

2025 Session of the Conference on Disarmament

Statement by the Republic of Korea

21 January 2025

Thank you President. Good morning colleagues. Let me begin by wishing everyone a happy new year and by welcoming all new colleagues to the Conference. My delegation congratulates Ambassador Bencini on assuming the first CD presidency of this year. My team and I look forward to cooperating with you and your team as well as all P6 members in the months ahead. We also take this opportunity to recognize and thank Ambassador Turner's dedicated contributions over the years and wish him all the best.

To begin with, and as the President rightly mentioned, this Conference should fully benefit from the continuity enabled by last year's Decision on the Work of the Conference. We thank the President for leading the coordination for an urgent decision to that effect and we add our voice of support to your proposal.

At the same time, we wish to point out, as have others, that the decision to be made is without of course prejudice to the work of the CD next year. Mere repetition of entrenched positions without any progressive consensus on substance cannot be considered a viable or sustainable methodology. Indeed, we should not lose sight of the *raison d'être* of this body as "the single multilateral disarmament negotiating forum." We count on the leadership of respective subsidiary body coordinators or to-be-reappointed coordinators, to whom my delegation pledges its full support.

Meanwhile, pending substantive advances in our negotiations, we should seek practical risk reduction measures relevant to our agenda. In these times of heightened tensions and geopolitical competition, securing sufficient

transparency particularly in terms of nuclear doctrines and policies as well as arsenals, is crucial to alleviate mistrust and miscalculation that can slip into conflicts with devastating potentials. Dialogue and diplomacy is the natural first step that needs to be taken. In this regard, we reiterate our call on the relevant parties to engage, or reengage, each other expeditiously.

In the same vein, we look forward to the resumption of full implementation of the New START treaty as well as negotiations on future bilateral or multilateral nuclear arms control arrangements between and among the Nuclear Weapon States. Other key steps include the declaration and observance of moratoria on nuclear testing and fissile material production for nuclear weapons by all states. Doing otherwise could trigger a destabilizing arms race.

At the same time, we maintain that Russia's invasion of Ukraine is a violation of the UN Charter. Hence, Russia must immediately cease its aggressive actions against Ukraine. To make matters worse, North Korea has dispatched more than 11,000 troops on top of massive delivery of deadly munitions and ballistic missiles all in violation of multiple UN Security Council resolutions which Russia itself had agreed to. The capture of two North Korean soldiers in Kursk clearly demonstrates that North Korean troops are engaged in combat. Many young soldiers' lives are being compromised to fulfill the objective of the North Korean regime. We also assess that Russia provided air defense missile system to North Korea, adding to the list of mutual violations.

Meanwhile, the Russian Foreign Minister recently asserted that the denuclearization of the DPRK is a "closed issue". This followed Russia's relentless actions paralyzing the Security Council in the face of ever-mounting threats by the DPRK, including its veto that single-handedly dissolved the UN 1718 Committee Panel of Experts to hide its own illicit complicity. Such irresponsible actions will inevitably erode the very foundation of the thus-far-

held NPT regime and norms. This certainly will not be in anyone's interest. This will potentially force others to think otherwise.

For its part, North Korea redefined inter-Korean relations as "two hostile states" at the end of 2023, scrapping the seven-decade long policy of unification overnight and eliminating the psychological hurdle to justify a preemptive nuclear strike on fellow Koreans in the south. Lowered nuclear threshold, coupled with its pursuit of tactical nuclear warheads and diversification of delivery means, as witnessed in the ICBM launch last October and yet another IRBM launch earlier this year, all amount to a clear and present threat to us all. These are counter-productive to peace and stability as much as they run directly counter to what we collectively strive for in the CD: the cessation of nuclear arms race, nuclear disarmament, and prevention of nuclear war. It is not provocations and hostilities, nor trying to find the root cause of the current situation in others and wrongly shifting the blame, nor cutting off road and rail links to the south, that will serve the interest of the DPRK – it is dialogue and diplomacy.

President,

With these initial remarks, my delegation reiterates its readiness to continue its constructive participation in the CD deliberations before us. It is our sincere hope to contribute towards restoring the relevance of this crucial body. In doing so, my delegation will undertake every effort to embrace a spirit of genuine cooperation with corresponding flexibility. Thank you. /END/