

# Democratic People's Republic of Korea

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## North Korea in the UN Disarmament Committee

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### 1. Introduction

The first North Korean Nuclear Crisis in the 1990s was a concrete starting point to the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (hereinafter North Korea or "DPRK") – US tensions.<sup>1</sup> North Korea, feeling insecure and losing economic and military support by the collapse of the Soviet Union, engaged in the production of plutonium. It further threatened to withdraw from the Nuclear Nonproliferation Treaty ("NPT") in 1993. Both of these events were not received warmly by the US leading Washington and Pyongyang to more hostile relations.<sup>2</sup> Pyongyang has also consistently voiced its dissent to the US involvement in the "Joint Military Exercises" conducted with the support of Seoul.

The Second North Korean Nuclear Crises broke out in the year 2002 when the US claimed that North Korea was concealing a uranium-enrichment program to build nuclear weapons which was consistently denied by Pyongyang. Especially under the Bush administration, the US took a very hard line stance on North Korea.<sup>3</sup> This was viewed by Pyongyang as hostility to its national interests as it carried an undertone of a possibility of a pre-emptive nuclear attack on the DPRK.<sup>4</sup> Tensions suddenly surmounted especially with the controversial withdrawal of the DPRK from the NPT by invoking Article X of the Treaty.

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<sup>1</sup> J. WIT, D. PONEMAN & R. GALLUCCI ET. AL., *GOING CRITICAL: THE FIRST NORTH KOREAN NUCLEAR CRISIS* 145 (2004).

<sup>2</sup> Akl Kairouz, *North Korean Nuclear Crisis*, 39 *ECON. & POL. WEEKLY* 25 (2004)

<sup>3</sup> YŌICHI FUNABASHI, *THE PENINSULA QUESTION: A CHRONICLE OF THE SECOND KOREAN NUCLEAR CRISIS* (2007).

<sup>4</sup> S. Hecker, *Lessons Learned from the North Korean Nuclear Crisis*, 139 *DAEDALUS* 46 (2010)

## 2. The First Committee, 5th Meeting at the 70th UN General Assembly<sup>5</sup>

On October 13, 2015, the fifth Meeting of the First Committee at the 70th UN General Assembly, the representative of the DPRK discussed several pertinent points.<sup>6</sup> The Representative from North Korea, Mr. Myong Hun An stressed that there is an inherent difference between ‘nuclear disarmament’ and ‘non-proliferation.’ He maintained that the priority should be given to the former rather than focusing only on non-proliferation which is counter-productive to the desire of the international community. Mr. An asked to draw attention to the inherent ‘double standards’ embedded at ‘non-proliferation’ established by “certain big countries.” In that approach, he criticized, the latter is just a denial of nuclear disarmament. He also placed significant importance on the role of certain States that possess nuclear weapons, as “blackmailers to the security and sovereignty of non-nuclear weapons States.”<sup>7</sup> An emphasized that such State practices are only indicative of promulgating mistrust, arbitrariness and a major factor in the “paralysis of multilateral disarmament bodies.”<sup>8</sup> He also noted that such mistrust and double standards are self-evident in the nuclear weapons exercises conducted at the 38th parallel by the joint efforts of South Korea and the US.<sup>9</sup>

After all the main speeches of the DPRK representatives to the Meeting, a series of “Right to Reply” was exercised by the member States. There were especially harsh debates between North Korea and the US. Mr. Myong Hun An first emphasized that the US has played substantial role in exacerbating tensions in the Korean Peninsula. He stated that the nuclear issue in the Peninsula would not have been created in the first place, had the US not threatened North Korea with nuclear weapons. He stressed that the maintenance of a peaceful environment with a powerful nuclear deterrent was, in fact, the underlying strategic line of the DPRK. An pointed out that North Korea had the right to defend her supreme national interests in the ensuring of her own regional security and stability which it would carry out as a nuclear-

<sup>5</sup> First Committee, 5th meeting - 70th General Assembly, *available at* <http://webtv.un.org/search/first-committee-5th-meeting-70th-general-assembly/4557466488001?term=first%20committee#full-text> (last visited on Oct. 22, 2015)

<sup>6</sup> For a textual summary of the Meeting, *see*, United Nations General Assembly, Seventieth Session, 5th Meeting, Consequences of Small Arms Claim Attention in First Committee, as African Nations Underscore Dangers of Terrorist Use, Press Release, *available at* <http://www.un.org/press/en/2015/gadis3523.doc.htm> (last visited on Oct. 22, 2015).

<sup>7</sup> *Id.*

<sup>8</sup> *Id.*

<sup>9</sup> *Supra* note 5.