

Opening Remarks

by

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Jeju Process

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I would like to begin by expressing my deep appreciation to the Government of the Republic of Korea for its many efforts both in organizing this conference and in working to sustain the “Jeju process.” Though we are meeting on an island described in tourist brochures as a “land of fantasy,” the Jeju process is focused on problems that are all-too real -- including some of the gravest threats to international peace and security. Few issues deserve more attention than the themes identified in the title of this Conference – the “challenges to non-proliferation and disarmament norms” in this region, for the fulfillment of these norms would bring concrete security benefits to all countries and advance the cause of human security everywhere.

In many respects, the security challenges in East Asia mirror those that exist at the global level -- especially threats posed by weapons of mass destruction (WMD) and their delivery systems. The flow of historical events relating to these weapons follows a two-way path – global

events can shape local conditions, but local developments can also have global effects, which is surely no surprise to those who follow developments specifically on the Korean peninsula.

The 1991 “denuclearization” declaration, for example, was a local initiative with profound significance for security well beyond the region -- its full implementation was (and remains) a matter of great interest to all countries. Similarly, the decision by the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK) to test fire a medium-range missile over Japan in 1998 -- while on one level a “local” development -- actually had far deeper repercussions for international peace and security. In both local and multilateral arenas, however, the people and their leaders throughout this region understand well the importance of disarmament and have long supported constructive efforts to advance this goal. This offers a constructive foundation upon which to build new progress in the years ahead.

Through the voices and votes of their representatives in the First Committee to the United Nations General Assembly -- and in other multilateral disarmament arenas -- the governments of East Asia have repeatedly affirmed their commitments to eliminating nuclear weapons, biological weapons, and chemical weapons. They understand how full compliance with the NPT, BWC, and CWC serves to enhance security interests at all levels -- national, regional, and global.

Like other regions, East Asia has experienced its share of local threats involving the potential use of such weapons, while confronting additional problems relating to the vertical and horizontal proliferation of missiles and missile-defence systems. While each threat has its own unique characteristics, it would be wrong to view them in isolation. This is particularly clear in the case of the recent actions of the DPRK -- including its failure to implement IAEA safeguards, its announced departure from the NPT, its public statements heralding a nuclear-weapons capability, and its threats to test both nuclear weapons and missiles. Such activities have profound implications well beyond the Korean peninsula, even well beyond the boundaries of East Asia. Indeed, how this ongoing crisis is resolved will likely affect not just the future of global nuclear non-proliferation regime, but more general conditions of international peace and security. I am particularly grateful, therefore, that the Conference will devote a Plenary Session to this specific issue.

I am also pleased that two additional Plenary Sessions will address the important issues of non-compliance and verification. Global efforts to eliminate all WMD require political commitment coupled with treaties, with permanence and their binding quality. Aside from its universality and the general pattern of compliance among its Member States, another test of the health of a multilateral treaty in the field of international peace and security concerns how the world would respond if and when it is violated. Even treaties like the NPT, which enjoys virtually universal support -- and, by all indications, overwhelming compliance -- can be severely jeopardized by violations. In this context, verification serves an essential confidence-building role, in facilitating future progress in both non-proliferation and disarmament.

As difficult as the challenge of verification may be, the three vital responsibilities of

monitoring compliance, determining the existence of non-compliance, and organizing multilateral enforcement actions together comprise an even more daunting agenda.

I hope in your deliberations you will consider not just the difficulties ahead, but also possible ways to overcome the difficulties and the potential gains – indeed, it is difficult to imagine a future “rule of law” that was missing any one of these essential functions. This brings me to the “Proliferation Security Initiative” -- the subject of a presentation at our second Plenary session. This initiative -- announced by a group of states interested in interdicting illicit shipments of goods relating to missiles and WMD – may well become, as its membership grows and it gains greater international legitimacy, a foundation or framework for coordinated, multilateral action to enforce non-proliferation norms.

Indeed, it would be most appropriate for such enforcement actions to be undertaken, in accordance with the UN Charter, as a result of decisions made in the Security Council. The fate of this Initiative – in particular its future relationship to the UN Security Council – offers a rich subject for discussion, for it is an issue with many profound implications for the future ability of the world community to enforce its most solemn disarmament and non-proliferation norms.

This issue of enforcement is at the center of an ongoing debate over the role of unilateral action to protect security interests. In his remarks at the opening of the current session of the General Assembly, Secretary-General Kofi Annan reminded all Member States that “it is not enough to denounce unilateralism, unless we also face up squarely to the concerns that make some States feel uniquely vulnerable, since it is those concerns that drive them to take unilateral action.” He added that “We must show that those concerns can, and will, be addressed effectively through collective action.” I hope that all participants at this conference will focus close attention on this specific challenge.

As seen in their words and deeds, governments throughout this region recognize the great advantages of addressing difficult problems of international peace and security through such collective action. It is not at all surprising that countries in East Asia would take a particular interest in WMD disarmament initiatives, considering that this region has already witnessed the use of nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction during the Second World War. We also forget sometimes that the great continent of Asia once hosted no less than fifteen nuclear-weapon test sites – many more than on any other continent.

It is also not very surprising, therefore, that in greater East Asia, there are two nuclear-weapon-free zones (in the South Pacific and Southeast Asia), and one country (Mongolia) that has earned international recognition of its nuclear-weapons-free status. Support for the NPT, BWC, and CWC throughout this region is overwhelming, and concerns over possible non-compliance remain quite rare relative to the overall pattern of compliance within the region. With respect to international nuclear safeguards, many states in the region have already concluded and are implementing the Additional Protocol, and others will, hopefully, soon follow. The deep support in this region for the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) is another

indicator of an abiding commitment to disarmament norms – I hope that all states in East Asia will soon ratify this treaty, thereby bringing it closer to early entry into force. I also note that two states of this region -- Myanmar and Japan -- have for several years introduced the two key nuclear disarmament resolutions considered in the General Assembly, and both continue to enjoy strong support.

Though many States worldwide are engaged in the development, testing, and export of missiles and related technology, the countries of this region have recognized the importance of export controls over such commodities and are trying to expand their cooperation -- both with and outside the region -- to address such concerns. We must examine the danger of an “action/ reaction cycle,” in which missile-proliferation developments stimulate the pursuit or deployment of advanced missile-defence capabilities, which in turn may generate new pressures for additional missile or nuclear proliferation. We should look into the possible ways to prevent a local or regional missile race. I am pleased therefore to see that many missile proliferation and verification issues will be addressed in the sessions that will follow.

I have not given up the hope that cooperation in addressing such issues – at both the regional and global levels – will eventually lead to the emergence of new global norms for missiles that will be legally binding. In this respect, I encourage all participants at this conference to view missiles not just as a proliferation threat, but also as a challenge for disarmament – this view is consistent with the disarmament goal for delivery systems found in the Preamble of the NPT, and we should work to keep this goal alive. We must not, however, allow the missile-disarmament challenges of tomorrow detract from our collective efforts to address missile-proliferation challenges of today – for unless we are successful in addressing the latter threat, we will have little hope of achieving the former.

Compliance is obviously essential only where treaties exist – there are no multilateral treaties, however, governing many types of weapons, including missiles. We must therefore work to strengthen existing weapons regimes, yet never forget the need to consider new initiatives to establish legal constraints for weapons not yet covered by regimes. I am sure such issues will come up in the conference’s discussions over delivery vehicles. I assume the discussion will also address verification, compliance, and prevention issues relating to biological weapons, as well as the implementation of national measures to reduce the potential threats posed by such weapons. New norms and measures will also be needed to address growing threats from non-state actors, as underscored by the UN’s Counter-Terrorism Committee last Monday – this is one area where some real progress should be made by the entire world community – I hope to hear ideas on certain specific options for future progress.

My remarks today have so far focused on the first part of the title of this conference, specifically that part dealing with challenges to disarmament and non-proliferation norms. The other important element on our agenda is the region of “East Asia.” The region encompasses great diversity -- diverse histories, cultures, levels of economic development, military capabilities, levels of technological achievement, and political views. I expect many participants at this

conference will have equally diverse ideas on measures to strengthen global non-proliferation and disarmament norms. Such diversity is a welcome sign of health for the regimes that seek to fulfill such norms.

East Asia must – however – remain a single, unified region with respect to the fundamental norms themselves. In particular, WMD disarmament should not itself be a subject for dispute. Our goal is not merely to reduce the risk of such weapons being used or being acquired by additional States or non-state actors -- but to work to eliminate such weapons all together. After all there is no better way to eliminate the threat of use of WMD than through the path of disarmament, even though we cannot justify or remain idle on the question of proliferation for this reason. The future of disarmament will be bright if it can advance security goals in a practical manner. Its future will be in jeopardy, however, if it depends for its success solely upon idealistic words rather than specific, practical, and verifiable deeds.

You, the distinguished participants at this conference, have extraordinarily diverse backgrounds and experience in dealing with all the issues on our agenda. I hope in your deliberations, that you will be able to find -- in this diversity -- a common ground upon which the nations of East Asia can make further progress in addressing the challenges facing disarmament and non-proliferation norms throughout the region.

Thank you for the honour of inviting me to open your proceedings – and thank you for your professional interest and commitment to non-proliferation and disarmament goals. Please accept my best wishes for a very successful conference.