

# Opening Statement

by

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The Sixth ROK-UN Joint Conference on Disarmament and Nonproliferation Issues

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I am deeply honoured to open this conference, jointly organized by the Republic of Korea and the United Nations, and dedicated to the challenges of fulfilling the great goals of disarmament and non-proliferation in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. At the outset, I wish to thank our host, Ambassador In Kook Park, the Deputy Minister for International Organizations and Global Issues at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, not only for his office's administrative and financial contributions in organizing this conference, but also for his nation's dedicated efforts on behalf of disarmament and non-proliferation, as well as its longstanding support for the deeper values and principles of the United Nations Charter.

I am told that there is a Korean proverb that says, "Even a sheet of paper seems lighter when two people lift it together." While it only takes a sheet of paper to communicate the *goal* of a world free of weapons of mass destruction, it will take dedicated efforts of the entire international community to convert this vision into a reality. This historic goal will surely require some heavy lifting not only by governments, but also by influential citizens and groups from civil society, and I am delighted to see some of their representatives here with us today. Your national proverb offers precisely the theme I would like to set for this conference – it is only through sustained collaboration that we will collectively be able to overcome the many obstacles that have prevented progress on disarmament and non-proliferation in the past.

As the United Nations High Representative for Disarmament Affairs, I intend to do all that I can to assist Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon in fulfilling his own profound, personal commitment to eliminating all weapons of mass destruction and preventing their future proliferation, whether to terrorists or additional states. This goal – which is of course shared by the overwhelming majority of states – is especially important to achieve with respect to nuclear weapons, given the horrific, indiscriminate effects from the use of even one such weapon. Fortunately, we have many valuable tools available to pursue this goal, including those in or associated with the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). As we are all aware, however, this treaty is facing its own challenges – some political, some technological – that must be overcome for it to fulfil its three great goals of disarmament, non-proliferation, and the peaceful uses of nuclear energy.

Appropriately, many speakers at this conference will address precisely such issues. The disappointing conclusion of the 2005 NPT Review Conference, the inability of national leaders to address disarmament or non-proliferation issues in the Outcome Document of the 2005 World Summit, the nuclear test by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea in 2006, and the continuing diplomatic efforts to encourage Iran to resolve outstanding issues and to comply with Security Council and IAEA resolutions – these are all developments that have had profound implications for the global nuclear regime based on the NPT.

I am glad to see that this conference will be addressing these issues not just in the abstract, but in many of their concrete and practical details. The closer we get to the 2010 NPT Review Conference, the more important will become the individual contributions from conferences such as these – which is of course fully consistent with our Korean proverb.

The treaty's review process surely deserves close attention, for it serves as a useful instrument for assessing the health of the nuclear regime. Blaming any particular review

conference for a failure, however, is a bit like blaming a thermometer for hot weather – the review process is telling us something, and it is up to states parties to decide if the time has come to adjust or reconsider their own national policies that are put forward on such occasions.

The same is true with respect to deliberations throughout the United Nations disarmament machinery, in particular the Conference on Disarmament, the General Assembly's First Committee, and the United Nations Disarmament Commission. In each of these institutions, consensus has been especially difficult to achieve on issues relating to nuclear weapons. I am therefore very pleased to see that this machinery has been included as one of the specific topics to be addressed at this conference.

While much of this machinery on disarmament is focused on problems that are already the focus of existing multilateral regimes, there are also a wide range of new issues that are increasingly calling out for greater international attention and cooperative responses, including some issues that are not yet the subject of any multilateral treaties.

This is true, for example, with respect to missiles – what one analyst once called “*infernal combustion engines*” – as well as to other types of delivery vehicles for nuclear weapons. It is ironic indeed that although the preamble of the NPT clearly identifies the goal of eliminating not only nuclear weapons but also the means of their delivery, the latter disarmament goal never gets the sustained level of attention it deserves at the level of diplomatic action, neither in the NPT review process nor in any other multilateral forum. Perhaps this conference will succeed in identifying some specific initiatives that might to some future progress, such as the possibilities of establishing regional missile-free zones as a stepping stone to some broader multilateral arrangements.

Another very difficult subject concerns the nuclear fuel cycle – I say difficult, because there is simply no consensus today on some of the most basic international rules of the road when it comes to nuclear reprocessing or uranium enrichment. Current proposals range all the way from complete *laissez faire* at one extreme, to centralized international ownership and control at the other, with many options in between. I believe that most, but evidently not all, states recognize the value in establishing some global standards in this field – not double-standards, but principles and norms that apply universally. As the world prepares for a renaissance in the peaceful uses of nuclear energy, we need parallel efforts to ensure that this renaissance does not jeopardize nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation goals. This is no doubt why the original architects of the NPT chose to build their treaty on three pillars, not just one or two.

A distinct but related subject requiring greater international collaboration concerns the looming danger of nuclear terrorism – whether defined as risks of attacks on nuclear facilities, the dissemination of radioactive materials as weapons, the theft of an existing weapon, or the fabrication and use by a non-state actor of a nuclear explosive device. All of these are dangers that have rightfully attracted the attention of governments across the globe, as reflected most recently – and positively – in the conclusion of the multilateral treaty on the suppression of nuclear terrorism, as well as the adoption of the UN Security Council's Resolution 1540.

So we meet today to confront some very old, and some very new, challenges. We know that no single country can solve these problems alone. We know that we do not need to break new ground on every issue, and that we have the advantage of building upon or perfecting the earlier work of others. We know that the subject of “nuclear disarmament” has in recent years regained some of its respectability as a serious public policy issue – as registered in opinion-editorials, statements by national leaders, studies from research groups, and strong support in public opinion polls – and this is also something upon which to build.

In this spirit, I will conclude by offering you my very best wishes as you commence your deliberations. I hope you will make new friends, establish new professional contacts, share ideas, and collaborate in fulfilling the central theme of this conference: “towards a fulfillment of disarmament and non-proliferation in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century”. Let us now commence this journey together.