

THE REPUBLIC OF
KOREA

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Statement

by

H.E. Ambassador CHANG Dong-hee
Head of Delegation of the Republic of Korea
to the Conference on Disarmament

on

Prevention of an Arms Race in Outer Space

Conference on Disarmament

Geneva, 13 February 2007

Thank you, Madam President.

Last week the CD, with the help of the coordinators, had very useful discussions on nuclear disarmament and the FMCT. My delegation hopes to follow suit this week when we deliberate on PAROS and NSA. We are confident that under your able leadership, we will be able to lay a solid foundation for future discussions on these agenda items.

Madam President,

Today's world relies heavily on space technology for a wide variety of peaceful and non-peaceful purposes, such as meteorology, telecommunications, navigation, disaster management, medical research, reconnaissance and so forth. The process of globalization itself is dependent upon safeguarding the peaceful use of outer space. Therefore, all nations, both space-faring and non-space-faring, have a vital stake and responsibility in ensuring that space remains a common heritage for all. However, we cannot take the unlimited and safe access to space resources for granted. Radio-frequency spectra are almost saturated and useful orbital positions are densely crowded. Satellites and Spacecrafts are increasingly jeopardized by space debris and can potentially be targeted by space weapons. The important question we have before us is how can we safeguard the uninterrupted and free use of outer space for peaceful purposes?

In this respect, my delegation is of the view that space security, including the prevention of an arms race in outer space, is a relevant issue to be dealt with by the CD. We appreciate the efforts made by some member States to stimulate the discussions on this subject. Among them, the working papers submitted last year will be important assets for the CD. They quite pertinently address the issues and challenges to be overcome. We are hopeful that intensive consultations under this agenda item during this session, at both the formal and informal meetings, will contribute to a deeper understanding and a further elaboration of the main issues.

Madam President,

Space technology, like WMD technologies, is by nature dual-use. Furthermore, as the industrial sector is growing increasingly involved in space activities, the space environment is rapidly changing from the past. The artificial barriers between civil and military activities in space are already dissolving. In that sense, we look forward to seeing enhanced dialogue between the CD and other international forums, including the United Nations Committee on the Peaceful Use of Outer Space (COPUOS), the First and Fourth Committees of the UN and the International Telecommunications Union.

This year marks the 40th anniversary of the signing of the Outer Space Treaty which is the cornerstone of international space law. On this occasion, in addition to renewing efforts towards universality and more effective implementation of the Treaty, as the WMD Commission recommended in its report, we may need to consider the possibility of strengthening the treaty and extending its scope.

Madam President,

The Republic of Korea, as one of the countries which are actively pursuing peaceful space activities, is very concerned that the proliferation of space debris could threaten peaceful uses of outer space. It is not a threat confined to the space-faring nations; there always exists a possibility of damage on the ground as well, as was witnessed in the case of the Kosmos satellite crashed in Canada. Noting with great interest the draft guidelines on space debris mitigation which provide for avoidance of intentional destruction and other harmful activities, my delegation hopes that the COPUOS will adopt these guidelines as soon as possible.

Transparency and confidence-building measures are highly important for multilateral cooperation on governing space. A particular challenge in this regard is to build confidence amongst the major powers concerning their strategic motives for the use of space. We may need to start by seeking ways to promote universal adherence to and to ensure full compliance with existing agreements and arrangements, such as the Registration Convention and the Hague Code of Conduct, by space-faring nations. Other measures of transparency and confidence building which are complementary to current mechanisms and conducive to enhancing space security could fruitfully be discussed in the CD.

Madam President,

It is incumbent upon us all to demonstrate that it is in the strategic interests of all concerned to preserve the peaceful, cooperative use of outer space. Given the wide gap inside and outside the CD on the key issues related to outer space, for instance the definitions of such essential elements as outer space, space objects, space weapons and the applicability of any verification mechanism, we believe that a pragmatic step-by-step approach is the most viable option at this stage. As many of the concepts have already been in use in other international instruments governing outer space, we should be rather cautious in adopting any definition anew. Through implementing various confidence building measures, respecting existing commitments, cooperating with other international forums and adopting a strategy of starting with the easily agreeable and immediate issues and then eventually taking on the more complex and difficult ones, we will be able to make our work on PAROS move forward.

I thank you, Madam President.