

## U.S. softens stance ahead of N. Korea resolution

The UN Security Council was scheduled to vote on Monday on a draft resolution imposing new sanctions on North Korea after the U.S. toned down its demands in a bid to win support from Russia and China.

Washington has led the international drive to punish Pyongyang after it detonated its sixth and most powerful nuclear device earlier this month.

The U.S. had originally pushed for a strict oil embargo, as well as a freeze on the assets of North Korean leader Kim Jong-un.

A new draft text circulated late on Sunday maintains an embargo on gas but would limit sales of oil to 5,00,000 barrels for three months from October 1 and 2 million barrels from January 1 for a period of 12 months, according to the text obtained by AFP.

Mr. Kim would be spared from a UN blacklist that would have hit him with an assets freeze and a travel ban. The proposed resolution, however, would slap a ban on textile exports from North Korea, but drop demands for a halt to payments of workers.

### Inspection of ships

Among other concessions the new text also softens the inspection by force of ships suspected of carrying cargo prohibited by the UN and drops a proposed assets freeze on the state-owned Air Koryo airline.

Meanwhile, German Chancellor Angela Merkel on Monday voiced her support for tougher sanctions in a telephone call with Russian President Vladimir Putin, a German government spokesman said.

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