

Statement by Ambassador Hahn Choong-hee

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Madame Chair,

At the outset I would like to associate myself with the previous speakers, in congratulating you on your election as Chair of this year's UN Disarmament Commission. I would also like to express my appreciation for the statement made by Mr. Kim Won-soo, High Representative for Disarmament Affairs. I assure you of my delegation's full support for the work of the Commission, and look forward to a productive session under your able leadership.

Madame Chair,

What we are witnessing today is a world where old threats are becoming more entrenched and new challenges are emerging in a more complicated manner. Instead of practical arrangements for the reduction of nuclear arsenals, expansive military programmes are being endorsed. Threats from chemical weapons have not been mitigated; they still linger dangerously. Peril from improvised explosive devices and other conventional weapons in conflict continue unabated. Risks of proliferation including by non-State actors are enhanced amid rapidly evolving technology and transboundary networks both on and off-line.

Among these, the most pressing issue we collectively face is the nuclear and missile threats posed by North Korea. Last year alone, North Korea staged two nuclear tests and launched 24 ballistic missiles in clear violation of multiple UN Security Council resolutions. Pyongyang is continuing path of provocation this year as it fired six ballistic missiles and carried out a ground test of a new type of ballistic missile engine in the last three months.

Each provocation is not a mere repetition, but, rather an advancement in its nuclear weapons programme. The North Korean leader declared in his New Year's address in January that preparation for launching the ICBM reached the final stage. Now there is a high possibility that North Korea may conduct additional strategic provocation this month.

If not dealt with a sense of urgency and gravity, the very foundation of global nuclear disarmament and nonproliferation regime with the NPT at its core will be irreparably shaken. In this regard, the Republic of Korea strongly urges North Korea to stop any further provocations and to abandon all of its nuclear weapons and existing nuclear and ballistic missile programmes in a complete, verifiable and irreversible manner in accordance with its obligations including in relevant UN Security Council resolutions.

Madame Chair,

As the unique deliberative body of the disarmament machinery under the UN framework, the UNDC has an important role in nurturing various ideas on global disarmament and nonproliferation issues. Being faced with the aforementioned challenges and an overall stagnation in the UN disarmament machinery, and charged with the wrapping-up work of the 2015-17 substantive sessions, UNDC's distinct role for deliberation is particularly important this year.

In our first working group discussion on nuclear disarmament and nonproliferation of nuclear weapons, both the nuclear-haves and have-nots, as well as both proponents and opponents for the immediate establishment of a legally binding instrument to prohibit nuclear weapons, leading towards their total elimination, should focus on reaching tangible recommendations, which can build on the positive momentum towards the success of the preparatory committee for the 2020 NPT Review Conference next month. The Republic of Korea believes in the step-by-step nuclear disarmament approach which takes security environment of each country into consideration, and is willing to work with other countries in a practical and inclusive manner so as to collectively reach fruitions during this year's session.

At the same time, we should not hinder progress made during the last two years in our second working group on confidence-building measures regarding conventional weapons. The Republic of Korea welcomes ideas of including additional items, including TCBMs in outer space activities, as a means to revitalize the current discussions in the Commission.

In conclusion, I would like to reiterate my sincere hope that this Commission will emerge from the prolonged deadlock to once again serve as a valuable platform for adopting concrete guidelines and recommendations in the field of disarmament. We look forward to constructive discussions over the next three weeks. I thank you, Madame Chair. /End/