



**17<sup>th</sup> Republic of Korea-United Nations Joint Conference on  
Disarmament and Non-proliferation Issues:**

**“Disarmament to Save Humanity – towards a World Free  
from Nuclear Weapons”**

**Remarks by Ms. Izumi Nakamitsu  
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Your Excellency Deputy Minister Yoon,  
Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is an honour for me to participate in this seventeenth annual Republic of Korea-United Nations Joint Conference on Disarmament and Non-proliferation Issues. This annual conference continues to be an exemplar of cooperation between the UN and its Member States on matters on international security.

I would first like to extend my sincerest gratitude to Ambassador Soon-gu Yoon, Deputy Minister for Multilateral and Global Affairs and his colleagues at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for the support in making this Conference possible. I would also like to recognize the exceptional list of speakers from governments, non-governmental organizations, academia, and international organizations and look forward to their productive deliberation.

This year's Conference addresses a very important topic "Disarmament to Save Humanity – towards a World free of Nuclear Weapons" with a focus on the role of the relevant international instruments.

I am also grateful to the Republic of Korea for inviting us to this idyllic setting to take a step back and look at some of the most topical nuclear disarmament issues facing us today from a fresh perspective.

The international security environment has shifted significantly in the past years. In many ways, the situation has worsened as the world has become less stable and secure. Landmark disarmament agreements from the Cold War era are threatened by violations and an unwillingness to resolve disputes concerning their implementation. Nuclear-armed States are undertaking costly efforts to modernize their arsenals, including the development of new first strike and non-strategic weapons. At the same time, the international system must also contend with new threats, including those related to offensive cyber capabilities, that may have an impact on the nuclear realm.

That is not to say that the deterioration of the international security environment is an entirely homogenous trend. Recent diplomatic efforts on the Korean Peninsula have significantly reduced

the risk of a nuclear confrontation, even if we are a considerable way from achieving the goal of the complete, irreversible and verifiable denuclearization.

The worsening international security environment, however, has had a detrimental effect on multilateral disarmament discussions. The recently concluded session of the General Assembly's First Committee was marked by rancorous debate on a multitude of issues and an absence of consensus on previously uncontroversial issues.

Many have concluded that this state of affairs militates against the prospect for further action on the path towards a world free of nuclear weapons.

Yet it is precisely *because* of this state of affairs that the Secretary-General launched his disarmament agenda "Securing Our Common Future" in May of this year.

Because the Agenda is based on a key premise – the historical truth that disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control are vital elements of international peace and security.

Without attempting to be exhaustive, the Secretary-General's Agenda addresses three priority areas: Disarmament to Save Humanity – the elimination of weapons of mass destruction; Disarmament that Save Lives – more strict regulation of conventional weapons; and Disarmament for Future Generations – the emerging challenges of rapid developments in science and technology.

In each area, the Secretary-General outlines current disarmament challenges and opportunities. Under each pillar, he proposes and commits to concrete actions to take the agenda forward.

Disarmament that Saves Lives aims to mitigate the humanitarian impact of conventional weapons. To that end, the Secretary-General will redouble his support to Member States in developing policies in conformity with international law related to the use of explosive weapons in populated areas. He will also work to ensure that the UN system is able to address the challenge of illicit small arms and ammunition.

Disarmament for Future Generations focuses on ensuring that developments in science and technology are not diverted or misused in ways that undermine security. It stresses the importance

of responsible innovation and its application and of the need for multi-stakeholder coalitions, including the private sector.

Let me now go back to Disarmament to Save Humanity. This pillar of the Agenda reaffirms the UN's historical commitment to the elimination of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) and to nuclear disarmament as the UN's highest disarmament priority.

The Secretary-General and I have committed ourselves to undertake specific actions in the Agenda, many of which are intended to serve as a tool for Member States. My Office has prepared an implementation plan, which is now available on our website. I would invite Member States to peruse the Agenda and the plan and find ways to support those actions that closely align with their own priorities.

In the Agenda, we have a versatile toolkit to help us make the most of the Review Conference of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation on Nuclear Weapons (NPT) in 2020. The 2020 Conference – which will coincide with the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the entry-into-force of the Treaty – provides an important opportunity to reaffirm that the NPT remains the cornerstone of the nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation regime, and to take steps to ensure its continued success.

Unfortunately, the first two sessions of the Preparatory Committee have shown that the NPT review process is not immune from controversial debate and divisions between States Parties. They have been characterized by increasing divisions both between and within the usual ideological and geographic groups.

After the failure of the 2015 Review Conference to adopt an outcome document, there is great fear and uncertainty about what a failed 2020 Review Conference would mean. There have never been two successive failed Review Conferences; it is not clear what the effects would be on the health of the NPT regime.

What *is* clear is that a successful Review Conference needs to show progress across all three of the Treaty's pillars, but forward movement on disarmament is especially needed. Many States parties have legitimate concerns that past commitments are not being implemented. Such sentiments can only serve to undermine the treaty.

It is also clear that States parties need to reaffirm the practical non-proliferation security benefits the NPT provides and recognize that non-proliferation challenges have evolved over the course of the Treaty's lifetime. To meet these challenges the non-proliferation regime requires flexibility, adaptability and the capacity to evolve.

It will be vital that States recall the NPT is based on a grand bargain and that integral to that bargain is the understanding that, as the Secretary-General has said, disarmament and non-proliferation are two sides of the same coin – backward movement in one will lead to backward movement in the other.

Finally, States should start now – while there is still time – to define exactly what they want to achieve from the anniversary of the NPT's entry-into-force. Serious consideration should be given to structural innovations, such as preceding the usual conference discussions with a ministerial segment to demonstrate continued high-level support for the Treaty. Such a segment would not replace a detailed review of the Treaty and its operation but would rather be an opportunity for States to reaffirm their commitment at the highest level.

It is clear that the Review Conference will again be freighted with a number of difficult discussions.

The issue of a Middle East Zone free of nuclear weapons and all other WMD was also a difficult issue during the recent First Committee session.

The issue is likely to remain key in determining an outcome in 2020. Now that it has been tasked by the General Assembly with convening a conference to negotiate a zone, the Secretariat will endeavor to make positive progress. However, we will be reliant on States of the region and the co-sponsors of the 1995 resolution to work together to achieve this outcome.

At the third and final session of the Preparatory Committee next year, NPT States Parties will have an opportunity to put past divisions behind them and set the right tone for the 2020 Review Conference. "Securing Our Common Future" gives some inspiration of what they could do to achieve this goal.

In order to resume real dialogue for nuclear disarmament, the Secretary-General calls on States respect each other's legitimate security interests—human, national and collective—and find a way to ensure security for all. Future agreements will have to be built on the implementation of past agreements. In an NPT context this means demonstrating progress on implementation of existing commitments, including those made at previous Review Conferences.

The Secretary-General has also encouraged States to cement the norm against the use of nuclear weapons. States that possess nuclear weapons should affirm – as the leaders of the Soviet Union and the United States once did – that a nuclear war cannot be won and must never be fought.

In seeking to both achieve and maintain a world free of nuclear weapons, verification remains both an enabler and also a source of some commonality. The International Partnership on Nuclear Disarmament Verification has done tremendous work to advance the discussion on the verification of any future nuclear disarmament agreement. Its deliberations have proven to be a valuable input into the work of the UN Group of Governmental Experts which is currently considering this issue. In a manner similar to the Groups of Scientific Experts that preceded the negotiation of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, States have an opportunity to consider in-depth the technical details of verification to prepare the ground for the elimination of nuclear weapons.

Risk reduction measures are also a key step on the road to the total elimination of nuclear weapons. I have mentioned the specific progress that has been achieved on the Korean Peninsula. More generally, risk reduction measures can include transparency in nuclear-weapon programmes, further reductions in all types of nuclear weapons, commitments not to introduce new and destabilizing types of nuclear weapons, including cruise missiles, reciprocal commitments for the non-use of nuclear weapons and reduction of the role of nuclear weapons in security doctrines. All States that possess nuclear weapons can undertake a variety of measures to reduce the risk of the use of nuclear weapons. Doing so would have an immediate beneficial impact on international security and go a considerable way towards building confidence among other States.

Active middle powers and States in key geopolitical positions, like the Republic of Korea, can play a critical role in building bridges across ideological divides and helping NPT States Parties to find common ground. Such efforts may well be the difference between failure and success at the 2020 Review Conference.

Over the next day and a half, we will have the opportunity to delve into some of the most relevant questions in the realm of nuclear disarmament, especially as they relate to the NPT.

The dialogue that takes place at the Jeju forum is entirely consistent with the Secretary-General's Disarmament Agenda.

I hope that by removing ourselves from the windowless conference rooms in which such issues are normally debated, we can inject fresh ideas and perspectives into the discussions on nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation.

The United Nations stands ready to support any efforts that help reignite a results-oriented dialogue on nuclear disarmament.

In closing, I would like to say a few words about the UN Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Asia and the Pacific (UNRCPD) which is located in Kathmandu, Nepal. The Centre has strengthened its capacity to undertake regional activities related to disarmament and non-proliferation, taking into account the specific and practical needs of States in the region. It also continues to promote regional dialogue and confidence building on disarmament, non-proliferation and security matters. In addition to advocacy and outreach activities, over the past year, the Centre has focused its activities on enhancing the capacity of the States of the region to control the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons, implement Security Council resolution 1540 (2004) as well as promoting the implementation of other relevant international instruments. In the coming years, the Centre will embark on an ambitious disarmament education programme in collaboration with Member States, teachers, universities, students, parliamentarians, and civil society.

On behalf of the United Nations Office for Disarmament Affairs, I would like to thank all countries, in particular those from the Asia/Pacific region, for their financial and in-kind support and assistance to the Regional Centre. These financial and in-kind contributions enable the Centre to carry out its mandate effectively and enhance its ability to serve the needs of States in this vast—and enormously important—region. This is indeed a worthy investment in our common future.

With these remarks, I would like to wish you all a very productive conference.