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Statement

by

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Republic of Korea

at

the 59th Session

of the United Nations General Assembly

24 September 2004

New York

Mr President, Mr Secretary-General and Distinguished Delegates,

I would first like to extend my sincere congratulations to you, Mr. President, on assuming the Presidency of the 59th Session of the United Nations General Assembly. I have every confidence that you will meet with distinction the challenges of this most eminent office. I take this opportunity also to pay tribute to your predecessor H.E. Mr. Julian Robert Hunte as well as Secretary-General Kofi Annan.

Mr President,

The past year has been marked by a series of atrocious terrorist attacks. The stark reality is that no people or nation is safe from the specter of international terrorism. Through their cowardly acts, terrorists seek to generate chaos and fear, raining violence upon the innocent, even children, as we so painfully and clearly witnessed in the recent tragedy in Beslan, Russia. On this occasion I extend my most sincere condolences to all those affected by terrorist attacks around the world.

The Republic of Korea has been no exception in exposure to heinous terrorist attacks. In particular, we experienced, with deep sorrow and pain, the loss of a Korean victim of such savagery in Iraq in June this year. There is no justification whatsoever for such brutality and cruel disregard for human life. This inhuman act has only bolstered our determination to rid the world of the dark cloud of terrorism. The Republic of Korea remains firm in its conviction that the international community must never give in to the demands of terrorists.

The fight against terrorism calls for unity in the international community with the United Nations at the lead, as well as enhanced abilities in each individual member state to combat terrorism. We also look forward to more concrete measures emerging from the work of the United Nations Counter-Terrorism Committee (CTC).

Mr. President,

Iraq still remains a most pressing security concern for the international community. The inauguration of an interim government and the transfer of sovereignty set in motion the process of political transition toward a new era of democracy for the Iraqi people. The United Nations has a wealth of experience to offer Iraq in the process of its political normalization and national rehabilitation. However, the transition cannot proceed smoothly without the restoration of order. The assistance of the international community to this end is vital.

The Republic of Korea has been actively participating in the international efforts to build a peaceful, democratic and prosperous Iraq. We strongly believe that stability in Iraq is vital for peace and security in the Middle East and beyond. Thus, in adherence with Security Council Resolutions 1511 and 1546, we are in the process of dispatching 3,600 troops to the multinational forces in Iraq. The aim of this dispatch is to assist the Iraqi people's efforts for rehabilitation and reconstruction. We have also pledged to contribute 260 million US dollars to this end, focusing on areas such as health, education, capacity building, job creation, and electricity.

Mr. President,

Terrorism lends renewed urgency to our common endeavors to halt the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction (WMD) and their means of delivery. In particular, the revelations about a nuclear black market network in Asia this year have awakened the international community to the danger of nuclear weapons falling into terrorist hands. Faced with this new kind of threat to nuclear nonproliferation, the international community must work to close the loopholes in the existing nonproliferation regime. Against this backdrop, my government strongly supports Resolution 1540 on Non-Proliferation adopted by the Security Council in April of this year.

The Republic of Korea has actively participated in the efforts of the international community in the non-proliferation field. In February this year, we became the 39th country to ratify the Additional Protocol to the Safeguards Agreement. In June, we joined the "G-8 Global Partnership Against Weapons and Materials of Mass Destruction" in order

to support joint forces to stem the spread of deadly arsenals. We held the chairmanship of the Nuclear Suppliers Group for the year 2003-4, and we will also host the Plenary Meeting of the Missile Technology Control Regime (MTCR) in Seoul next month. These are just a few examples that attest to my government's unwavering commitment to the cause of the non-proliferation of WMD.

Given such a solid commitment on our part, my government reported the recent discoveries about the past scientific experiments involving nuclear materials in my country pursuant to the Additional Protocol to the Safeguards Agreement with IAEA. The experiments were isolated, laboratory-scale research activities that a few scientists conducted on their own for purely experimental purposes. In good faith and with full transparency, my government has been providing full cooperation to the IAEA in its activities to review and verify our declarations on nuclear research activities.

Renewing and reaffirming our commitment to nuclear non-proliferation and the peaceful use of nuclear energy, the government of the Republic of Korea pronounced the "Four Principles for the Peaceful Use of Nuclear Energy" on 18 September 2004.

First, the Republic of Korea reaffirms that it has no intention of developing or possessing nuclear weapons; Second, the Republic of Korea will firmly maintain nuclear transparency, and will strengthen our cooperation with the international community to this end; Third, the Republic of Korea will faithfully abide by the norms set out in agreements on nuclear non-proliferation, including the NPT and the Joint Declaration of the Denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula; And fourth, on the basis of international trust and with the highest level of transparency, the Republic of Korea will continue to expand the peaceful use of nuclear energy.

Mr. President,

I would now like to turn to one of the most important tasks that lie ahead: resolving the North Korean nuclear issue. The government of the Republic of Korea has been actively engaged in the efforts to bring about a peaceful resolution to this issue through the Six-Party Talks process.

The Republic of Korea firmly believes that the expeditious resolution of the North Korean nuclear issue is in the best interests of all the participating parties to the Six-Party Talks, including the DPRK. The resolution of this issue will certainly have a positive impact on the global nuclear non-proliferation regime. It will also have a profound effect on the relations between North Korea and the other participating countries in the Six-Party Talks.

Upon the resolution of the nuclear issue, North Korea would indeed be able to become a full-fledged member of the international community, enabling it to gain all the accompanying benefits. It is our fervent wish that North Korea will make a strategic decision to forgo all its nuclear weapon programs, including uranium enrichment programs, in a thorough and transparent manner.

The government of the Republic of Korea also strongly hopes that the fourth round of talks will be held as soon as possible, so that we can engage in substantive discussions on concrete steps toward the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula.

While seeking a peaceful resolution of the North Korean nuclear issue, the Korean Government is working hard to ensure the steady improvement of inter-Korean relations. Indeed, government-level meetings have been institutionalized. As many as 90 such meetings have been held over the past two years. Impressive progress is also being made in major projects for economic cooperation. In particular, the start of operations at the Gaesong Industrial Complex scheduled for later this year will be a significant achievement in inter-Korean cooperation.

As a result of such efforts we believe that inter-Korean exchanges and cooperation have now advanced to a point from which there is no turning back. The rise of such inter-Korean interaction and interdependence will certainly contribute to peace and prosperity on the Korean Peninsula and beyond.

Mr. President,

There are no easy answers to the many problems the world now faces, and poverty is at the top of the list. The roots of poverty run deep, with no simple solution in sight. Still

a large number of the human population languishes in abject poverty, presenting a serious stumbling block to the achievement of our shared goal of lasting peace and prosperity for all.

Four years ago, the leaders of the world pledged to reduce by half the proportion of people living in poverty and hunger by the year 2015 as part of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). However, at this point, the gap between the objectives and the tangible progress we have made remains wide. It is our sincere hope that the 2005 High-Level Meeting to review the progress made in the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals will serve to renew our commitment to the world's poor. Political will is the key.

Despite the difficult challenges it has brought, the new century also offers unprecedented opportunities. The explosive growth of information and communication technologies (ICT) is the key to accelerated economic and social development. But the capacity of individual countries to translate this potential into reality varies greatly. The United Nations should assume a leading role in utilizing ICT to the fullest extent for the attainment of poverty eradication and other development goals. The Republic of Korea, as a country strong in IT, is seeking to share its experience with developing countries by providing training and resources.

Another area that requires our abiding attention in the 21st century is the environment. The international community's commitment to sustainable development was reaffirmed through the adoption of the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation in 2002. My Government has been faithfully implementing the international agreements on the environment, and has been doing its share to keep environmental issues high on the global agenda. Indeed, next year, we will be hosting the "ESCAP Ministerial Meeting on the Environment and Development" to discuss environmental protection and sustainable development in the Asia-Pacific region.

Mr. President,

Over the past year the United Nations has continued its efforts to realize our common aspirations for the promotion of human rights, freedom and well-being. While

persevering in its quest to make human rights universal, the United Nations has exerted special efforts to enable the most vulnerable of our fellow human beings to enjoy the rights and freedom that should be guaranteed to all. In particular, much progress has been made in the endeavors to draft a convention to promote the rights of persons with disabilities.

The government of the Republic of Korea strongly supports global action to strengthen the values of human rights and democracy around the world. Just last week in Seoul, we organized a "Seminar on Good Governance Practices for the Promotion of Human Rights" in conjunction with the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and the UNDP. We believe that this meeting of human rights experts has contributed greatly to developing the links between good governance and human rights, as well as enriching the global human rights discourse.

It is in the same vein that my government will host next year in Seoul the "Sixth Global Forum on Reinventing Government" in cooperation with the United Nations. We are convinced that this Forum will serve as a useful venue for the exchange of experience in government innovations aimed at enhancing participation and transparency in governance.

We also support the United Nations in reaching out to people in distress in many corners of the world, providing life-saving assistance to millions of refugees and others displaced by conflicts and natural disasters. We share the concern of the international community over the humanitarian crisis unfolding in Darfur, the Sudan. Security Council Resolution 1564 should be implemented so as to bring back peace and stability to this troubled area and its inhabitant.

Furthermore, all too often, the complexities of major crises have been fueled by the public health emergency created by the HIV/AIDS pandemic. In order to overcome the scourge of HIV/AIDS, it is vital that we strengthen the global assistance mechanisms. In this regard, the "3 by 5" initiative of the World Health Organization aiming to provide anti-retroviral treatment to 3 million infected people by the year 2005 is a timely program. We should all render our full cooperation to ensure its success.

Mr President,

For almost six decades, the United Nations has played a crucial role in merging the diverse interests of various member states for the global good. As the international community becomes more interdependent and areas of cooperation expand further into the 21st century, the world body will have an even greater role to play.

Meanwhile, doubts have been expressed as to whether the current UN system is suitable for confronting the challenges of the new century. As the Secretary-General has pointed out, the United Nations has come to a fork in the road. Choices must be made for a more effective, strengthened United Nations.

In this regard, the Republic of Korea hopes that the High-Level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change established on the recommendation of the Secretary-General will identify the challenges the international community faces and recommend ways to deal with them effectively. We look forward to the Panel's Report and hope that its recommendations will shed light on ways to make the United Nations more effective and responsive to the needs of the 21st century.

No doubt, continued reform of the United Nations will be an important part of the discussions. In particular, the Security Council, as the primary organ for maintaining peace and security, must be reformed in such a way as to make it more representative and democratic than it is today.

In this context, we share the view that the Security Council should be expanded to adequately reflect the increase in the membership of the United Nations during the past decades. Expansion of the Security Council should be designed to enable more countries to participate in the Council more often on the basis of more equitable geographical distribution. In this spirit, we support an increase in non-permanent members so as to accord those member states, willing and able to contribute to international peace and security, greater opportunities to serve in the Council.

Mr President,

There is a common thread that holds together all the views expressed in this honored hall, as diverse as they are. We are all united in the goal of seeking a better and more peaceful world. Now more than ever, countries are called to rise to challenges together, all as members of our one global body. The Republic of Korea stands firm in its hopes for and belief in the United Nations as the steadfast anchor for our collective endeavors, and remains as committed as ever to fully playing its part in all areas of its noble work.

Thank you.