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Statement by H.E. Ambassador SHIN Dong-ik

General Debate

First Session of the Preparatory Committee

for the 2020 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons

2 May, 2017

Mr. Chairman,

I would like to join the previous speakers in congratulating you on your assumption of the chairmanship of the First Session of the Preparatory Committee for the 2020 NPT Review Conference. I assure you of my delegation's full support and cooperation during this session.

We are now at a critical juncture for the future of the NPT. After the 2015 Review Conference failed to produce a final document, there have been skeptical reactions regarding the validity of the NPT.

However, we should not take the lack of consensus at the last Review Conference as a failure of the review cycle or the Treaty itself. Since its entry into force in 1970, the NPT has been the cornerstone of the nonproliferation regime. Although the modest progress made so far in nuclear disarmament falls short of our expectations, the achievements in the other two pillars, nonproliferation and peaceful use of nuclear energy, cannot be underestimated.

For example, the comprehensive agreement reached by E3+3/EU and Iran stands out as one of the major achievements in nonproliferation since the 2015 Review Conference. The Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) demonstrates the great potential of diplomacy in resolving international

concerns peacefully. The ROK hopes that all parties to the JCPOA will remain committed to the successful implementation of the agreement.

Mr. Chairman

Just three years shy of the 50th anniversary of the Treaty, tough challenges lie ahead of us.

First and foremost, North Korea remains the flagrant exploiter of the NPT regime. Abusing all the benefits permitted to NPT Parties, Pyongyang acquired nuclear technology, equipment, and materials for a clandestine nuclear weapons programme, and then one-sidedly announced that it was leaving the Treaty and the IAEA. Despite repeated warnings by the international community, North Korea has continued its development of nuclear and missile capabilities.

Last year alone, North Korea conducted its fourth and fifth nuclear tests and launched 24 ballistic missiles, violating the relevant United Nations Security Council resolutions at least 26 times. Pyongyang is now racing toward the final stage of nuclear weaponization.

As the missile capabilities of North Korea progress, no country will be safe from Pyongyang's nuclear threat. Not only that, a nuclear-armed North Korea could shake the very foundation of the global nonproliferation regime.

We should not let such nuclear nightmare come true. On April 28, the first-ever Security Council meeting on the denuclearization of North Korea demonstrated the sense of gravity and urgency shared by all members of the international community. Reaffirming that North Korea's continuous development of nuclear weapons and missiles will significantly undermine international peace and security as well as the global non-proliferation regime

based on the NPT, Security Council members called for an action to seize this last opportunity to stop the North Korea's dangerous nuclear proliferation.

As continuously reaffirmed by the NPT Review Conferences and the United Nations Security Council resolutions, North Korea cannot have the status of a nuclear-weapon State in accordance with the Treaty under any circumstances. Pyongyang should realize that the only option left for it is to abandon its weapons of mass destruction programme in a complete, verifiable, irreversible manner, return to the IAEA Safeguards, and fully comply with its obligations under the NPT. In line with this, the ROK welcomes the IAEA's efforts to maintain readiness to return and re-establish safeguards-related activities in North Korea. We underline our support for the IAEA's role in the monitoring and verification of the North Korean nuclear activities.

Mr. Chairman,

The ROK has been a keen supporter of the global nonproliferation regime. I would like to take this opportunity to highlight the successful conclusion of the 2016 IAEA International Conference on Nuclear Security: Commitments and Actions, chaired by our Foreign Minister, Yun Byung-Se. The adoption by consensus of the Ministerial Declaration was a milestone in the international community's efforts to protect nuclear and other radioactive material from malicious acts by keeping pace with evolving challenges and threats, maintaining effective security of radioactive sources throughout their life cycle, and taking active steps to combat illicit trafficking. The Korean government has been also playing a constructive role in strengthening the multilateral export control regime, as the Chairs of both the Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG) and the Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR) for the 2016-2017 terms. Following the 26th Plenary of the NSG held in Seoul last year, Participating

Governments of the NSG successfully updated the NSG Control Lists and Guidelines. Voluntary adherence to these revised NSG Control Lists and Guidelines will contribute to the implementation of NPT Article 3.2.

While being convinced that the NPT should remain as the cornerstone of the nonproliferation regime, a balanced approach to the three pillars of the NPT is vital for maintaining the credibility, integrity, and legitimacy of the Treaty. In this regard, my delegation would like to highlight the following points as our priorities as we prepare for the 2020 Review Conference.

First, ensuring full compliance with nonproliferation obligations is crucial for the credibility and integrity of the NPT. In order to do this, we should clarify the disadvantages of non-compliance.

In this regard, we need to come up with concrete proposals to counter and discourage incidents of non-compliance. As shown by the case of North Korea, the NPT regime currently lacks effective measures to address violations of the Treaty. If the NPT regime remains powerless against rule breakers, the validity of the Treaty will be constantly questioned. We need to agree on concrete actions to effectively deal with violators of the Treaty. In particular, the issue of withdrawal during or after violations should be seriously discussed.

A reliable mechanism for identifying non-compliance is also crucial. Since IAEA Safeguards provide credible assurances of a State's compliance with its obligations, we attach great importance to the strengthening of the IAEA Safeguards system, including by universalizing its Additional Protocol (AP).

Second, although there have been a relatively modest progress made in nuclear disarmament compared to the other two pillars of the NPT, we should remain committed to the centrality of the Treaty in nuclear disarmament. My delegation shares the view that any hasty attempt to eliminate nuclear weapons

all at once leaves the international security environment out of consideration, and undermines the credibility of the NPT. In this sense, my delegation believes that nuclear disarmament can only be achieved step-by-step following the relevant obligations of the NPT.

At the same time, we need to work together to make progress in the overdue promise of nuclear disarmament according to Article VI. The deepening gap between nuclear-weapon States and non-nuclear-weapon States on this issue does not serve our common interests. Sincere efforts to translate the 2010 Action Plans into actions, including an early entry into force of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) and starting the negotiation for a Fissile Material Cut-Off Treaty (FMCT), would bring us closer to a world free of nuclear weapons.

Lastly, our efforts should be focused on expanding a common ground where States can come to an agreement. While there notably remain diverging views on some critical issues, peaceful uses of nuclear energy is an issue around which we can form wider consensus and build a positive momentum in our discussions for a successful 2020 Review Conference.

Indeed, we have made substantial progress in the implementation of the 2010 Action Plan on this front. Bearing in mind that exercise of the inalienable right to peaceful uses of nuclear energy should entail compliance with nonproliferation and safeguards obligations, NPT Parties have worked together to promote technical cooperation and realize the full potential of nuclear energy in many ways. This includes support of and participation in the IAEA's Technical Cooperation program, the Peaceful Uses Initiatives (PUI), and other programs; efforts to draw lessons from the Fukushima Accident and further enhance nuclear safety; and the establishment of an enduring nuclear security architecture. In this context, the ROK will provide full support for the success of the International Conference on Technical Cooperation in May and International Ministerial Conference on Nuclear Power in October which will be held later in this 60th anniversary year of the IAEA.

Mr. Chairman,

These are important achievements that we have made together and they should serve as a solid foundation in moving our discussion forward. It is our view that we should continue our work to strengthen the third pillar of the NPT and that this will contribute to our finding the Treaty valuable, and thus make the NPT regime stronger and more relevant.

To do that, all NPT Parties should accept responsibility for making concrete actions, especially as described by the 2010 Action Plan, to promote all three pillars of the Treaty. Bearing in mind that this review cycle is critical in reaffirming the validity of the Treaty, we should work together to make meaningful progress.

I would like to conclude by expressing my wish for the success of the 2020 Review Process.

Thank you. /END/