

Move Toward a Northeast Asia Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone

(Non-Governmental Organizations' Statements to the States Party to the Seventh Review Conference of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, May 11, 2005, New York)

Mr. Chairman, distinguished delegates and colleagues,

The peace and security environment in Northeast Asia has steadily deteriorated since the last NPT Review Conference in 2000. The reason is obvious: The revival of hostile relationship between the United States and the DPRK (Democratic People's Republic of Korea: North Korea). What does this mean in the context of the NPT process?

In June 2000, soon after the 6th NPT Review Conference, a historic inter-Korean summit took place in Pyongyang, raising high hope of ending the Cold War on the Korean Peninsula finally. However, this positive development came to a full stop with the change of leadership in the White House in 2001. The Bush administration unilaterally froze and discarded the new relationship between the U.S. and the DPRK that the Clinton administration had committed to. President Bush named North Korea as one of the member nations of the "axis of evil" in his 2002 State of the Union address, and things got worse between the two nations from thereon. In October 2002, the United States accused the DPRK of violating the 1994 Agreed Framework and stopped delivery of heavy fuel oil to the North. In response, the DPRK denied the U.S. accusation and declared its withdrawal from the NPT in January 2003, saying, "A dangerous situation where our nation's sovereignty and our state's security are being violated is prevailing..." Finally, in February this year, the DPRK stated officially that it had "manufactured nukes" as a "deterrent for self-defense."

We are very dismayed with these negative steps taken in recent years by the U.S. and the DPRK since they are causing a big blow to the NPT regime. Both parties bear full responsibility for the current proliferation crisis in Northeast Asia. The Bush administration, in particular, bears a heavy responsibility for the current situation because of its hard-line, hostile policy toward the DPRK in the last four years. The North Koreans may have a genuine fear of a possible attack on their country in view of the recent, illegal U.S. invasion of Iraq in the name of dismantling weapons of mass destruction there. We thank the efforts of the Chinese and other officials to diffuse the current tensions on the Korean Peninsula, and urge all members of the United Nations as well as UN officials to do their utmost to prevent the revival of another horrific Korean War which may well end up in a new nuclear holocaust in

Northeast Asia.

As far as nuclear threats are concerned on the Korean Peninsula, we deplore any and all nuclear threats whoever may make them. This said, it is disingenuous for the United States to accuse the DPRK of “nuclear blackmail” when the DPRK has been subjected to American nuclear blackmail for more than half a century. As recently as 2002, the DPRK was designated not only as one of the seven countries against whom the U.S. may use nuclear weapons in any future conflicts but also it was singled out as one of the two “chronic military concerns,” according to the U.S. Nuclear Posture Review. As it turned out, the other nation, Iraq, was soon attacked by the U.S. and its allies, to bring about a “regime change.” Thus, it is incumbent upon the U.S. to take some confidence-building measures to remove the deep distrust and fear that the DPRK may have at this time.

The Six-Party Talks on the DPRK nuclear issue is an indispensable venue for the peaceful resolution of the issue. We urge North Korea to return to the Talks as soon as possible. Furthermore, to expedite the resolution, we believe it is essential that the main antagonists on the Korean Peninsula—namely the U.S. and the DPRK—engage in direct talks too. For such talks to succeed, it is critically important that the Bush administration create a positive environment for dialogue by expressing its willingness to live in peaceful coexistence with the DPRK. We urge the United States to show flexibility and good-faith in negotiation and make a realistic offer to the DPRK, which already expressed its willingness in the past to give up its nuclear weapons program if it is offered a fair package deal for security assurances and economic cooperation.

Mr. Chairman and distinguished delegates,

The North Korean nuclear issue is multifaceted and has a multidimensional impact on Northeast Asia and the world at large, beyond the Korean Peninsula. Therefore, we strongly believe that “Peace and Security-for-All” approach is the only effective, legitimate step toward a peaceful and sustainable resolution of the issue. Although we welcome the current policy of the ROK and Japan to pursue a peaceful resolution of the North Korean nuclear issue through patient negotiations, their overall approach remains obsolete since they still cling to their old policy of seeking military superiority under a continuing U.S. nuclear umbrella and through upgrading of military weapons system as well as enhancement of military readiness in alliance with the U.S. In this regard, we are particularly disappointed that Japan decided to join in the U.S. missile defense system in recent years and the ROK (Republic of Korea: South Korea)

is about to follow suit. We urge all parties concerned in the area to embark on an innovative undertaking to establish a regional cooperative security system, discarding bilateral military security agreements eventually.

We must build on the undeniable truth that if one country in the region continues to claim the need for nuclear weapons for its security, then another country will claim the same. If the ROK and Japan want to play a leading role in persuading the DPRK to discard its nuclear weapons program, the two countries should take a more progressive and bolder step to discard their own dependence on the U.S. nuclear protection. They should proceed to establish a new model of nuclear-weapon-free zone (NWFZ) in Northeast Asia, in which all non-nuclear weapon states renounce their nuclear dependence and are protected at the same time from any future nuclear threats from the nuclear weapon states.

A nuclear-weapon-free zone is possible in Northeast Asia if the concerned nations and the civil society work hard together for a new era of peace, reconciliation and cooperation in the region. Last year, some NGOs and experts of the region have developed a Model Treaty for the Northeast Asia NWFZ as a first step toward a regional cooperative security system. It is a six-party treaty that involves three intrazonal non-nuclear weapon states, namely the DPRK, the ROK and Japan as the central players, and three surrounding nuclear weapon states, namely China, Russia and the United States, as supportive players to provide negative security assurances in the main body of the treaty. The constituent six parties of the Model Treaty are exactly the same as those of the current Six-Party Talks. (See www.peacedepot.org for the full text of the Model Treaty.) Thus, we believe that the Six-Party Talks in Beijing could also serve as the venue for negotiating a NWFZ in Northeast Asia in the future. We urge all parties concerned to give a serious consideration to our proposal. Thank you for your attention.

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