Mr. Chairman,

1. The Republic of Korea acknowledges the important role of Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zones in enhancing global and regional peace and security. We see them as an effective and practical way to buttress and complement the current NPT regime. Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zones have been and will remain useful tools not only for non-proliferation, but also for disarmament in the longer term.

2. In this context the Republic of Korea has supported the UN General Assembly resolutions calling for the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone in the Middle East and calling on all countries in the region to join the NPT. We believe that nuclear-weapon-free zones, if established in the Middle East, would significantly strengthen the nuclear non-proliferation regime and would promote the process of nuclear disarmament, as well as peace and security in the region.

3. As endorsed by the Resolution on the Middle East adopted by the 1995 Review Conference, parallel efforts need to be made to advance the Middle East peace process. My delegation believes that a balanced and pragmatic approach that envisages a constructive engagement by the concerned parties in the region would certainly contribute to an early realization of the Middle East being free of nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction.
Mr. Chairman,

4. We cannot deal with regional issue without mentioning the DPRK nuclear problem. The nuclear test proclaimed to have been conducted by the DPRK on 9 October 2006 drew sharp criticism from around the world. However, it was a source of relief that on February 13, the Six Parties agreed on the Initial Actions to tackle the current DPRK nuclear issue for its ultimate resolution.

5. The February 13 Agreement is divided into two parts. At the initial phase, the DPRK is requested to shutdown its Yongbyon nuclear facility, invite back the IAEA personnel, and discuss with other parties a list of all its nuclear programs. The other five parties, in return, promised to provide the DPRK with emergency energy assistance equivalent to 50,000 tons of heavy fuel oil.

6. At the next phase, the DPRK will make complete declaration of all its nuclear programs and disable all its existing nuclear facilities, while the other five parties provide additional economic, energy and humanitarian aid up to the equivalent of 950,000 tons of heavy fuel oil.

7. However, as is known, the Sixth Round of the Six Party Talks held on 19-22 March in Beijing was confronted with an unexpected hurdle as the DPRK insisted on resolving the Banco Delta Asia (BDA) issue as a pre-requisite to embark upon the initial action of its part.

8. In this regard, it is worth noting that soon after the March meeting, DPRK and other parties concerned engaged themselves in intensive negotiations to sort out the technical problems and to find a way forward on the BDA issue. Since the strong commitment of all parties to fully implement the February 13 Agreement remains unabated, we believe that the Six Party Talks process will resume and pick up speed as soon as the technical and procedural problems concerning the BDA are resolved.

Mr. Chairman,

9. The importance of the Six Party Talks process as the only viable mechanism for resolving the North Korean nuclear issue cannot be overemphasized. The success of the Six Party Talks process will remove the nuclear threat posed by the DPRK and prevent a potential nuclear proliferation in Northeast Asia. It will also provide lessons for non-proliferation initiatives and strengthen the global non-proliferation regime which faces volatile times.
10. Ultimately, when the Six Party Talks achieve denuclearization and succeed in incorporating the DPRK into the global community, the mechanism of the Six Party Talks will serve as a good basis for future multilateral security cooperation in Northeast Asia. Furthermore, the experience of having resolved the greatest security issue in Northeast Asia through cooperation and dialogue will prove to be a major asset in responding to new security challenges.

11. Now with the next session of the Six Party Talks to be held any time soon, the six parties' resolve to achieve complete denuclearization on the Korean Peninsula is stronger than ever. What is crucial at this point is that the six parties remain faithful to the agreement they have made and stay the course. It is also imperative that the international community continue to pay due attention to the positive developments in the Six Party Talks process, and support the progress that have been made thus far.

I thank you.