Institutionalization of the NPT

Thank you, Mr. Chairman,

The Republic of Korea shares the concerns that the NPT regime is suffering from an institutional deficit. Undoubtedly the Non-Proliferation Treaty has served as the cornerstone of global non-proliferation and disarmament efforts since its entry into force in 1970. Nonetheless, we believe that the NPT regime needs to be equipped with better tools so that it can respond more efficiently and promptly to the mounting threats it faces.

Unfortunately, the current NPT review process, with its quinquennial Review Conference (RevCon) and almost yearly Preparatory Committee (PrepCom) meetings, has not been as productive as had been expected. At the past seven Review Conferences spanning 35 years, a final document was adopted only three times. Substantive and timely decisions have been rare. Neither the RevCons nor the PrepComs have responded properly to emergency situations, including grave cases of non-compliance and withdrawal from the Treaty. It is incumbent upon the NPT review process to restore the eroding trust in the international community in the Treaty by
reinforcing its institutional structures and mechanisms.

My delegation believes that the way to deal with this issue is by envisioning a better NPT system that will function more quickly and effectively to achieve the Treaty's key objectives, particularly when emergencies arise. As such, we are open to any constructive proposals that will serve this purpose.

In this vein, the proposal to replace the Preparatory Committee with an annual General Conference equipped with decision-making powers and assisted by a small dedicated Secretariat is worth being taken into serious consideration. An annual General Conference would perpetuate the NPT process without interruption and would be able to respond to emergencies in a more efficient way.

The idea to establish a full Secretariat for the NPT needs to be further examined. For the moment, the current practice, whereby the United Nations Office of Disarmament Affairs takes that role, could be strengthened. My delegation hopes that we will be able to reach consensus on the issue of institutionalization of the NPT during the review process beginning with this year's PrepCom.

Mr. Chairman,

Another important lacuna in the NPT system is the withdrawal chase. We recognize that the right to withdraw from the NPT per se should be respected pursuant to Article X. However, it is imperative that the abuse of the right of withdrawal by countries violating their treaty obligations be properly addressed. If such violators are allowed to withdraw from the Treaty with impunity once they have acquired the necessary materials and technologies to manufacture nuclear weapons, particularly under the cover of ostensibly peaceful nuclear activities guaranteed by Article IV of the Treaty, the raison d'être NPT regime itself may be seriously damaged.

That's why the States Parties to the NPT should consider the establishment of a collective and systematic response mechanism for the withdrawal.
In case of withdrawal, the State Party should ensure: i) that any obligation under the NPT has been fully implemented before the withdrawal; ii) that the withdrawing state immediately return the nuclear equipment and materials obtained under Article IV of the NPT to the supplying state; and iii) that such equipment and material remain under IAEA safeguards pending their return to the supplying states.

Taking into account that any withdrawal from the NPT, unlike withdrawals from other treaties, may pose a direct threat to international peace and security and severely undermine the validity and durability of the NPT, the State Parties are encouraged to have constructive and active deliberations on a collective response mechanism to a possible case of withdrawal from the treaty throughout the entire 2010 NPT review cycle with a view to adopting a decision or a guideline on article X at the Review Conference in 2010.

Together with the establishment of such a collective response mechanism, other joint efforts should be made to mitigate the sense of insecurity of the States Parties. In this context, universal adherence to the NPT and a positive change in Nuclear Weapon States’ policies to more faithfully implement their obligations under Article VI are to be encouraged.

Thank you.