



Opening Remarks
14th Republic of Korea-United Nations Joint Conference: “The Unfinished Business of Building a More Secure World”

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Deputy Foreign Minister Shin,
Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my pleasure to welcome you all to the fourteenth iteration of this conference in Seoul, my old home. My pleasure is all the greater as this is my first as the new head of the UN Disarmament Office. I want to express my deep appreciation to the Government of the Republic of Korea, through Foreign Minister Yun Byung-se and Deputy Foreign Minister Shin, for their generous support and hospitality.

I would be remiss not to recognize the two of my closest partners who came all the way from Vienna; Dr. Lassina Zerbo of the CTBTO and Ms. Simonetta Di Pippo of UNOOSA and many others travelling long distances from the EU, Dr. Asbeck, the Netherlands, Amb. De Klerk, Russia, Mr. Belousov and the U.S., Dr. Mousavian and Mr. Snyder, as well as the neighbors from China and Japan.

Distinguished participants,

This year, the international community has shown inspiring solidarity in adopting the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals. For the first time in the 70 year history of the UN, they comprehensively link development to peace and security.

By the end of this week, I hope that Member States will have reached an historic and ambitious agreement at the Climate Change Conference in Paris.

These are significant achievements. Yet we do not have the luxury of basking in their accomplishment. We must refocus our energy on achieving a more peaceful and secure world.

As Secretary-General Ban noted, the specific issues on this year's agenda are especially pertinent. Each of these issues relate to distinct concerns at the regional and global levels. Indeed we have vast array of the unfinished business as this year's theme indicates. But we cannot rest until we finish it all.

King Sejong the Great said that: "One of the most essential ingredients of great statesmanship is trust."

The unique feature of this conference is that the discussions take place in an open and candid setting; they build trust and foster understanding on some of the most pressing security challenges of the day.

Ladies and Gentlemen

In the seventy years of the UN's existence, we have made progress on addressing the problem posed by weapons of mass destruction. Two entire categories of weapons of mass destruction – chemical and biological – have been prohibited. 98.2 per cent of the declared chemical weapon stockpiles in the world have been verifiably destroyed. But we cannot afford to be complacent. While the nuclear weapon arsenals by the two largest possessors have declined 85 percent since the Cold War, sixteen thousand remain worldwide and they continue to pose an existential threat to humanity.

Additionally, chemical weapons have again been used in Syria – breaking the international taboo against their use and adding another horrific layer to this devastating conflict.

This brings me to my first point regarding challenges at the regional level.

The most recent report by the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons Fact Finding Mission is deeply troubling. The UN and OPCW Joint Investigative Mechanism will build on these fact-finding missions. Its mandate is to identify the perpetrators so as to hold them accountable. This is crucial; we cannot allow further erosion of the taboo against chemical weapons.

The agreement regarding Iran's nuclear programme is a historic accomplishment. It is great to see that diplomacy can work in tackling proliferation challenges. But implementation of the deal will be a long journey. It will require sustained effort and attention at the highest levels. It is now incumbent on all States to make this deal work. We hope that the positive lessons from this effort can be emulated in tackling other challenges.

There is strong international consensus on the need to work for peace, stability and denuclearization on the Korean Peninsula. To achieve this goal, dialogue is the way forward. Meaningful dialogue must be revitalised and conducted in a sincere manner. The UN agencies will continue to work and even harder with the DPRK Government for the well-being of its people.

Beyond the Korean Peninsula, various initiatives should be further encouraged to promote regional security dialogue and cooperation in Northeast Asia. Northeast Asia remains the critical missing link in regional security cooperation architecture under Chapter 8 of the UN Charter. The recent trilateral summit between China, Japan and the ROK and the Northeast Asia Peace and Cooperation Initiative, NAPCI forum held in Seoul are encouraging developments which are hoped to be nurtured into the future.

The UN stands ready to assist however we can in facilitating inter-Korean dialogue and reconciliation on the Korean Peninsula as well as promoting security cooperation in Northeast Asia.

Distinguished participants,

My second point relates to the global level, and the peaceful use of outer space.

Outer space has increasingly become congested, contested and competitive. This has led to growing concern that an accident or miscalculation could escalate into conflict. We must find a way to manage these new challenges.

I welcome all efforts to build new norms, including advancing transparency and confidence-building measures, or TCBMs, proposals for a code of conduct on outer space activities and on a legally-binding instrument to prevent an arms race in outer space.

The decision on which path to take is, of course, up to Member States. But there is no reason why this mix of initiatives cannot be pursued in parallel. States could make better use of the UN disarmament machinery, including the Disarmament Commission, as a universal body, to consider practical steps to implement TCBMs.

My third point relates to the potentially dire consequences of the evolving nexus between nuclear security, cyber security and non-state actors, including terrorists and violent extremist groups. These cross cutting security threats are developing faster than our ability to address them. There is a growing institutional and normative gap.

The horrific events in Paris have underscored the urgent need for the whole international community to step up to the plate. We must prevent non-State actors from acquiring WMD or the means of producing any form of a “dirty bomb”.

The UN Plan of Action on Preventing Violent Extremism, to be presented by the Secretary-General early next year, is one plank of the international community’s efforts to counter this threat.

The Nuclear Security Summit process has been effective in enhancing the security of nuclear material through practical commitments from Governments. Next year’s Washington Summit should be the beginning of mainstreamed policy implementation. The challenge post 2016 is how to sustain the gains made, to universalize these commitments, to continue to build national capacities and to strengthen security culture. International cooperation remains essential, including to achieve the full implementation of Security Council resolution 1540 and universalisation of the International Convention on the Suppression of Acts of Nuclear Terrorism.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

When the Secretary-General launched his Five Year Action Agenda at the beginning of his second term, four years ago, he said: “waves of change are surging around us. If we navigate wisely, we can create a more secure and sustainable future for all. The United Nations is the ship to navigate those waters.”

The United Nations can do it only when we work together. Together, nothing is impossible. We count on the support and cooperation of Member States, academia, international organisations and civil society. I hope this conference will be the stepping stone to building a winning coalition toward that goal.

Thank you.

