

**Statement by
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Deputy Minister for Multilateral and Global Affairs
The 10th Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty
on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons
General Debate
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Mr. President,

Congratulations on your long-overdue official appointment as President of this 10th NPT Review Conference. I also express my deep appreciation for your enormous and enduring efforts to bring all States Parties together despite unprecedented challenges. The Republic of Korea (ROK) stands ready to support you in every way possible to make this Conference a success.

Mr. President,

Over the past 50-plus years, the NPT has served as the cornerstone of the global nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation regime and as an essential foundation for the pursuit of peaceful uses of nuclear energy. The NPT is the only near-universal treaty that can effectively address these three inseparable and mutually reinforcing pillars. Therefore, maintaining and strengthening the NPT regime is indispensable for international peace and security.

This Conference comes at a critical juncture. The credibility and relevance of the NPT are being questioned. We have witnessed dangerous and irresponsible nuclear rhetoric and threats to use nuclear weapons; concerns are growing as transparency is decreasing regarding nuclear stockpiles, posture, and operations; and gaps have widened in assessing progress in nuclear disarmament. Persistent challenges remain in the non-proliferation

pillar. Nuclear safety and security have been seriously undermined by a dangerous attack on a nuclear power plant. This Review Conference should naturally focus on reaffirming our joint commitments and identifying concrete actions to advance all three pillars of this landmark treaty as we look to the next fifty years.

First, today's complicated security environment underscores that genuine efforts by the nuclear-weapon states are required to reduce nuclear risks and achieve progress in nuclear disarmament. The P5, in particular and among others, should assume their due and special responsibilities under Article VI of the Treaty. The January 2022 P5 Leaders' Statement affirmed that a nuclear war cannot be won and must never be fought and clearly expressed the intent to engage in bilateral and multilateral efforts to strengthen stability and predictability and increase mutual understanding and confidence. Stated willingness must be translated into concrete actions.

At the same time, the ROK believes that bridge-building efforts, including the Stockholm Initiative and the Creating Environment for Nuclear Disarmament, can contribute to building trust and promoting real progress toward our shared goal of a world without nuclear weapons. Therefore, all nuclear-weapon states are urged to positively consider the Stockholm Initiative's ambitious yet realistic "Stepping Stones" approach that includes promoting transparency, reducing nuclear risks, promoting an early entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear Test Ban Treaty, and proceeding with negotiations on a treaty prohibiting fissile material production for nuclear weapons, among others.

Second, the IAEA-centered nuclear safeguards and verification regime should be strengthened. The IAEA's safeguards regime has served as the linchpin of the NPT by providing assurance to all States Parties on the non-diversion of nuclear material from their peaceful nuclear programs and thus facilitated exchanges of nuclear material, equipment, and technology.

The ROK urges those State Parties which have not yet adopted the comprehensive safeguards agreements and the Additional Protocol to conclude and bring them into force without delay. As a strong supporter of the JCPOA (Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action), we encourage all relevant parties to return to genuine dialogue at the earliest possible opportunity and find a path back to full compliance with the milestone agreement. We also reiterate our support for the Establishment of a Middle East Zone Free of Nuclear Weapons and Other Weapons of Mass Destruction.

Another top priority non-proliferation issue is the DPRK. While relentlessly developing nuclear and missile programs, the DPRK has been launching ballistic missiles at an unprecedented frequency, 31 this year alone, in flagrant violation of the UN Security Council resolutions. Furthermore, the DPRK is assessed to be technically ready for yet another nuclear test, which would be its seventh. The DPRK is the only country that abused the NPT regime and openly developed nuclear weapons. How we address the nuclear challenges by the DPRK at the NPT will not only serve as a message to the DPRK but will be a litmus test on the viability of the NPT regime itself. We urge the DPRK to cease all kinds of provocations, comply with the UN Security Council resolutions, return to fully comply with the NPT at an early date, and denuclearize in a complete, verifiable, and irreversible manner. At the same time, we take this opportunity to make it clear that the door to dialogue remains open.

Third, it is time to redouble our efforts to expand and enhance the cooperation for the peaceful uses of nuclear energy in accordance with Article IV of the NPT. As one of the major producers of nuclear energy, the ROK has actively contributed to expanding the benefits of peaceful uses of nuclear energy. The ROK remains committed to continuing its contribution to the IAEA's Technical Cooperation programs, including ZODIAC and the Peaceful Uses Initiative, and will spare no effort to promote international cooperation advancing nuclear technologies such as small modular reactors.

It should also be noted that securing the highest standard of nuclear safeguards, safety, and security is a prerequisite for expanding peaceful uses. In this vein, the ROK has been one of the main contributors to the IAEA's Nuclear Security Fund and its activities. The ROK is determined to continue its leading role in improving nuclear safeguards, safety, and security and remains a staunch supporter of the IAEA's central role in this area.

Finally, to ensure the sustainability of our efforts well into the future, the ROK is leading the initiative on youth engagement as a champion of the UN Secretary-General's Agenda for Disarmament. We will be contributing to the NPT by hosting a side event in this regard and look forward to your support.

Mr. President,

In closing, let me take this opportunity to reaffirm the ROK's unwavering commitment to strengthening the NPT regime hand in hand with States Parties. We need to constructively engage and seize the opportunity for the sake of peace and prosperity. And we all know that the enduring relevance of the NPT itself is an important pillar in this regard.

Thank you. /END/