

World must act on South Korean ship sinking: Clinton

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US Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton said yesterday the world must respond to the sinking of a South Korean warship that has been blamed on North Korea.

“This was an unacceptable provocation by North Korea, and the international community has a responsibility and a duty to respond,” Clinton said after talks with South Korean leaders.

The ship sinking “requires a strong but measured response,” she said at a joint news conference with South Korean Foreign Minister Yu Myung-hwan, though she did not elaborate.

Clinton said the US would be consulting with South Korea and members of the UN Security Council on what the appropriate action would be, but she declined to offer a timeline.

“We’re very confident in the South Korean leadership, and their decision about how and when to move forward is one that we respect and will support,” she said.

Tensions on the Korean Peninsula have risen sharply since a team of international investigators last week concluded that a torpedo from a North Korean submarine tore apart the corvette Cheonan on March 26. It killed 46 sailors.

Clinton spent just a few hours in Seoul discussing possible international responses with South Korean leaders. North Korea denies it was to blame and has threatened any attempt to punish it could lead to war.

Clinton arrived in Seoul yesterday after intense discussions on the deteriorating Korean situation with Chinese officials in Beijing.

“I believe that the Chinese understand the seriousness of this issue and are willing to listen to the concerns expressed by both South Korea and the United States,” she said. “We expect to be working with China as we move forward in fashioning a response.”

China, the North’s biggest ally, says it is still weighing the evidence over the sinking.

Beijing regards the sinking as “extremely complicated” and has no firsthand information about the cause, Chinese Vice Foreign Minister Zhang Zhijun (张齐俊) told reporters in Beijing.

“China is carefully and prudently studying and examining the information from all sides,” he said.

Yu, asked about the possibility of China or Russia blocking action by the UN Security Council, said they “will take time, I’m sure, but they will not be able to deny the facts.”

As Clinton visited Seoul, the two Koreas traded new threats. Pyongyang’s military said it would block cross-border traffic heading to a joint industrial zone in North if the South does not stop psychological warfare operations. South Korea accused Pyongyang of taking “menacing”

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measures.

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