

## Asan Plenum 2011

### “Our Nuclear Future”

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Chairperson Lee In-ho, President Hahm Chaibong, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen, it is my privilege and honor to speak at the Asan Plenum. I greatly welcome the holding of this event, which is the first of its kind to gather experts from Korea and abroad to engage in an in-depth and comprehensive exchange of views on a single theme. The initiation of such a forum in Korea, I believe, is timely and significant, given the huge challenges we are facing in the nuclear field.

My understanding is that this Plenum will focus on five topics under the theme of “Our Nuclear Future,” namely: non-proliferation, disarmament, peaceful use, nuclear security, and deterrence. I am confident that we will all benefit from the diverse range of perspectives presented and that the outcomes will greatly contribute to preparing for the Seoul Nuclear Security Summit to be held next March.

The earthquake and tsunami that hit the northeastern region of Japan in March, and the ensuing Fukushima nuclear accident and radiological leak vividly illustrate the two contrasting faces of nuclear energy. Until that incident, many predicted the advent of a “nuclear renaissance,” with a growing number of nuclear power plants— more than 300 are known to be under construction or are planned to be constructed by 2030.

The Republic of Korea is recognized by many as an exemplary country in its use of nuclear energy for peaceful purposes. In 1977, Korea became the 21st country in the world to construct a civilian nuclear power plant, the GORI #1, 15 years after it adopted the TRIGA MARK II, a research reactor. Since then, our nuclear industry has made great strides, reflecting our economic growth over the 40 years that followed.

Korea currently operates 21 nuclear power plants, with an additional seven under construction: we have plans to increase that number to 34 by 2024. Nuclear energy will be responsible for producing nearly half of our electricity by the mid-2020s, compared to the figure of 31.4% today. With our advanced technology and extensive experience of the safe operation of power plants, we are now an exporter of nuclear power plants.

There may be many divergent views on the future of nuclear energy, especially in light of the Fukushima accident. Yet we should learn from this experience and turn crisis into opportunity, just as the Chernobyl accident in 1986 served to catalyze major reforms in international norms on nuclear safety. Nuclear energy needs to continue to play a vital role in facilitating low-carbon green growth in a way that balances protection of the environment and economic development. It is a key to solving the two most important challenges the world faces today: climate change and energy shortage.

Korea is fully aware of the fact that the right to the peaceful use of energy brings with it nonproliferation obligations. As is clearly stated in the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty (NPT), nuclear nonproliferation, nuclear disarmament, and the peaceful use of nuclear energy constitute the three pillars of the NPT and cannot be addressed separately. As a non-nuclear weapon state, the Republic of Korea has fully complied with its nonproliferation obligations and has actively joined in international nonproliferation efforts.

In this vein, I reaffirm that the “Four Principles on the Peaceful Use of Nuclear Energy” that my government declared in 2004 still stand firm today. The “Four Principles” are as follows: 1) the Korean Government has no intention of developing or possessing nuclear weapons; 2) the Korean Government will firmly maintain its principle of nuclear transparency and strengthen its cooperation with the international community to this end; 3) the Korean Government will faithfully abide by international agreements on nuclear nonproliferation; 4) the Korean Government will expand its peaceful use of nuclear energy with the confidence of the international community.

The IAEA publicly confirmed that Korea’s nuclear activities are conducted in a peaceful way by drawing a “Broader Conclusion” in 2008. Korea is also actively participating in the international efforts to counter the proliferation of WMD; it is an active member of all major export control regimes, including the PSI, which we officially joined in 2009.

In sharp contrast, North Korea has taken actions which undermine the very basis of the NPT regime. It has abandoned its obligations under the NPT by abusing the right to the peaceful use of nuclear energy in order to develop nuclear weapons.

The Republic of Korea government has been patiently exerting efforts to realize the denuclearization of North Korea, but North Korea has not yet shown any sincere change in its attitude toward denuclearization, and the threat posed by North Korea’s nuclear capabilities has grown more serious than ever. North Korea continues to develop its nuclear program despite sanctions imposed by the United Nations Security Council. It conducted nuclear tests in 2006 and 2009, violated the agreements of the Six-Party Talks by reversing the disablement conducted at the Yongbyon nuclear facility, and intentionally revealed its uranium enrichment program (UEP) last November. Furthermore, suspicions over North Korea’s nuclear proliferation activities, such as its collaboration with Syria, are constantly raised by the international community.

North Korea refuses to take any responsible measure for the series of provocations it has made. Rather, its behavior has been simply irrational. Not long after it stated its willingness to return to the Six-Party Talks without preconditions and discuss its UEP, just last week, after Kim Jong-Il returned from China, North Korea declared that it would no longer deal with the Korean government and threatened to launch an all-out military retaliation.

Such pattern of behavior has been repeatedly demonstrated by North Korea. It has tended to first make provocations, such as launching missiles or conducting nuclear tests, then attempt to establish its actions as a fait accompli and seek to make bargains on this basis. If that attempt fails, it then resorts to military threats to extract concessions.

We are determined not to condone North Korea’s tactics of brinkmanship any longer. It follows that while there are high expectations for the resumption of the Six-Party Talks, we believe that the Six-Party Talks should be resumed when they can yield substantive progress, rather than being held merely for the sake of dialogue. North Korea must demonstrate its sincerity toward denuclearization through concrete actions and thereby restore the trust of the international community prior to the resumption of the Six-Party Talks.

In this regard, I would like to emphasize that the door to dialogue is always open for North Korea. My government proposed an inter-Korean dialogue on denuclearization in January; the Five Parties are in agreement to create appropriate circumstances for the resumption of the Six-Party Talks through various contacts, with inter-Korean dialogue as an essential first step. Despite the recent provocative statements

by North Korea, my government will continue to take a calm and resolute posture while continuing our unwavering pursuit of dialogue with North Korea.

The Ministers at the ASEM Foreign Ministers' Meeting, which I attended last week, underlined the importance of sincere and constructive inter-Korean dialogue. I believe this represents the international community's broad support for the Korean Government's efforts to induce positive change in North Korea's behavior toward denuclearization, starting with inter-Korean dialogue.

It is also essential to clearly define North Korea's UEP as illegal before discussing the issue at the Six-Party Talks. As long as North Korea continues to assert that its UEP is for peaceful purposes, the Six-Party Talks are bound to be caught up in time-consuming debates on the legitimacy and legality of North Korea's UEP. The resumption of the Talks would then be utterly fruitless. This is why the international community needs to clearly state, in a unified voice, that North Korea's UEP is inconsistent with the 2005 Joint Statement and is a violation of UN Security Council resolutions 1718 and 1874, just as the leaders of the G8 recently condemned it as a violation of UN Security Council resolutions.

Meanwhile, North Korea's nuclear program also gives rise to concerns from a safety perspective. The recent nuclear accident in Japan clearly demonstrates that the dangers stemming from the North Korean nuclear issue are twofold: threats to the peace and stability on the Korean Peninsula and in the Northeast Asian region, as well as economic and environmental threats to the region and the world. As it is highly likely that North Korea's nuclear facilities are not commensurate with international safety standards, the safety of North Korea's nuclear programs should be given more attention by the international community, and should be treated as a key agenda in future Six-Party Talks.

North Korea should meet its people's wish for a better future and respond to the international community's call for denuclearization. To improve inter-Korean relations, North Korea needs to demonstrate responsible behavior concerning the Cheonan and Yeonpyoung issues which is acceptable to the Korean people. It is my sincere hope that North Korea may respond to our proposal for inter-Korean dialogue as soon as possible as a first step toward that end.

On the Korean Peninsula, there are two very different countries: the Republic of Korea, a model country in its peaceful use of nuclear energy and an active participant in international nonproliferation efforts; and the DPRK, which undermines the very basis of the NPT regime by developing nuclear weapons. I believe this stark contrast clearly illuminates the direction in which we need to be heading in "Our Nuclear Future," which is the topic of this plenum.

Against this backdrop, we appreciate the significance of the next Nuclear Security Summit which will be held in Seoul, on the 26th and 27th of March, next year. The Korean Government believes that the Seoul Summit holds great significance for the following reasons:

First, for Korea, hosting the Nuclear Security Summit means engagement in the overall trends of the post-Cold War era, in particular, post-9/11 international security discussions. Nuclear terrorism is one of the most serious threats to international security, considering the devastating consequences it would have on the global economy and beyond, regardless of where it takes place. It is said that one should be prepared for the worst-case scenario with regard to security issues; in this sense, we should not neglect to address even the slightest possibility of nuclear terrorism. In a globalized world in which countries are more mutually dependent than ever, nuclear terrorism is not a problem solely for the West; it is a common challenge from which even Korea is not immune.

Second, the fact that Korea was chosen as host of the second Nuclear Security Summit serves to demonstrate Korea's increasing role in international fora. It may be seen as recognition by the

international community of the responsible role Korea has played in supporting nonproliferation principles and leading green growth against global climate change. It can also be seen as recognition of Korea's role as a bridge between developed and developing countries in solving major global issues, as demonstrated by last year's G20 Seoul Summit. Korea will play a bridging role in the nuclear field as well, between nuclear and non-nuclear weapon states, and between states with advanced nuclear energy industries and those with developing industries.

Third, the 2012 Seoul Summit will strengthen the nuclear security regime by expanding the scope of discussions, building upon the achievements of the Washington Summit. While we will have to consult with participating countries, we plan to address the issue of securing radioactive sources more comprehensively. Although the destructive impact of radiological terrorism using 'dirty bombs' is much weaker than that of nuclear terrorism, appropriate management in safely securing radioactive sources is vital given the higher probability, relative ease, and enormous psychological effect of radiological terrorism.

In addition, there is an ever growing need to address the issue of nuclear safety within the context of the Nuclear Security Summit in light of recent developments as a result of the Fukushima nuclear accident. Nuclear security and nuclear safety need to be enhanced in a mutually-reinforcing way, considering the fact that the consequences of a terrorist attack on a nuclear facility may be equivalent to a nuclear accident. The Seoul Summit aims to address the interface between the two.

Lastly, the year 2012 is a highly significant year both for the Korean Peninsula and beyond. It is the centennial of the birth of Kim Il-Sung and the year in which North Korea has pledged to turn itself into a "strong and prosperous country." It is also a year in which there will be changes in the global leadership, not only in the Republic of Korea, but also in the United States, Russia, and China. By bringing world leaders to Seoul to discuss key international security issues, the 2012 Summit will send out a strong message on renewing the importance of maintaining peace and security on the Korean Peninsula and pursuing the denuclearization of North Korea.

I look forward to insightful and constructive debates over the next three days, and would like to wish you every success in ensuring highly fruitful outcomes from the Asan Plenum.

Thank you for your attention.