

Opening Address

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**Eighth United Nations-Republic of Korea Joint Conference on
Disarmament and Non-Proliferation Issues**

**“NPT 2010: Prospects for a New Era of Progress on Disarmament
and Non-proliferation”**

Jeju, Republic of Korea
16 to 18 November 2009

Ladies and gentlemen, excellencies, distinguished participants and guests. I would first like to extend my sincerest thanks to Ambassador Oh and his colleagues at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade of the Republic of Korea for their cooperation and support in organizing the conference. I also wish to express my deep appreciation to the Jeju Prefecture for hosting the annual conference, on this island that is renowned for its natural beauty and the hospitality of its people. Let me say that I am personally grateful for this opportunity to return to this ideal location for such a conference.

The Jeju Process brings together government officials, academics, independent experts, and civil society representatives for the purpose of exchanging views on key disarmament and non-proliferation issues, at both the global and regional levels. Its goal is not just to describe challenges we are facing, but to seek to identify some practical steps forward in addressing them. It is a great honour for me to be opening this Eighth United Nations-Republic of Korea Joint Conference on Disarmament and Non-proliferation Issues — these of course are issues that are very much on the minds of leaders and citizens not just throughout this region, but throughout the world.

By all indications, a new era of progress on disarmament and non-proliferation is upon us. And may I say, at long last — given that this year marks the 50th anniversary of General Assembly Resolution 1378, which identified “general and complete disarmament under effective international control” as a fundamental goal of the United Nations. At its first Special Session on disarmament in 1978, the General Assembly adopted this as the “ultimate objective” of the United Nations in this field. This goal, of course, encompasses both the elimination of all weapons of mass destruction, and the regulation or limitation of conventional arms.

The priority that UN Member States have attached to nuclear disarmament is so well known that it helps to define the very identity of the UN organization. In 1955, Secretary-General Dag Hammarskjöld referred to nuclear disarmament as a “hardy perennial” at the United Nations, while Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon has said that a world without nuclear weapons would be “a global public good of the highest order.”

Some positive steps have been made forward in achieving this goal — including reductions in deployments, destruction of some delivery vehicles, closure of some nuclear test sites, and several declared cessations in the production of fissile material for weapons. Yet much more remains to be undertaken, as is apparent in the reported existence of well over 20,000 nuclear weapons, thousands of missiles and bombers to deliver them, thousands of kilograms of weapon-usable fissile material that remain, and concrete plans for modernization, but not disarmament. In all these areas, there is ample room for improvement in such areas as transparency, irreversibility, and verification, backed by binding commitments. In this light, it is difficult to dispute that the problem of achieving a nuclear weapon-free world remains a daunting challenge of our time.

The more closely this challenge is examined, however, the more apparent it is that the most effective guarantee against the danger of nuclear war and the use of nuclear weapons is nuclear disarmament and the complete elimination of nuclear weapons. This was in fact a conclusion adopted in the Final Document of the 2000 NPT Review Conference and recognition of this basic fact is growing each day around the world. Indeed, many Member States have repeatedly stated that they consider the very existence of nuclear weapons — in anybody’s hands — to be the gravest threat to international peace and security. Legal commitments are therefore urgently needed to reduce the number of weapons and halt their further development and production, on the road to their total elimination.

In October 2008, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon launched a five-point proposal to achieve this goal. That plan included a call for negotiations on a nuclear-weapon convention — or a framework of separate, mutually reinforcing instruments — for achieving a nuclear weapon-free world. Other elements included a call for a summit of the Security Council on disarmament issues, along with other measures to strengthen the “rule of law” in disarmament, improve accountability and transparency, and advance several complementary measures, including in such fields as conventional arms, space weapons, and missiles.

Demonstrating his personal commitment to disarmament and non-proliferation, the Secretary-General has subsequently raised these issues time and again in major international arenas, as well as in meetings with governmental officials and representatives of civil society — not to mention a novel internet campaign using Twitter and Facebook, and in an op-ed published in many countries throughout the world.

I am encouraged by recent positive developments in the field of non-proliferation and disarmament, including: the statements by the Presidents of the United States and the Russian Federation this year affirming their common goal of a world free of nuclear weapons, specifically, their commitment to new reductions in their own nuclear arsenals; the Security Council’s first-ever summit last September devoted exclusively to nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation; an outpouring of civil society initiatives like the “Hoover Plan”, and the International Commission on Nuclear Non-Proliferation and Disarmament launched by Australia and Japan; and the positive outcome at the third session of the Preparatory Committee for 2010 NPT Review Conference.

These developments provide some compelling evidence of a spirit of common cause — a welcome change in the international environment that I hope will soon deliver concrete results. This positive momentum must be maintained, especially over the months leading up to the Review Conference of the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) next year. I hope we will all be witnessing new progress towards the entry-into-force of Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, and countries following through on their commitments to reduce arsenals and move toward nuclear disarmament. Achieving a world free of nuclear weapons will not occur overnight, but to get there, we must act now. And the more we see of actual plans backed by domestic laws, budgets, and institutions — the better.

Preventing the proliferation of nuclear weapons is also essential to pursuing a nuclear weapon-free world. At its historic summit held on 24 September, the Security Council reaffirmed, in Resolution 1887, that the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, and their means of delivery, constitutes a threat to international peace and security. They pose such a threat because of their intrinsic characteristics, including their uniquely indiscriminate effects and the enormous strategic implications from the use of even one such weapon.

The 2010 NPT Review Conference will undoubtedly be a real test of political will and creative diplomacy. Its outcome will have a significant and far-reaching impact in shaping the nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation agenda. I am especially pleased to acknowledge the presence here today of Ambassador Cabactulan, the President-elect of the Review Conference. And no discussion of that Review Conference could fail to address issues relating to the peaceful use of nuclear energy, the third pillar of the NPT.

These peaceful uses, a right of every party to the treaty, consist of activities to enable humanity to make full use of the benefit of nuclear energy while minimizing its risk. In this regard, the IAEA plays a key role in ensuring that the benefits of nuclear technology are shared globally for economic and social development, that nuclear activities are conducted safely, that nuclear and radioactive materials and facilities are adequately protected, and that a credible inspection regime exists to verify compliance with safeguards commitments.

The rising global energy demand is accompanied by concerns of energy security and environmental protection. Yet concerns remain regarding various security risks associated with the national use or further spread of sensitive nuclear technologies, such as uranium enrichment and spent fuel reprocessing. The convergence of these realities points to the need for a robust global dialogue on challenges associated with the nuclear fuel cycle and on improving nuclear security.

Our present joint conference also provides a timely opportunity to discuss some regional issues, especially in Northeast Asia — including the DPRK nuclear and missile issues, compliance with UN Security Council Resolutions 1718 (2006) and 1874 (2009), and efforts to resume the six-party talks. Government officials — some of them directly involved in these talks—as well as academics and representatives from independent think tanks will exchange views on the current state of play and possible ways forward. Other diplomatic efforts are underway to seek a diplomatic solution to the Iranian nuclear issue, another subject that will likely figure at the 2010 Review Conference.

In conclusion, I would like to note that this is the first time that the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Asia and the Pacific has organized this annual Conference after its relocation to Kathmandu, Nepal in August 2008. On behalf of the UN Office for Disarmament Affairs, I would like to thank all countries, especially those from the Asia/Pacific Region, for their financial and in-kind support and assistance to the Regional Centre, and would warmly welcome their continued support to the Regional Centre in the years ahead. To all participants at this Conference, I very much look forward to your lively and productive deliberations on these important issues in the days ahead.