

Statement by H.E. Ambassador CHO Tae-yul
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to the United Nations

General Debate

The Preparatory Committee for the 2020 Review Conference of the
Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons
Third Session, 29 April - 10 May 2019, New York

Mr. Chairman,

I would like to begin by expressing my congratulations on your election to the Chair of the Third Session of the Preparatory Committee for the 2020 NPT Review Conference. You have assumed this important position at a critical time in the NPT review cycle, as next year will also mark the 50th anniversary of the Treaty's entry into force and the 25th year of its indefinite extension. I assure you of my delegation's full support for your endeavors to make this Session a success.

Mr. Chairman,

Without a doubt, the NPT has been and will continue to be the cornerstone of nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation regime. Only through our collective efforts to maintain and further strengthen the NPT regime, can we move steadily towards our shared goal of achieving a world free of nuclear weapons.

(Nuclear Disarmament)

In moving towards this common goal, progress in nuclear disarmament is crucial. But, nuclear disarmament cannot be achieved in isolation or all at once. It is closely interlinked with the ever-changing international security environment and thus can only be achieved on a step-by-step basis. It is for this reason that we welcome the initiative for Creating an Environment for Nuclear Disarmament. It will provide a useful opportunity for candid and frank dialogues

between all parties concerned. We look forward to participating in the Working Group and stand ready to contribute to facilitating such dialogues.

The Republic of Korea is also participating in the International Partnership for Nuclear Disarmament Verification (IPNDV). Having hosted one of its Working Group meetings in Seoul last year, my government is committed to working with partners to present concrete deliverables by 2020.

We also emphasize the need to make progress on long-standing issues, including the entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty (CTBT) and the early launch of negotiations on a Fissile Material Cut-off Treaty. The Republic of Korea, as the Chair of the 2019 Preparatory Commission of the CTBTO, will do its utmost to make sure that the Commission fulfills its mandated role.

(DPRK Nuclear Issue)

Mr. Chairman,

On April 27 of last year, during the second PrepCom session, the first inter-Korean Summit in eleven years was held at Panmunjom where the two leaders confirmed their commitment to realizing a nuclear-free Korean Peninsula through complete denuclearization. Many state parties expressed their support for this positive development on the Korean Peninsula and hoped for the momentum to continue. Meeting the high expectation of the international community, two more inter-Korean Summits took place in between the two US-DPRK Summits including the historic Summit in Singapore, the first ever in their bilateral relations. As such, unprecedented diplomatic efforts have been underway to achieve a negotiated settlement. All of these developments have been possible thanks to the strong political commitment and engagement by the top leaders of the two Koreas and the United States.

The second US-DPRK summit that took place in Hanoi this past February was useful in terms of a reality check, as it provided an opportunity to better understand each other's negotiating position,

which in turn will provide a solid basis for moving forward to the next step of negotiations with a clear understanding of reality. It is also encouraging that both sides have shown their willingness to continue dialogue. Under the current circumstances, what is important is to maintain the hard-won momentum for dialogue and diplomacy.

Denuclearization and peace on the Korean Peninsula is a top priority of my Government and we will continue to work to move the inter-Korean dialogue and US-DPRK negotiations forward in a mutually reinforcing manner. We urge the DPRK to abide by its reaffirmed commitment to complete denuclearization and look forward to the continued support and encouragement from the international community for our efforts towards a peaceful and diplomatic solution. If substantial progress is made for the denuclearization and permanent peace on the Korean Peninsula, it will have positive impact on our work in the NPT review process and can strengthen the resilience of the NPT regime.

(Peaceful Uses of Nuclear Energy)

Mr. Chairman,

The peaceful use of nuclear energy -- the third pillar of the NPT-- is most probably an area where we can make positive progress in this review cycle, as the related issues are less divisive. In fact, we have made substantial progress in the implementation of the 2010 Action Plan on this front.

But we believe that the right to peaceful uses of nuclear energy should also entail compliance with non-proliferation and safeguards obligations, as well as high level of safety and security. In particular, IAEA safeguards are crucial in verifying that state parties are honoring their obligations to use nuclear materials and technology only for peaceful purposes. The effective and strengthened IAEA safeguards system and its full compliance will contribute to enhancing international nuclear cooperation. The universalization of the Additional Protocol could also help strengthen this safeguards system.

We also recognize and support the IAEA's unique role in the NPT

context and its mandated role -- atoms for peace and development. The Republic of Korea is committed to supporting the IAEA with its ongoing financial and in-kind contribution to the IAEA Technical Cooperation Program and Peaceful Uses Initiative.

Mr. Chairman,

We are gathered here with a shared sense of responsibility. We must explore various options to ensure the success of the 2020 Review Conference. Most important is to prevent our discussions on divisive issues from holding this Session and the Review Conference hostage. We must seek a positive outcome by focusing on areas where our views converge, while working also towards the balanced progress across all of the three pillars of the NPT and rebuilding trust among state parties, especially between nuclear and non-nuclear states.

I sincerely hope that, at the end of this Session, we will be able to adopt a final report with a list of recommendations that may contribute to the success of the Review Conference next year. In this regard, it is important to reach an early agreement on all the organizational issues including the nomination of the President, as we need to secure enough time to well prepare for the Conference.

We urge all state parties to engage in the discussions in a constructive and forward-looking manner. My delegation stands ready to work with you, Mr. Chairman, to lead our deliberations to a successful conclusion.

Thank you. /END/