



OPENING STATEMENT

By

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**13th UN-ROK Joint Conference
on Disarmament and Non-proliferation Issues**

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Deputy Minister Shin, Excellencies, distinguished participants, ladies and gentleman. It gives me great honour to welcome you to the 13th United Nations - Republic of Korea Joint Conference on Disarmament and Non-proliferation Issues.

At the outset, I would like, on behalf of the UN Office for Disarmament Affairs (ODA), to express my deep appreciation to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Korea, for its valuable support and cooperation in co-organizing the Conference. I would like also to thank the Vice Governor and the people of Jeju Special Self-Governing Province for the warm hospitality extended to all participants coming from all over the world to this beautiful island for this annual Conference.

Since 2002, this annual conference, also known as the “Jeju Process”, has become an important forum to address pressing disarmament and non-proliferation challenges facing the international community at both global and regional levels. The goal of this forum is to promote frank and constructive dialogue and discussion with a view to identifying practical steps and concrete measures to contribute to their solutions.

ODA is honoured to be part of this process which is exemplary of the partnership between the UN Secretariat and Member States in their common efforts to achieve the UN goals in peace, security and disarmament. I pay tribute to the Government of the Republic of Korea for its active and significant role in promoting global and regional security and disarmament.

Themed “Looking Ahead: Opportunities and Challenges in Disarmament and Non-proliferation”, this year’s Conference will focus on three critical issues: (1) the 2015 NPT Review Conference; (2) pressing nuclear non-proliferation challenges; and (3) autonomous weapons systems.

Last May, the States parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) concluded the third and last session of the Preparatory Committee for the 2015 Review Conference. Despite the constructive and positive atmosphere of the third session and the expeditious handling of procedural matters, many substantive challenges remain for the 2015 Review Conference.

Discussions on the implementation of article VI, on the obligation to pursue good faith disarmament negotiations, continued to present divergent views. Many non-nuclear-weapon States continue to emphasize that disarmament obligations are legally-binding and

should be time-bound. Other parties maintain that disarmament can only be achieved through a step-by-step approach.

The reports provided by the nuclear-weapon States to the Preparatory Committee on the implementation of their disarmament commitments was a step towards building transparency and mutual confidence. At the same time, these reports have underscored the growing gap between the pace of disarmament and the expectations of non-nuclear-weapon States.

The humanitarian approach to nuclear disarmament has emerged as a key theme during this review cycle. It is clear that this perspective will play a major role in NPT discussions moving forward, including at the 2015 Review Conference.

The nuclear non-proliferation regime is more than just a grand bargain on a global scale. Often, its role in ensuring international peace and security is more keenly felt by its presence – or lack thereof – at the regional level.

One case-in-point is the region of the Middle East, which is one area where the NPT has not yet achieved universality. It is clear that this present status quo and the integrity of the regime cannot be maintained indefinitely. Therefore, the question of whether or not we see the convening of a conference on the establishment a Middle East zone free of nuclear weapons and all other weapons of mass destruction will also bear significant weight on the 2015 Review Conference.

Turning to the topic of more specific proliferation challenges, recent history has provided ample examples for how proliferation concerns are best addressed through diplomacy, the rule of law and cooperation.

The successes gained through these approaches are impressive and growing: in the early 1990s, three newly independent countries—Belarus, Kazakhstan and Ukraine—gave up their holdings of ex-Soviet nuclear weapons and joined the NPT; South Africa dismantled its weapons programme. Since then, Libya ended its clandestine military nuclear efforts and most recently Syria joined the Chemical Weapons Convention and eliminated its programme. And, this year also saw the emergence of a Nuclear Weapons Free Zone in Central Asia.

Over the past year, the international community has been engaged in the most

serious efforts in a decade to reach a comprehensive solution to the concerns surrounding Iran's nuclear programme. The recent extension of these negotiations, against all political odds, is a testament to the determination and commitment of all sides to a negotiated solution. As long as the spirit of mutual trust and good faith continues to prevail, the parties should be able to overcome their remaining differences.

In this region, the lack of negotiations on the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula remains a matter of concern. However, it remains clear that the only viable solution is through diplomacy and confidence-building. There is not peace as long as the continued nuclear and ballistic missile activities by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea continue to be a source of tension and provocation in the region.

There are a host of emerging weapons technologies that require new controls to reduce or eliminate any potential challenges to international peace and security they might pose. Some of these technologies also make it increasingly difficult to protect civilians from the effects of armed conflict. One of these technologies is that of autonomous weapons systems.

Autonomous weapons are distinguished by their ability, once activated, to select and attack a target without human intervention. While some existing weapon systems already meet these criteria, they tend to operate only in simple environments where civilians would not normally be present. There is significant research underway aimed at creating autonomous weapons that one day may begin to take on more common battlefield functions. It is important to take pre-emptive action in this regard to ensure that the ultimate decision to end life remains firmly under human control.

A unique and important feature of the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW) is its ability to address emerging issues and to develop new protocols. The CCW States parties tasked a group of experts in May of this year, under the chairmanship of France, to address the implications of emerging technologies in the area of lethal autonomous weapon systems (LAWS). The meeting of experts attracted record attendance and provided an opportunity for delegations to hear the views of international experts and discuss the ethical, technical, military and legal aspects of LAWS.

The CCW States parties decided at their annual Meeting last month that the experts' group shall continue its deliberations in April 2015 to further understand the potential of these weapons in the context of international humanitarian law and the CCW.

As you can see, we are embarking on quite an interesting and challenging agenda for the next two days.

Before concluding, I would like to say a few words about UNODA's Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Asia and the Pacific (UNRCPD), co-organizer of this Conference. Since its relocation to Nepal in 2008, UNRCPD has strengthened its capacity to undertake regional initiatives related to disarmament, taking into account the specific circumstances and practical needs of States in this region. It continues to assist States in the region upon request in capacity building in several areas, including promoting the Arms Trade Treaty, the implementation of the UN Programme of Action on SALW and the implementation of UN Security Council resolution 1540 (2004), as well as peace and disarmament education. The Centre also promotes dialogue and confidence building on disarmament, non-proliferation and security matters, including through events like this annual Conference.

On behalf of the UNODA, I would like to thank all countries and organizations, for their financial and in-kind support to UNRCPD, in particular the Republic of Korea that made this conference today possible. I urge them all to continue this support through funding, as well as by engaging the Centre as partners on practical initiatives.

Finally, I look forward to lively and productive deliberations on these important issues on our agenda.

I thank you.