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# China, Russia welcome Korean peace efforts with diplomacy in overdrive

**S**EOUL (Reuters) - China's President Xi Jinping offered encouragement for South Korea's initiative to nurture peaceful engagement with North Korea, and Russia also expressed support, the South Korean official leading diplomatic efforts said on Thursday.

During the past week, National Security Office head Chung Eui-yong briefed officials in Beijing and Moscow following his dramatic success in arranging summits between the North Korean, South Korean and U.S. leaders.

"Xi Jinping offered a Chinese phrase that says 'once hard ice melts, spring comes and flowers bloom' to describe the situation on the Korean peninsula and expressed his willingness to support the current situation," Chung told reporters on his return to Incheon International Airport.

North Korean leader Kim Jong-un told the South Korean delegation led by Chung that he was open to addressing

denuclearizing with the United States, an offer that led to U.S. President Trump agreeing to meet Kim for a summit expected to happen sometime in May.

South Korean President Moon Jae-in is set to hold a summit with the North's Kim by the end of April.

The flurry of diplomatic activity comes after a year-long verbal spat between Kim Jong-un and Trump, with tensions exacerbated by multiple missile and nuclear tests by the North which has said it will forge on with its nuclear program to protect its regime.

"China and Russia agreed to continue cooperation to uphold the peace that has been created, as well as the momentum for stability through close communication," Chung said.

North Korea has friendly ties with both Beijing and Moscow, and China is by far its biggest trading partner.

Chung said China's top diplomat Yang Jiechi will visit Seoul early next

week for talks with security officials here.

Pyongyang has remained silent over its agreement for the summits since Chung returned from the North, although officials in Seoul have said they expect to continue working talks soon to work out details for the inter-Korean summit.

South Korea's Yonhap news agency reported that North Korea's Foreign

Minister Ri Yong Ho was seen in Beijing Capital International Airport on Thursday and speculated that he was on his way to Sweden.

Swedish media reported last week that Ri would visit soon to meet Sweden's Foreign Minister Margot Wallstrom. Their talks, according to Japan's Kyodo News Agency, could touch on three Korean Americans currently detained in North Korea.

\* FOREIGN NEWS  
\* PEACE TALK