Mr. Chairman,

The Korean Peninsula shows in stark contrast what our efforts for non-proliferation has to be and can achieve, and what ultimate challenge we can face. On one side we have a professed, convicted proliferator threatening the very construct itself. On the other hand, we have the fifth largest peaceful user of atomic energy that prides itself as a model non-proliferator and is actively participating in the non-proliferation efforts as a responsible member. The ROK is currently serving as the Chairs of both the Nuclear Suppliers Group (NSG) and the Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR), playing an active role in facilitating effective, efficient, and relevant work of the international non-proliferation and disarmament regime.

It has been a firm belief of the Republic of Korea that ensuring full compliance with non-proliferation obligations is vital for sustaining and reinforcing the credibility and integrity of the NPT regime in all its three pillars. On the one hand, the number of States for which the IAEA is able to draw the broader conclusion that all nuclear materials in the State have remained in peaceful activities is steadily increasing. This is a welcome development, and we support further efforts to achieve universal application of the APs in conjunction with the CSAs. We also hope to see the broader conclusion become the international safeguards standard.

The Republic of Korea welcomes the IAEA’s efforts to improve the efficiency
of safeguards while maintaining or enhancing their effectiveness as the quantity
of nuclear materials and the number of facilities under safeguards is on the rise.
The development and implementation of a State-level safeguards approach
(SLA) under integrated safeguards have been an important accomplishment in
this regard. The Republic of Korea was an early adopter of the SLA and
appreciates the effective and efficient manner in which the IAEA was able to
draw the broader conclusion.

On the other hand, non-compliance remains a serious challenge to keep the
NPT regime credible, effective, and robust. Most alarmingly, after abusing the
peaceful uses provisions of the NPT to develop a nuclear weapons program,
North Korea has undermined international peace and stability for decades with
test after test of nuclear explosives. In fact, since our last Review Conference,
North Korea conducted two nuclear tests, reprocessed spent nuclear fuel rods,
and continued to advance its delivery system by launching ballistic missiles of
all types in clear violation of multiple UN Security Council resolutions.
Pyongyang is continuing on this path of illegal provocation this year as well.
The North Korean leader’s declaration at the beginning of this year that its
preparations for an ICBM launch had reached the final stage is being
corroborated by more ballistic missile launches and the repeated ground tests of
the new-type engine for the ICBM. It is no exaggeration to say that the sixth
nuclear test or another strategic provocation is just a press of a button away.

As a result of its long-pursued nuclear weaponization, North Korea is now
nearing a functional nuclear weapon capability. If not dealt with a collective
sense of urgency and gravity, North Korea’s exploitation will irreparably harm
the international nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation regime on a
fundamental level. Such brazen disregard for international norms and binding
obligations is unprecedented in the history of the NPT. As responsible Parties to the Treaty, we cannot afford to tolerate such wrongdoings of North Korea.

Mr. Chairman,

To paraphrase what many political scientists have said in moments of crises, we have to act before the politically impossible becomes politically inevitable. It should not take a crisis to bring real change. We should act before North Korea deals a fatal blow to the global non-proliferation regime based on the NPT.

Since our security is always inter-connected, regional issues are not entirely regional in nature. Looking back on the previous review cycles, the delayed implementation of the 1995 resolution on the Middle East sadly cast a long shadow over the NPT review process. Given the grave challenges we are facing now, we cannot afford to have any more barren review cycles. In this regard, let me conclude by stating again that the Republic of Korea has consistently supported an early convening of a conference on the establishment of a WMD-free zone in the Middle East, to be attended by all States in the region on the basis of arrangements freely arrived at by them. Thank you. /END/