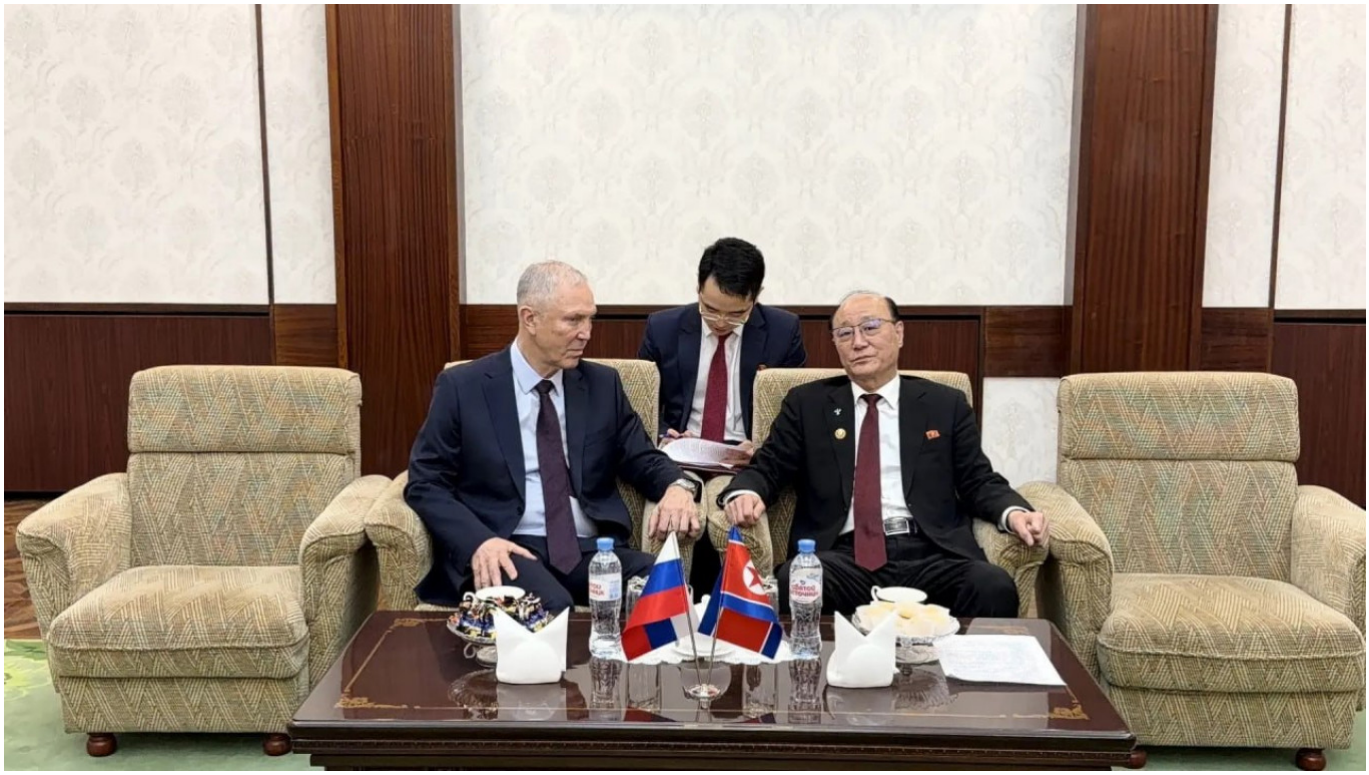
The Moscow Times
30 YEARS
INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Russia-Appointed Official in Occupied Kherson Holds Talks with North Korean Envoy

April 18, 2026



Vladimir Saldo (left) and Shin Hong Cheol.

A Russian-installed official in occupied southern Ukraine has held talks with North Korea's ambassador in Moscow, discussing potential cooperation in agriculture and other sectors, according to statements and media reports.

Vladimir Saldo, the Moscow-appointed head of the Russian-controlled part of Ukraine's Kherson region, met North Korean Ambassador Sin Hong Chol at the North Korean Embassy in Moscow, South Korea's Korea JoongAng Daily reported.

Saldo later published photographs of the meeting on social media, saying the sides explored possible collaboration in agriculture and humanitarian initiatives, as well as culture, sports and education.

The meeting highlights deepening ties between Moscow and Pyongyang as Russia seeks

economic and military support amid its war in Ukraine, while North Korea faces chronic food shortages and international isolation.

Saldo said North Korea's need for food products aligned with proposals from the Russian-installed administration.

He cited vegetable oil, flour and processed foods as potential areas of cooperation and invited the North Korean envoy to visit the Kherson region to familiarize himself with local farms.

Related article: Russia and North Korea's Propaganda Partnership Is Taking Shape

The talks come as reports have emerged of North Korean labor being deployed in Russia to address workforce shortages.

According to the rights group Global Rights Compliance, North Korean workers on Russian construction sites often endure conditions akin to forced labor, working up to 16 hours a day with few days off, living in overcrowded and unheated containers, and receiving only about $10 per month after deductions. Their passports are typically confiscated upon arrival, the group said.

Russia has stepped up the import of North Korean labor since launching its full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022. By June 2025, around 15,000 North Korean workers were in Russia, while Russian companies had submitted requests for some 153,000 workers.

Cooperation between Moscow and Pyongyang has expanded since the start of the war.

North Korea has supplied Russia with munitions, and its soldiers have reportedly taken part in combat operations alongside Russian forces in the Kursk region.

In return, Russia is believed to be providing North Korea with military technology, Korea JoongAng Daily reported.

Read this article in Russian at The Moscow Times' Russian service.

Original url:
https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2026/04/18/russia-appointed-official-in-occupied-kherson-holds-talks-with-north-korean-envoy-a92535