First Committee of the 72nd Session of the UN General Assembly  
General Debate  
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Statement by H.E. Ambassador Cho Tae-yul  
Permanent Representative  

New York <Check against Delivery>  

Mr. Chairman,  

At the outset, I would like to align myself with previous speakers in congratulating you on your election as Chair of the First Committee during this session. I assure you of my delegation’s full support for the work of the Committee, and look forward to a productive session under your able leadership.  

Mr. Chairman,  

On 24 January 1946, the very first resolution of the United Nations, resolution on the “Establishment of a Commission to deal with the Problems Raised by the Discovery of Atomic Energy” was adopted in London. 72 years have passed since then, but a significant portion of our Committee’s work is still focused on the issues of this resolution, that is, nuclear nonproliferation and disarmament.  

And what further complicates our task in this regard is North Korea, the only country that has conducted nuclear tests in the 21st century. Following its two nuclear tests and numerous ballistic missile launches of all types last year in defiance of stern warnings of the international community, North Korea went ahead with its sixth nuclear test this past month. North Korea’s such reckless provocations indeed pose the
gravest threat to international peace and security as well as the global nonproliferation regime.

We must stop North Korea before it crosses the point of no return. In order to do so, the international community should be united to speak in one voice and act in solidarity by fully and thoroughly implementing the relevant UN Security Council resolutions. North Korea, for its part, should make a strategic decision, without further delay, to give up its nuclear and ballistic missile programs for the sake of its own future. Whether to stick to its current path of self-destruction or redirect itself towards the path of prosperity is entirely the choice of North Korea. The Republic of Korea remains committed to peaceful resolution of the issue and stands ready to help North Korea build a brighter future if it changes its course.

Mr. Chairman,

As such, today’s world is a far cry from a world free of nuclear weapons. Indeed, now more than ever before, we need practical measures to advance nuclear disarmament. To be viable, however, any nuclear disarmament approach should give due consideration to the underlying security concerns of each country or region. As a country under the constant nuclear threat from North Korea, it is only logical for the Republic of Korea to prefer and support a progressive approach to nuclear disarmament.

We firmly believe that the Treaty of Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) should be the basis for our ongoing efforts for the realization of the nuclear weapon free world. We also believe that the early entry into force of the Comprehensive Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) and the early launch of the negotiation on the Fissile Material Cut-off Treaty (FMCT) in Geneva should be our priority to promote nonproliferation leading to disarmament, and vice versa. As a member of the High-Level FMCT Expert Preparatory Group, we will exert our utmost efforts to ensure that the recommendations of the Group are both substantive and comprehensive to pave the way toward actual negotiations on this critical issue.

Mr. Chairman,

The discussions on confidence-building measures in the field of conventional arms are also of vital importance, as the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons (SALW) continue to prolong conflicts and fuel terrorism and other illicit activities
around the world. Earlier in April, the UN witnessed the adoption by consensus of recommendations on this issue, the first ever made in the UN Disarmament Commission in 17 years. We look forward to the equally inclusive and fruitful discussions during the third UN Review Conference of the Program of Action (PoA) to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in SALW next June.

Rapid scientific and technological developments do not allow us the ease of life unless we take heed of its double-edged nature. Proliferation challenges from tech-savvy and transnational non-state actors, violent extremists, and global terrorist groups necessitate enhanced vigilance and strengthened coordination between different national authorities. In this regard, the Republic of Korea reaffirms its firm support for the work of the Security Council 1540 Committee and will continue to contribute to its outreach and capacity-building activities.

Areas such as outer-space security and cyber security are where the international community can still be more proactive. In this regard, the Republic of Korea is of the view that the transparency and confidence-building measures to avoid a possible arms race in space is a very opportune item for our deliberations. With regard to the cyber security, the Republic of Korea appreciates the work and progresses made so far by the UN Group of Governmental Experts (GGE) on Information Security. Unfortunately, the 2016-17 GGE failed to adopt a consensus report, but its four rounds of in-depth meetings taught us where we are now in terms of our collective efforts to ensure an open and secure cyberspace and to promote global cooperative framework for addressing cyber threats.

Under your stewardship, Mr. Chairman, we are confident that the Member States will come together to address these areas of pressing concern. The Republic of Korea remains committed to actively contributing to the work of the Committee during this session.

I thank you, Mr. Chairman. /END/