsula, avoid regime collapse in Pyongyang, limit U.S. military expansion near China's periphery, preserve regional stability and border control.

Likely Priorities: Immediate de-escalation, ceasefire language, restoration of communications, opposition to open-ended enforcement language, preference for a negotiated rollback over coercive escalation.

Red Lines: Use-of-force authorization, regime-change framing, sanctions language seen as destabilizing, Council text that legitimizes unilateral military action by allied states.

France (Permanent, has veto power)

Strategic Interests: Defense of international law and the rules-based order, non-proliferation, civilian protection, Council credibility.

Likely Priorities: Clear condemnation of unilateral seizure, call for restoration of the status quo ante, support for Secretary-General reporting and humanitarian access, possible targeted sanctions if noncompliance continues.

Red Lines: Language that normalizes the seizure or treats the event as a politically neutral border dispute.

Russian Federation (Permanent, has veto power)

Strategic Interests: Limit Western diplomatic gains, resist one-sided attribution, preserve leverage in Northeast Asian security questions, oppose coercive UNSC enforcement.

Likely Priorities: Mutual restraint language, renewed talks, skepticism of sanctions, emphasis on broader militarization by all parties.

Red Lines: Strong Chapter VII language, measures that appear to facilitate U.S.-led military pressure, text that isolates DPRK without wider context.

United Kingdom (Permanent, has veto power)

Strategic Interests: Collective security, alliance solidarity, non-proliferation, support for international law.

Likely Priorities: Condemnation of the seizure, call for withdrawal, support for monitoring and humanitarian language, calibrated pressure if the DPRK refuses to comply.

Red Lines: False equivalence that obscures the initiating act.

United States (Permanent, has veto power)

Strategic Interests: Alliance credibility, deterrence, defense of the armistice framework, prevention of wider war, containment of nuclear escalation.

Likely Priorities: Strong condemnation, immediate withdrawal demand, robust reporting and verification, readiness for sanctions and broader pressure if the DPRK does not reverse course.

Red Lines: Text undermining the right of the Republic of Korea to self-defense or legitimizing DPRK gains on the ground.

Bahrain

Strategic Interests: Regional stability, support for sovereignty and territorial integrity norms, alignment with broader rules-based security principles while retaining flexibility.

Likely Priorities: Ceasefire, rollback, humanitarian access, support for a balanced but firm resolution.

Red Lines: Open-ended escalation that could broaden the crisis beyond the peninsula.

Colombia

Strategic Interests: Defense of international law, support for civilian protection, preference for multilateral conflict management.

Likely Priorities: Strong legal framing against unilateral armed revision of a buffer zone, Secretary-General reporting, humanitarian protections, and disciplined diplomatic follow-up.

Red Lines: Language that effectively rewards faits accomplis created by force.

Democratic Republic of the Congo

Strategic Interests: Protection of sovereignty norms, concern over conflict spillover and humanitarian harm, support for UN-led de-escalation tools.

Likely Priorities: Ceasefire, humanitarian access, clear Council authority, pragmatic support for monitoring arrangements.

Red Lines: Council paralysis in the face of a clear destabilizing move.

Denmark

Strategic Interests: Protection of international law, support for rules-based diplomacy, civilian protection, and effective multilateral response.

Likely Priorities: Legally coherent condemnation, fact-finding, humanitarian language, and a practical roadmap toward de-escalation and compliance.

Red Lines: Ambiguity that weakens accountability for the initiating action.

Greece

Strategic Interests: Regional stability, respect for territorial order, maritime and wider security-system credibility.

Likely Priorities: Firm but diplomatic language, support for rollback to pre-crisis positions, and careful management of escalation risk.

Red Lines: Any precedent suggesting military seizure of demarcated zones can be normalized.

Latvia

Strategic Interests: Deterrence credibility, strong defense of sovereignty norms, concern over revisionist state behavior.

Likely Priorities: Firm condemnation, rollback demands, support for pressure mechanisms, and close coordination with Western delegations.

Red Lines: Text that blurs responsibility for coercive border revision.

Liberia

Strategic Interests: Civilian protection, support for mediation where possible, maintenance of international peace and security through collective institutions.

Likely Priorities: Ceasefire, protection of noncombatants, humanitarian coordination, and support for a workable consensus product.

Red Lines: Language that ignores humanitarian consequences while focusing only on military signaling.

Pakistan

Strategic Interests: Strategic caution, avoidance of great-power escalation, support for negotiated de-escalation while preserving formal legal principles.

Likely Priorities: Balanced language, restoration of communications, opposition to rushed coercive language if it risks making the crisis worse.

Red Lines: Council action that appears to predetermine military escalation rather than prevent it.

Panama

Strategic Interests: Support for international law, trade and maritime stability, preference for clear and orderly multilateral responses.

Likely Priorities: Ceasefire and withdrawal language, humanitarian measures, strong support for Secretary-General engagement and compliance review.

Red Lines: Extended ambiguity that undermines market and shipping stability.

Somalia

Strategic Interests: Conflict prevention, humanitarian protection, respect for sovereignty, and effective Council action under pressure.

Likely Priorities: Urgent de-escalation, humanitarian access, support for a negotiated but principled outcome, willingness to bridge blocs where possible.

Red Lines: Council deadlock that allows violence to expand unchecked.

8. Research Questions for Delegates

- What legal consequences follow from an attempted unilateral alteration of the armistice structure?
- How does your government typically balance deterrence and de-escalation in high-risk interstate crises?
- Would your delegation support a demand for immediate withdrawal, a monitored interim arrangement, or simply a ceasefire?
- What forms of sanctions, if any, would your state support?
- How would your delegation address the risks of nuclear signaling and cyber escalation?
- What humanitarian provisions would your state consider essential in any Council product?

9. Suggested Resolution Architecture

A. Immediate security language

Condemn the seizure; demand cessation of hostilities; call for withdrawal to pre-crisis positions; request urgent restoration of military communication channels.

B. Verification and reporting

Request a Secretary-General report within 24 to 48 hours; explore a fact-finding or observer arrangement if political conditions permit.

C. Humanitarian provisions

Call for protection of civilians, medical access, infrastructure restraint, and contingency support for displacement.

D. Diplomatic track

Support emergency talks, special envoy engagement, or contact-group style diplomacy.

E. Compliance mechanisms

Reserve the possibility of additional Council measures in the event of noncompliance.

10. Glossary and Source Note

Term	Meaning
DMZ	Demilitarized Zone separating the two Koreas under the post-1953 armistice framework.
DPRK	Democratic People's Republic of Korea (North Korea).
ROK	Republic of Korea (South Korea).
Status quo ante	The state of affairs that existed before the crisis action under review.

Rule 37 / Rule 39	Procedural routes by which non-Council states or briefers may participate in Council discussions without a vote.
-------------------	--

Source note: Current 2026 Security Council membership and institutional details were aligned to official United Nations Security Council resources current in 2026. All scenario developments in this guide concerning the DPRK seizure of the DMZ are fictional and created for educational simulation.