Cluster III (Peaceful Uses of Nuclear Energy, Withdrawal)

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Mr. Chairman,

The Republic of Korea fully appreciates that all Parties to the NPT enjoy the inalienable right to peaceful uses of nuclear energy and views the third pillar of the Treaty as an area around which we can form a wider consensus and build a positive momentum to move our discussion forward. We believe doing so would lay a good foundation for us to achieve a constructive and fruitful outcome at the 2020 NPT Review Conference. With this in mind, I would like to touch upon a few issues of importance to us.

First, given the sensitive nature of nuclear energy, full confidence of the international community in the exclusively peaceful nature of a State’s nuclear program is vital. Thus, the exercise of the right of peaceful uses should entail compliance with the nonproliferation and safeguards obligations and we strongly support the role of the IAEA as a guardian of nonproliferation.

Second, as a country where nuclear energy has played a crucial role in development, the Republic of Korea attaches great importance to international cooperation [for safe, secure, and peaceful uses of nuclear energy]. We strongly endorse the IAEA Technical Cooperation (TC) program as a core mechanism in providing developing countries greater access to peaceful uses and applications of nuclear energy.
We support the efforts, called for by the 2010 Action Plan, to ensure that the TC program has sufficient, assured, and predictable resources, and we will keep engaging in the ongoing discussion on enhancing the effectiveness and efficiency of the program. The Republic of Korea will continue with its contributions to this program and the Peaceful Uses Initiative (PUI) and, as the host of the Regional Office of the Regional Cooperation Agreement (RCA), will continue to take an active part in providing capacity-building resources, training, and technical support to developing countries in Asia and the Pacific.

Third, as we reaffirmed at the Review Conference in 2010, the right to peaceful uses of nuclear energy must be exercised in conjunction with appropriate and effective levels of safety and security. Nuclear safety is particularly crucial in guaranteeing sustainable development and increasing public receptiveness to nuclear energy. The Republic of Korea is faithfully implementing key instruments on nuclear safety, such as the Convention on Nuclear Safety (CNS) and the Vienna Declaration through the domestic legislative and regulatory framework established last year. And just a little over a month ago, Korea received positive peer reviews at the 7th Review Meeting of the Contracting Parties to the CNS. We have continued our efforts to engage with neighboring countries with a view to further strengthening regional cooperation for nuclear safety and emergency preparedness in Northeast Asia. While safety remains a national responsibility, progress achieved in this area is a testament to the effectiveness of our international cooperation. We commend the IAEA in leading the efforts to raise awareness on the issue, drawing on the lessons learned from the major accident in 2011 and coming up with concrete measures to enhance nuclear safety worldwide.
As for nuclear security, last year marked an important juncture in garnering wider international support: we welcome the entry into force of the Amendment to the Convention on the Physical Protection of Nuclear Material (CPPNM/A) last year and look forward to the effective implementation and universalization of this key instrument. We urge all States to join the Amendment to the CPPNM (CPPNM/A) to strengthen a norms-based nuclear security architecture. While responsibility for nuclear security, as with nuclear safety, rests with each State, international cooperation is vital. The Republic of Korea notes with satisfaction many achievements of various international organizations and initiatives, such as the UN, INTERPOL, the Global Initiative to Combat Nuclear Terrorism (GICNT), and the Global Partnership against the Spread of Weapons and Materials of Mass Destruction (GP). As the host of the 2012 Nuclear Security Summit (NSS), Korea also welcomes the tangible results and political commitment generated through the NSS process.

We also stress the IAEA’s central role in facilitating and coordinating international cooperation for nuclear security. We attach particular significance to strengthening cyber security, as shown in our contribution of 6.3 million U.S. dollars to the IAEA Nuclear Security Fund.

Fourth, we believe that the management of spent fuel is the most critical issue that all countries using nuclear power are currently facing. We support the IAEA’s development of safety standards on the decommissioning of nuclear facilities and the Agency’s sharing of best practices with Member States. We encourage all NPT Parties to give due attention to and expand cooperation on safe and secure management of the back end of the fuel cycle. Next month, we will be shutting
down our first nuclear power reactor Kori-1 among the 25 reactors we have, after 39 years of its operation. In conducting our very first decommissioning, we are willing to work together with other States and share our experiences and technology developed in the process.

Last but not least, addressing the issue of preventing the abuse of withdrawal is critical in upholding the credibility of the NPT regime. The right to withdraw is a sovereign right given to Parties to the Treaty. However, if a Party harms the objectives of the Treaty by abusing its rights, then it seriously undermines the validity of the NPT, as we have witnessed in the case of North Korea. Unfortunately, the current NPT regime lacks a proper mechanism to respond to a State’s withdrawal after violating the Treaty or to address the consequences of the violations prior to withdrawal. Therefore, we need to keep our discussions on Article X including the following points to address the potential but grave consequences of withdrawal by a violator:

- First, a mechanism that enables State Parties to intervene immediately to review any violations of the state withdrawing from the Treaty should be developed. Such mechanism may include an emergency meeting to assess compliance with the NPT and the IAEA Safeguard Agreement.

- Second, withdrawal from the Treaty cannot affect the consequences resulting from violations prior to withdrawal, and the materials, facilities, and equipment acquired prior to withdrawal must remain subject to the IAEA Safeguards.

- Third, the withdrawing state must return all facilities and materials acquired prior to withdrawal.

I thank you, Mr. Chairman. /End/