First Committee of the 74th Session of the UN General Assembly

Thematic Debate on Nuclear Weapons

Mr. President,

A world free of nuclear weapons is an aspiration shared by all humanity. Yet the reality is that the leadership and sincerity of nuclear states that gave birth to the NPT in 1969 as well as landmark agreements on nuclear weapons reduction are questioned more and more by many non-nuclear states. What’s more concerning is the deepening erosion of trust between states with and without nuclear weapons. The termination of the INF is a clear example that the relationship among the nuclear powers is further eroding in the middle of continued deterioration of the international security environment.

In order to rekindle the hope of a nuclear-free world, the Republic of Korea believes that the international community should set priorities in the following elements and areas.

First, we strongly believe that the NPT regime should remain the solid foundation for the future course of action in moving closer towards Global Zero. Therefore, the 2020 NPT Review Conference being held on the 50th anniversary of the Treaty is a crucial occasion to reaffirm our strong commitment to the NPT. In this regard, we support the ongoing efforts to bridge the gap between the states with different perspectives and to seek pragmatic, achievable results, such as the stepping-stone approach, which the Republic of Korea is part of. In addition, we are in favor of reaffirming political support to the treaty, including through high-level participation at the Review Conference. The ROK will continue to be in full compliance with the NPT and remain a strong supporter of the NPT system.
Second, priority should be placed on deepening common understanding between nuclear-weapon states (NWS) and non-nuclear-weapon states (NNWS). We believe that the role of the P5 nuclear-weapon states is particularly important in addressing the growing dissatisfaction and mistrust between these two groups. The P5 need to show their steadfast and clear commitment for nuclear disarmament by strengthening consultations and the coordination of their nuclear policies. Efforts to implement their commitments under Article Six (6) of the NPT should be combined with their active engagement with non-nuclear-weapon states in various trust- and confidence-building measures.

In this regard, Korea welcomes and supports all efforts for greater communication and cooperation between the NWS and the NNWS. US-led initiative on ‘Creating an Environment for Nuclear Disarmament’ is a clear example of such communication and cooperation, and we look forward to further work, following the Kick-Off meeting of the Working Group in July and stand ready to contribute to the Group’s discussion. We also believe that continuing the consultations around nuclear verification, risk reduction, and issues related to new technology can facilitate understanding between the two groups. We welcome the work of the International Partnership for Nuclear Disarmament Verification (IPNDV) and the Group of Government of Experts on Nuclear Verification to this end.

Third, long-standing issues, mostly importantly the early commencement of the negotiations on the FMCT and the entry into force of the CTBT, should not be overlooked. After more than twenty years of preparation for the negotiations on the FMCT, we believe that it is now time to embark upon the negotiations on the Treaty in the Conference on Disarmament without any further delay. All the groundwork is in place including the excellent report from the High-level FMCT Experts Preparatory Group. We also call for all non-parties to the CTBT, in particular those in the list of Annex II, to sign and ratify the Treaty at the earliest possible
date. Korea is ready and willing to closely cooperate with our partners on these fronts.

Mr. President,

The denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula has long been an issue of key importance for the sake of international peace and security. We are at a critical juncture in this regard. Unprecedented diplomatic efforts at the summit level are being explored with a view to realizing our shared goal of a nuclear-free Korean Peninsula.

To back up the summit level efforts, working-level negotiations between the United States and the DPRK were recently resumed in Stockholm. Although the talks did not produce tangible results, it seems the two sides are keeping the door open for future discussions. As the United States expressed its willingness to hold additional meetings with the DPRK in the near future, we sincerely hope that the DPRK, fulfilling its commitment to complete denuclearization, will also remain engaged in dialogue.

It is imperative to continue to create and foster favorable conditions leading to peaceful diplomatic resolutions. It is also critically important to further build upon the hard-won breakthroughs already achieved and to move the negotiations forward. As my President emphasized at the UN General Assembly last month, dialogue is the only possible avenue towards peace. And only peace that is built upon a firm basis of trust will endure.

In this process towards the denuclearization of and lasting peace on the Korean Peninsula, the Republic of Korea will be resolute and patient. And throughout this process we will work closely with our friends in the international community. Your continued full support would indeed be deeply appreciated. Thank you. /END/