



TRANSCRIPT OF PLENARY SESSION III

«Security in Northeast Asia: Threats, Vulnerabilities and Risks»¹

MOSCOW NONPROLIFERATION CONFERENCE

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[**KHLOPKOV**]² We now begin the session “Security in Northeast Asia: Threats, Vulnerabilities and Risks”. When we worked on the agenda of the Conference, we deliberately separated the issue of challenges and threats in the region from the issue of what to do about them. In our view, as the organizers, we have noticed that when experts and officials speak about possible solutions, these solutions arise from concerns and fears of the respective party. Today, in several speeches at this Conference, the problems and challenges we are dealing with in this region were described as “the North Korean problem”, or the “North Korean nuclear problem”. I strongly disagree with such terminology. In my view, it will be a road to nowhere if we only focus on the North Korean nuclear problem because clearly, the development of the North Korean nuclear and missile capability is motivated by Pyongyang’s national security concerns, and the unsettled security situation in the entire region. That is why I believe that the experts who deliberately limit the scope of the issues chosen the wrong path. So, once again, this is why we have isolated the issue of challenges and threats in the region, and why we are having this meeting now, while the meeting on the topic of “what to do” will focus on the mechanisms that can be used to defuse the tensions in Northeast Asia and the Korean peninsula.

I am grateful to all the participants who have joined us for this discussion. The topic, as we all understand, is extremely sensitive, which is why the format of this meeting is all the more important. Our first speaker is Madam Choe Son Hui, President of the Institute for American Studies (IFAS) under the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the DPRK. Madam Choe, thank you for joining us. As I have already said, Center for Energy and Security Studies greatly appreciates the contacts established with the DPRK Foreign Ministry’s Institute for American Studies over the years. I am grateful to you for not evading dialogue on such a complex and sensitive issue as security in Northeast Asia. I suggest that all the contributors speak from the floor. Each speaker will have 7 minutes, and then there will be some time for Q&A. Madam Choe, the floor is yours.

¹ Recording of the session was decoded by Nadezhda **MASLENNIKOVA**, Intern, CENESS; and Anastasia **SHAVROVA**, Research Associate, CENESS.

² **KHLOPKOV** Anton, Director, Center for Energy and Security Studies (CENESS); Chairman, The 2017 Moscow Nonproliferation Conference, Russian Federation



[CHOE]³ Good afternoon. First of all, I would like to express my thanks to Mr. Anton Khlopkov, the director of CENESS (Center for Energy and Security Studies), for the excellent arrangement of the current Moscow Nonproliferation Conference and inviting me to this Conference.

Today, nearly three decades after the end of the Cold War, the regional security of Northeast Asia is still facing the critical challenges involving the pursuance of hostile policies and strategic interests among the regional powers. The Korean peninsula is the place where all of such interests are intertwined and today the Korean peninsula is in the state of touch-and-go situation due to the U.S. hostile policy on DPRK. Whereas the Bush administration pursued a hostile policy toward DPRK by labeling it as the “axis of evil” and enlisting my country as a target of a nuclear preemptive strike, the Obama administration had maintained so-called “strategic patience” and embarked on all-out campaign to stifle DPRK by putting in place literally every single sanctions available. And today, the Trump administration is engaged in a reckless anti-DPRK campaign by not hesitating to make hysterical statements, such as “fire and fury” and “total destruction” of my country. All we hear from the officials of the Trump administration is the U.S. dedication to the campaign of pressure and the military preemptive strike being put on the table. And these are the very reasons for and the answers to our efforts to pursue nuclear weapons.

As for the DPRK, this is the matter of life and death and the present situation strengthens our belief that we should strongly hold to the nuclear weapons to deter the possible U.S. attacks. Every nuclear state, including India and Pakistan, as far as the permanent Member States of the United Nations Security Council made very clear, when they were trying to possess nuclear weapons, that the missions of the nuclear weapons are to deter possible nuclear attacks on their nations. And I want to make very clear that the DPRK’s nuclear weapons carry the same mission.

Looking back, it is worthy to note that each nuclear state had experienced tremendous ordeals in order to acquire nuclear weapons. France, as one of the old allies of the United States, has chosen to become a nuclear state rather than to be under the nuclear umbrella of the United States and conducted more than 200 nuclear tests by asserting as to whether the United States was prepared to sacrifice New York to save Paris. The former Soviet Union after its first hydrogen bomb test in 1953 made a statement that its country had gone ahead with the hydrogen bomb test to put an end to the monopoly of hydrogen bomb of the United States and to secure the safety of the people of the former Soviet Union by balancing the power with the United States. The Chinese government after its first nuclear test in 1964 made a similar statement that it is inalienable right of any sovereign state to defend itself and China had to develop nuclear weapons to deter increasing U.S. nuclear threats on China. As every nuclear state has its own reason to develop nuclear weapons the DPRK also has its reason to develop nuclear weapons. The DPRK is under the constant nuclear threats by the United States and as early as last week, there were unprecedented military exercises involving aircraft carriers in addition to the flying exercises by the nuclear strategic bombers into the Korean peninsula.

³ **CHOE** Son Hui, President, Institute for American Studies (IFAS), Ministry of Foreign Affairs, DPRK



Action invites reaction. The respected supreme leader Kim Jong Un in his statement made on September 21, clarified that the DPRK's position that he will surely and definitely tame the mentally deranged U.S. dotard with fire and making pay dearly for his speech calling for totally destroying the DPRK. We neither put our nuclear weapons and ballistic rockets on the table of negotiations in any case unless the United States puts an end to its hostile policy and nuclear threat on the DPRK. The DPRK's nuclear arsenal is a noble result of the bloody struggle of our people to protect the destiny and sovereignty of the Motherland from the prolonged nuclear threat by the United States. Today we have almost reached final stage of balance of power with the United States and our ultimate goal is to achieve a power balance with the United States, so that the United States was not there to talk about any military actions against the DPRK.

At the same time, I have to recall that the government of the DPRK made it very clear on several occasions that the DPRK will regard all attempts to stifle the DPRK under excuse of the implementation of so called "UN sanctions and resolutions" as an act of aggression and war against the DPRK. The United States should take our position seriously and should make a decision to abandon hostile policy on our country. As the DPRK government made its position very clear on several occasions, I once again would like to take this opportunity to make sure that the DPRK's nuclear weapons are non-negotiable unless the U.S. is prepared to co-exist with the nuclear DPRK, because this is the only way to ensure lasting peace on the Korean peninsula, stability and security in the Northeast Asia. Thank you.

[**KHLOPKOV**] Our next speaker, Bob Carlin, has been involved in the Korean issues for decades. He has worked for the U.S. Department of State and other government agencies. He is now a Visiting Scholar at the Center for International Security and Cooperation (CISAC) at Stanford University. Bob, thank you for joining us once again. Thank you for coming to the 2017 Moscow Nonproliferation Conference. The floor is yours.

[**CARLIN**]⁴ Thank you. Anton, thank you for inviting me again and especially thank you for organizing this panel. I have known Madam Choe for 21 years, and all the time we have been sitting across the table from each other, so it is a pleasure to be sitting next to you finally. The title of this is, as Anton said, threats, vulnerabilities and risks in Northeast Asia. We are lucky to be able to just describe the melody and not the cure, which is going to be quite a feat, I am looking forward to that. It is also a pleasure to look beyond the current disaster to the horizon on which several looming disasters exist. This is not a happy seminar, as far as I am concerned. People used to describe me as being an optimist, I used to hear that all the time. "Why are you so optimistic on the issue of DPRK-U.S.?" I was never an optimist; I always thought of myself as a pragmatist. But since 2001, and certainly since 2005, I have not seen much room for hope. Since that time, there has been a winding down of the post-WWII structure of stability in Northeast Asia. And it may have been a mythical structure, maybe that we were fooling ourselves, but there was a period in the 1970s and the 1980s, and even the 1990s, when a lot of people said that despite what was

⁴ **CARLIN** Robert, Visiting Scholar, Center for International Security and Cooperation (CISAC), Stanford University, United States



going on in the rest of the world, Northeast Asia was sort of an island of calm and prosperity.

Obviously, it is not the case anymore. And partially, I think it is because of, and it brings to mind something Anton said, our focus was too narrow. We were always laboring under the weight of events of the first half of the twentieth century. That is the Japanese occupation of Korea. We have never really fixed that. And it suddenly comes back, roaring back to haunt us in a big way. That was then, we have to worry about the now and the future. Usually that there's no one event. No one single instance, which defines the future. But I think in this case, we may have to look to something very specific. And I am not talking about events so much as dynamics.

You know, when a plane crashes and they do the post-event inspection, they usually decide that it is not a single event that brought the plane down. It is what they call a "cascade" of decisions. One bad decision, then another bad decision, and then another bad decision. In my mind, I can hear the recording in the cockpit screaming at us at this point: "Pull up! Pull up!" And I don't see signs that either side, any side, is appropriately acting to pull up. We have gone through a long period of negative reinforcement, where negative actions on one side have reinforced negative reactions on the other side. It is extremely difficult to get to this virtuous circle that we want of positive actions and signals reinforcing positive actions and signals. And the reason is because those forces in each capital, which are negative, are the best allies of the forces in the other capital. They reinforce each other. Where is the positive force is what Dr. Hecker has called "the control rods" recently, are usually too little, too late, too few. We tend to misread the positive signals from each side. We have reached the point, where I think, there's hardly an inclination even to try to read the positive signals from each side. They simply disappear in the wind.

Madam Choe raised three things, actually in her own address, which strike me as very important, and I do not know if we are reading them correctly or not. The DPRK has in the air three balls, that where and how they land, it seems to me might have a big influence on what happens next. The first one is the formulation that there are circumstances under which the DPRK might put nuclear weapons on the table. The second one is they are approaching, not yet have achieved, but are approaching the final goal of finishing the state nuclear force. Finally, the final goal, as she said, is an equilibrium of force with the United States. Is that the outlines of a pivot point? Is that the point on which the DPRK is prepared to move from the first part of its two-line policy, which is a concentration on building a nuclear force to concentration on the economy? Is that the pivot point or we are simply opening the way to further decline and more negative reinforcements? And are we so far into our dive going down, that we are not going to be able to pull up even if the DPRK does shift to something more positive?

On the horizon, it seems to me, we have in front of us potentially some very serious negative forces, more bombs to explode. And I am not here to talk about physical bombs, I am talking about the circumstances in two of the major countries in Northeast Asia – Japan and South Korea, – population bombs. Both of them are facing, very soon, a shrinking population and a fast-aging population. These are going to be so incredibly disruptive, economically, socially and politically. And we do not



know the circumstances that those are going to create on top of the tensions that are going to continue to exist over this nuclear problem. We have a political calendar in front of us, we have learnt to our sorrow that the pace of the change in Washington and a little bit in China and in South Korea force, usually in a negative way, events and decisions on a nuclear issue. We have got an election coming up in 2020, sounds like a long time away, it is not. Lots and lots can go wrong between now and then, and then even more can go wrong. So, we sometimes look to the sources of what we think are stability that are helping to preserve, keep us away, keep us out of the harm's way.

One of those is the Armistice Agreement of 1953. 1953 – think about it! Is it such an agreement that is so old really a source of stability or is it a source of suffocating stasis? Do we have to begin to look at not just a nuclear issue, but the broader parts of the strategic situation in Northeast Asia? Do we have to finally get passed what we did 60+ years ago and begin a new of creating new circumstances? We have not even begun to do that. The Six-Party talks, the September 2005 Joint Statement, seems to me, is not where we should be going, we do not have much time that that voice in the cockpit “Pull up! Pull up!” should be loud, you should hear it every morning you wake up. We do not have much space, we do not have much time and it seems to me that horizon is shrinking constantly for us to being to address this problem.

[KHLOPKOV] Bob, thank you for always being such an optimist, while also remaining pragmatic about where we are now. Our next two speakers will share their views on the challenges in Northeast Asia from their respective offices in China and Russia. Our next speaker is Dr. Teng, who is a military expert and scientist. He currently serves as Director of the Center for Arms Control and International Security Studies at China Institute of International Studies (CIIS), which is part of the Chinese Foreign Ministry. Dr. Teng, please.

[TENG]⁵ Thank you very much. It is really a great pleasure to be here and this is my second time to attend such an important conference and I highly appreciate the sponsors' effort to organize such a big conference at this crucial moment. The assignment given to me, I think, you mentioned just now, is sensitive and I will do my best from the scholar's approach to understand the threats, vulnerabilities and risks in Northeast Asia. I think that Northeast Asia had become again a hot spot in recent years. Some said that this is a result of the missile and nuclear tests by the DPRK, others argued that it is actually a manipulation by the United States to maintain the control of the Republic of Korea and Japan or to maintain the dominant position in Northeast Asia. This is a geopolitical competition. We also have heard a lot of the complaints about China's role in maintaining the stable situation in the Korean peninsula and especially the President of the United States Donald Trump once upon a time he highly appreciated Chinese effort in this regard, but other time he criticized that China has done nothing to the denuclearization in the Korean peninsula. So, this is a very controversial signal given by the current U.S. president.

In Northeast Asia actually different countries share different interests. I would like to give some specific studies on these interests. The United States actually during Obama administration had adopted so called “strategic patience”. After the very

⁵ TENG Jianqun, Director, Center for Arms Control and International Security Studies, China Institute of International Studies (CIIS), China



beginning of his term he gave some active response to the exchanges between the United States and the DPRK, but after several rounds of missile tests President Obama suddenly realized that he should have some policy and finally he named it “strategic patience”, which means that the United States would like to do nothing with the situation in the Korean peninsula. I am not sure President Trump has any concrete policy towards the DPRK. Some say that this is maximum pressure on the DPRK, some say – no, it is only a response from the U.S. government to the situation in Northeast Asia. So, this is a very controversial policy by the U.S. government. And in DPRK, of course, as Madam Choe just mentioned, security concern should be the dominant element for the decision-makers in that country. And I am sure our DPRK friends can give a long list of reasons for its choice to go nuclear-armed.

Madam Choe just mentioned the Chinese way to go nuclear-armed. I think there should be one point I would like to mention here. The Treaty. The NPT, which came into force in 1970. I think this is very important line for the countries committed to the Treaty. So, this is important part for my argument that we should show our international treaties and we also should show our respect to the sovereignty and security of a sovereign country. I think China, of course, has its specific strategy interests in the Korean peninsula. To be frank I think peace and stability are the conditions for China’s domestic development. This is very important, I think. Just imagine if the war in Northeast Asia happens, China of course would shift its attention to that region. So I think that peace and stability in Northeast Asia actually is a condition for China’s domestic development. This is our specific strategic interest. And also the 19th CPC National Congress has been on its way and I am sure that the leaders of this generation have attached great importance to peace and stability surrounding our country.

And if you look at the evolution of China’s security policy, I would like to divide it into 3 stages. First, immediately after the founding the PRC, actually the leaders of China adopted to some extent an ideology oriented to security policy towards its neighbors, towards other countries in the world. And after the opening-up reform, China adopted trade-oriented, so we got a lot from the trade with all the countries in the world. And if we look at the years after 2012, you can find out that security has become a very important part for our decision-makers, when they decide anything to do and to have some policies toward other countries and even the domestic policies. We established the so-called “National Security Commission” and we adjusted the importance of the military reform, which initiated from September 2015. So, China today has attached great importance to the security, not only to the domestic security, but also to the international security, which means that fast development of China requires such security environment. And Russia, of course, is another important player in this game. Japan – to some extent, I think the politicians have manipulated the tension in the Korean peninsula. For instance, Shinzo Abe in the recent days said, just because of the missile test by the DPRK he would like to have new election in light. And also ROK. I do not think that leaders from Park Geun-hye, Moon Jae-in have any room to push forward ROK’s Northeast Asia policy. After the inauguration, president Moon Jae-in has proposed several ideas to promote peace and stability, but denied by other countries. This actually is a dilemma for ROK how can their country play a more important role in maintaining peace and ease the tension in Northeast Asia.



So I would like to say something about the implications of the situation on Korean peninsula. First, historic implications. Even if you look at the recent 100 years' history there were four large-scale wars. No country in this region avoided that moment, and China, Korea, Japan and even Russia suffered a lot from these 4 wars: Sino-Japanese war, Russian-Japanese war and also the Korean war. So we suffered a lot from the war. So this is a very important reason for China for many years trying its best to maintain peace and stability. So this is the implication from our history.

Second, the international implication. At the UN Security Council, I do not think there can be any consensus on using force against a sovereign country in Northeast Asia at this moment. So this is a very important part for the international community to protect or to give some opportunities for some sovereign countries in Northeast Asia. So this is very important. Another international implication is ROK. As president Moon Jae-in recently repeatedly mentioned that ROK would not like to have any war or clash, or even a surgical strike against DPRK. So this is another factor for us to think about the use of force in Northeast Asia.

Third, I think, there is a military implication. I do not think that the military implication should be the number one choice for any country in this region. We have three choices at this moment in dealing with the situation in the Korean peninsula: negotiations, sanctions and war. So I think that negotiation should be the best one for all the countries concerned. So I am 100% in favor of what the Chinese government recently proposed, that double-suspension and double-track approach to the issue, because we are facing a very different world.

Three tendencies I would like to mention here. First – multipolar origin of the international politics. No individual country can play a hero in deciding the important issues in this region. Second is the globalization of world economy. Such connections among powers, among countries can't afford this price... I do not think any country could afford such a price. And why do we use the information technology? To complete the change in our social life. So I think this is actually a new era for us to think about the situation in Northeast Asia, not as the zero-sum game theory. We need peace and stability for our own country and for the region. Thank you.

[**KHLOPKOV**] Thank you, Dr. Teng. Our fourth speaker is Aleksandr Vorontsov, an advisor to the Center for Energy and Security Studies. Many of you also know him as head of the Korean and Mongolian Studies Department at the Institute for Oriental Studies of the Russian Academy of Sciences. Me and Dr. Vorontsov have paid several visits to Pyongyang over the past few years. One of the main purpose of those visits was to get a better understanding of the logic and motivation driving the DPRK nuclear and missile programs. We wanted to understand the existing concerns, because if we want this crisis resolved, we need to understand the motives of each party. Dr. Vorontsov, please.

[**VORONTSOV**]⁶ Thank you, Anton, for organizing this important conference, and for inviting me to attend. All the participants in this meeting agree that the situation

⁶ **VORONTSOV** Alexandr, Advisor, Center for Energy and Security Studies (CENESS); Director, Department for Korean and Mongolian Studies, Institute of Oriental Studies, Russian Academy of Sciences, Russian Federation



on the Korean peninsula is volatile, and that the risks and challenges we are discussing today have grown dramatically. Unfortunately, the key problem lying in the foundation of this issue is the lack of dialogue. That is one of the main components of this troublesome situation: the lack of dialogue, and an uncontrolled escalation of tensions and military activity from both sides.

As we know, one of the root causes of the crisis is the unsettled conflict between the United States and North Korea. As my colleague Bob Carlin has noted, the document that is now in force between Washington and Pyongyang is the obsolete and archaic Armistice Agreement of 1953. Under various pretexts, the United States refuses to replace it with a more permanent and solid document, such as a peace treaty. Washington refuses to normalize its relations with the DPRK, and right now, it even refuses to maintain any dialogue. It speculates on the idea that the DPRK does not want any dialogue, that it cannot be trusted and is unable to stick any bargain to the end, that it has never fulfilled its commitments, and that its main goal has always been to develop nuclear weapons. Washington insists that Pyongyang was merely using all the negotiations and agreements to buy itself more time in pursuit of its nuclear ambitions, and that it has never taken those negotiations seriously. That is not actually the case.

We all remember several success stories, such as the Framework Agreement, which our colleague Bob Carlin helped to negotiate and then implement. The Framework Agreement remained in force for a whole decade, which was the most peaceful decade in the recent history of the Korean peninsula. Even after the Framework Agreement collapsed in 2002 following the arrival of the Republican Bush administration, the DPRK continued to look for ways of ensuring its own security on the basis of international legally binding guarantees. However, North Korea had soon realized that promises by the U.S. president did not constitute a sufficient guarantee because once a new administration had arrived, it began to pursue a completely different policy.

This, incidentally, mirrors the current situation. The Bush administration withdrew from the Framework Agreement with the DPRK, while the current Trump administration is trying to withdraw from the deal with Iran. After the arrival of the Bush administration, DPRK representatives proposed the idea of the U.S. Congress passing a resolution that would be legally binding for the current administration and for all future presidents. They wondered whether that could constitute a sufficient security guarantee for their country. That was, of course, an unrealistic idea. It was clear that Congress would never pass such a resolution. Nevertheless, this demonstrates that the DRPK tried to find a solution based on international guarantees and assurances. Unfortunately, they got disillusioned with that approach, and that is what has brought us to the current situation.

Of course, nobody likes the fact that the DRPK has come to believe that only its own nuclear deterrent can be a reliable guarantee of its national security. Unfortunately, that is the case. The situation is also worrying because of the new developments earlier this year, related to the conduct of certain Heads of state. The direct verbal duel between President Trump and King Jong-un, which has shocked the international community, reflects the level of tensions between the two countries.



Let me also recall a story once told by former Russian Deputy Foreign Minister Aleksandr Losyukov, who came to Pyongyang during another bout of tensions in January 2003 as President Putin's Special envoy. The Framework Agreement collapsed the year before, the DPRK withdrew from the NPT, the United States had branded North Korea as one of the "Axis of Evil", Iraq was being destroyed by a military invasion, and everyone was asking who would be next. Today we have a similar situation.

When the talks began, the then-second most senior North Korean official, Vice-Marshal Jo Myong-rok, declared that every single North Korean serviceman was ready to go to war with the American aggressors in the event of an attack, and die fighting. Losyukov replied to him that before going to war and dying bravely, the military should give the diplomats a chance to do their job. If the diplomats were to succeed, there would be no need for anyone to die, heroically or otherwise. In the end, we managed to kick-start the Six Party Talks – which, as we all know, were not entirely unsuccessful, either.

It was no coincidence that President Putin recalled the Six Party Talks at the Eastern Economic Forum, when he said that we were very near to reaching an agreement back in 2005, but then some countries began to demand even more concessions from North Korea, and that led to the failure of the Six Party Talks. Why did I just recall that story told by Amb. Losyukov? Because we have a completely opposite situation here. The roles have been reversed. The U.S. Defense Secretary, James Mattis, has taken a more cautious stance on the DPRK than the U.S. president. Secretary Tillerson says that the United States is in contact with the North, that dialogue is under way – but he is immediately interrupted by President Trump, who declares that any negotiations with the North are a waste of time.

So, the U.S. military have taken a more cautious stance than the U.S. president. The roles have been reversed. That brings in a new element of uncertainty. One of the most worrying prospects is an uncontrolled military escalation on both sides. That includes the two successful launches of long-range missiles by North Korea in July; many believe those were intercontinental ballistic missiles. Russian military specialists are more conservative in their estimates, but North Korea's missile progress is obvious. The sixth nuclear test on September, 3 is also a provocation and a blow for international stability. They constitute a violation of the UN Security Council resolution, no doubt about it. But the military maneuvers, the non-stop, massive joint maneuvers right at the border with the DPRK are no less of a provocation. They represent a direct security threat for the DPRK.

Let us also recall the scale of those maneuvers. The events in March and April involved 320,000 servicemen. Russia's own Zapad-2017 maneuvers that have just been completed involved only 12,700 servicemen – but see how much alarm that caused in the Western capitals, who described the exercise as an unacceptable threat, etc. We have 12,700 on the one side, and 320,000 on the other. It is no coincidence that the Russian and Chinese foreign ministries issued a joint statement on July 4, calling for a de-escalation, for a reduction of military activity and military tensions. Unfortunately, military activity continues to grow. The latest regular drills were held



in late August. Now, in October, they are undertaking naval operations, involving 40 to 70 ships, according to various estimates. That is a powerful naval force right by the DRPK coast. Neither should we ignore the nature of these maneuvers. Washington assures us that these are regular, routine and defensive drills that are no threat to anyone. But take a look at the scenarios of those drills. They involve landing of an amphibious assault force, and seizing an administrative center. The scenarios of all these drills always include a decapitating strike. There is even a special military unit set up by the South Korean forces for that task. The drills in October also included a force of U.S. commandos landing from a nuclear submarine to deliver a decapitating strike against North Korea. Naturally, this is taken in Pyongyang as a direct security threat, so the call made by Russia and China in their joint statement is very relevant.

I think the situation is quite clear. We need to reduce the level of military tensions and start talking in calmer voices. For some reason, Washington perceives the joint Russian-Chinese statement as an attempt to undermine the system of American military alliances in the region.

To conclude, I would like to express hope that the ongoing escalation, the belligerence on both sides are just a stage in the period of preparations for somewhat serious talks. I hope it is just an attempt by both parties to strengthen their negotiating positions before they sit down and talk. Thank you.

[**KHLOPKOV**] Thank you. We now have exactly 30 minutes for questions, answers and comments. I would like to remind you once again that the topic of this session is the risks and challenges in the region. We will have a separate session to discuss the issue of sanctions, and another session focusing on how to reduce the risks. Of course, representatives of other countries in the region are also welcome to ask their questions or make their remarks, but please keep it to two minutes at the very most. Our task, as a research organization, is to understand how security challenges are perceived in different countries, and then use that understanding to try to propose solutions. Dr. Zhebin first, then Amb. Lee.

[**ZHEBIN**]⁷ Thank you. Alexander Zhebin, head of the Center for Korean Studies at the Institute for Oriental Studies of the Russian Academy of Sciences. I have a question to Mrs. Choe. Last year at the Party Congress, the DPRK leader said that the DPRK would conduct itself as a responsible nuclear-weapon state, that it would not transfer nuclear weapons to other countries, etc. Does that mean that while the DPRK is formally outside the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, it is prepared to abide by all the terms of that treaty in practice?

[**KHLOPKOV**] Thank you. The next question is from Amb. Lee.

[**LEE**]⁸ Thank you, Anton, for giving me the floor. As you suggested, I will limit myself to the risks and vulnerabilities on the situation. I think that no one would disagree that we are racing against time, and as my Chinese colleague suggested, the

⁷ **ZHEBIN** Alexandr, Director, Center for Korean Studies (CKS), Institute of Far Eastern Studies (IFES), Russian Academy of Sciences (RAS), Russian Federation

⁸ **LEE** Sang-hwa, Director-General for North Korean Nuclear Affairs, Ministry of Foreign Affairs; Fmr. Assistant to the U.N. Secretary General (2007-2014), Republic of Korea



number one precondition should be, that there cannot be a war in the Korean peninsula. Without peace on the peninsula, there is no peace in the region. As Dr. Carlin indicated the reason has served for many decades as an engine for peace and prosperity. Without peace in the region there cannot be peace and prosperity in the entire world. Having said that, I think that North Korea's nuclear program is standing at a tipping point, at the final stage of weaponization. I think this can be our last chance, but let us look at the bright side, that it also can be our best chance.

The risks and vulnerabilities, two biggest ones, as I said. The first is kind of “catch-22” situation. Between the U.S. and North Korea, no one wants to look weak, no one wants to be the fool. Each side wants to stand on the position of strength. So under the circumstances, small things can spire out of control easily and quickly. And the second thing is, you know, as my Russian colleague pointed out, there is no reliable channel of communication. There seems to be some, for instance, the New York channel, but it seems that it is not meaningful way of communication for dialogue. The most important thing is to manage the situation in a stable manner. We have been witnessing the longest spell of absence of North Korea provocations since September 15th. So I think we should do everything to encourage them to stay the course. Thank you.

[**KHLOPKOV**] Doctor Santoro – next and then we will give the floor to the panelists to answer.

[**SANTORO**]⁹ Thank you, Anton. Thanks to all panelists. David Santoro, from the Pacific Forum CSIS. This is a question to Ms. Choe. You mentioned in your speech that the DPRK was developing nuclear weapons predominantly for deterrence purposes, and I was curious if you could elaborate a little bit more about how you perceive the roles of weapons and particularly elaborate on what specific actions you are trying to deter? Thank you.

[**KHLOPKOV**] Thank you, David, for being brief. Madam Choe, please. Then I will give the floor to other speakers.

[**CHOE**] I think you know the history of our pulling out of the NPT, so I am not going to narrate all this long history on why we pulled ourselves from the NPT, but as our General Kim Jong Un mentioned very clearly last year, the DPRK is not going to proliferate or sell out our nuclear weapons to other countries and we will be committed to non-proliferation spirit with regard to the nuclear weapons. So even though we are outside of the NPT, we, as our great General has mentioned, we will be committed to non-proliferation of our nuclear weapons. And I have to mention again that the mission of our nuclear weapons is only for deterring the possible U.S. attack on the DPRK. Thank you.

[**KHLOPKOV**] Madam, could you please to respond to doctor Santoro's question and to react to Ambassador Lee's comment if you wish?

⁹ **SANTORO** David, Director and Senior Fellow for Nuclear Policy, Pacific Forum CSIS, France/United States



[CHOE] I think you know what specific threats we are trying to deter. I mean you read newspapers every day. There are nuclear threats on the DPRK. Do I have to read out all the newspapers' lines or...? Okay.

[KHLOPKOV] Would you react to Ambassador Lee's comment now or later?

[CHOE] I will skip that, okay?

[KHLOPKOV] Next, please. Dr. Evseev.

[EVSEEV]¹⁰ I have a question for the U.S. expert. How realistic is the U.S. assessment of North Korea's nuclear and missile capability? According to the information at our disposal, the range of the North Korean missile launches is sometimes deliberately overstated, although some U.S. experts also believe that the DPRK is not yet ready to produce a nuclear warhead. In this connection, I also have the following question. Keeping in mind that the U.S. missile defense system is not sufficiently effective in a real combat situation, do you personally believe that the United States could launch a disarming strike against targets in North Korea if it decides that at some point in the future the DRPK may build effective nuclear weapons? Does Washington believe that if it strikes now, it can achieve its goals with fewer losses? In other words, how tempting is it for the United States to deliver a disarming strike – not necessarily a nuclear strike – now? Thank you.

[KHLOPKOV] Dr. Mizin, please.

[MIZIN]¹¹ Victor Mizin, from MGIMO MFA. Well, we understand that the situation is like a snowball rolling toward, I mean some kind of brink migration is to professor Carlin and professor Vorontsov. I mean it is understandable that the People's Democratic Republic of Korea would never forgo its nuclear weapons in the situation when the United States is not changing its policy and I do not see any signs. And we know what the risks are and what are the other crises in the region, which is, unfortunately, very close to Russian borders. And we know that many Russian and joint Chinese-Russian initiatives they go nowhere as well as what professor Vorontsov mentioned, there have been the whole set of previous Russian initiatives on stabilization on the Korean peninsula. So my question to you both is what you think could be a solution in the present situation? Should it be some independent actor, who could be some kind of intermediary? Should it be Madam Mogherini and the European Union suggesting something like a new conference as a substitute for Six-Party talks, which, unfortunately, are dead now? What kind of a solution just to solve and to prevent from, I think, a catastrophe? Thank you.

[KHLOPKOV] We will give the floor to one more participant and then the speakers will have a chance to answer. Mr. Ilitchev, please.

¹⁰ EVSEEV Vladimir, Deputy Director, Institute of CIS Countries, Russian Federation

¹¹ MIZIN Victor, Leading Research Associate, Center for Post-Soviet Studies, Institute of International Studies, Moscow State Institute for International Relations (MGIMO–University), Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Russian Federation



[**IYICHEV**]¹² Thank you. Alexander Ilyichev, former UN officer, consultant. It is perfectly clear that in a situation where the international collective security system – based primarily on the UN Charter – is put to serious test, North East Asia is a good example of a region where that system has stopped working completely.

The security interests of all the countries in the region and of the United States are divergent. China is primarily concerned at the prospect of instability, which would threaten its economic and social situation. The United States is concerned with the military security threat; that threat is not yet existential, but tangible. Russia is concerned by the possibility of the worst-case scenario affecting its Eastern provinces. For North Korea, and even more for South Korea, the threat is entirely different. Their very survival, the survival of the Korean nation as a whole and of the two Koreas, is at stake. My question to the panel is the following. I understand the importance and the necessity of bilateral dialogues, especially between the two Koreas. I believe that is the only possible solution of the crisis. Nevertheless, can you see any realistic prospects for launching some practical efforts on building some kind of collective regional security mechanism, of the kind mentioned in a joint statement by the countries involved in the Six Party Talks? Thank you.

[**KHLOPKOV**] Thank you. Another question from Paul Ingram, and then we'll get back to the panelists. Paul, please.

[**INGRAM**]¹³ Hello. Paul Ingram, I am from London, the British-American Security Information Council. My question is for Madam Choe. There was a statement, I believe, in the United Nations earlier this week, that third parties would not suffer the threat of nuclear attack if they were not involved in a strategic attack on the DPRK. Is this the basis for declaratory policy that could defuse some of the tensions, fears and recruit the interests of states in the region to calm things down?

[**KHLOPKOV**] Thank you, Paul. I will also put a question to Dr. Teng, the Chinese representative, and then all the speakers will have a maximum of 2-3 minutes to answer. Dr. Teng, as a scientist, what do you believe represents a greater threat to Chinese national security: North Korea's growing nuclear and missile capability or the U.S. response - or the use of North Korea's growing nuclear/missile capability as a pretext for such a response, and for building additional U.S. military infrastructure in the region? Let us start with Dr. Vorontsov, please.

[**VORONTSOV**] Thank you. I have received two questions, including the one on neutral states – such as the EU – acting as mediators. First, I would like to hope for reconsideration of the July 4 Joint Statement by the Russian and Chinese Foreign Ministries. It did not gain any immediate traction, but I don't think we have yet received the final answer. Our proposals are still being scrutinized. We are getting signals that they are being studied by our partners, so they are not dead in the water.

¹² **ILITCHEV** Alexander, Senior Consultant, United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism; Fmr. Principal Adviser to the Personal Envoy of the U.N. Secretary-General for the Korean Peninsula (2003–2005), Russian Federation

¹³ **INGRAM** Paul, Executive Director, British American Security Information Council (BASIC), United Kingdom



Second, we have never objected against the participation of any third states, any other parties, provided that their efforts are aimed at strengthening security. Russia, as I see it, always welcomes any negotiations – with or without Russian participation – with our participation would be preferable, but any talks are good, any efforts are good if they help to lower tensions on the Korean peninsula and strengthen stability, whatever the list of participants is. The Joint Statement also emphasizes that we need to re-launch, as soon as possible, dialogue in various formats, including bilateral inter-Korean dialogue, the US-DPRK dialogue, and other trilateral or multilateral formats; regardless of the format, we support such efforts. We welcome the participation of all honest brokers who seek to reduce tensions and strengthen stability on the Korean peninsula. There are no contraindications here, and we remember the period not so long ago when the European Union played an active positive role, including the role of a mediator. It participated also in the KEDO energy project.

Now to the question put by our colleague Mr. Ilyichev, as to whether I can see a realistic prospect for some mechanism being put together. The prospects are challenging right now. When there is no dialogue, and when all our attempts, all our calls for its speedy resumption are not heeded, and when the US representative at the UN says that proposals for resuming negotiations are insulting... But the idea of six-party talks, or some other multilateral talks, is not dead. As far as I am aware, no-one has officially rejected it. As part of the six-party format, we had working groups, and one of them was led by a Russian representative. It was tasked with drawing up a multilateral regional security mechanism for Northeast Asia. The group made some progress and developed some possible solutions. As we transition from an uncontrolled escalation and military activity towards dialogue – and I hope that such a transition will be made – those proposed solutions may once again become relevant. I have that hope, but I don't have any certainty.

[**KHLOPKOV**] Thank you. Dr. Teng.

[**TENG**] As I mentioned just now, I think the leaders of the generation, China has attached great importance to the security of the country. For example, on April 2014 during the 1st National Security Commission meeting, President Xi defined 11 areas, including the security in nuclear and the political security, economic, cultural security. There are at least 11 areas related to the security of China. So I think this time the leaders gave such a great attention to the security of the country. It is actually a very important part for China's future development. If you read the speech delivered by President Xi during the parade in commemorating the 90 years' anniversary of the PLA on July, 30, he also suggested that the PLA assignment is not only to safeguard the territory of the country, but also to safeguard the development process. That cannot be stopped. In terms of international threat, of course, China, I am sure, has been prepared to deal with any challenges in traditional and non-traditional feature. Also China would like to contribute greatly to the peace and stability in other areas. For example, China in the recent years has contributed a large numbers of peacekeepers, according to the UN Security Council assignment. And also the escort in Asian Development Bank (ADB) to protect the commercial sailing. So China actually not just adjusts the domestic security, but also adjusts the international security and peace.



[**KHLOPKOV**] Bob Carlin.

[**CARLIN**] A lot of questions are really strategic in nature, and I am not a strategist, I am a tactician. So I am going to dodge some of them with one point I do want to make. And that is Madam Choe has emphasized several times that the purpose of North Korean nuclear development is deterrence, and what puzzles me is that from I can see, you have achieved that already. The nuclear force currently exists, which is in fact already a deterrent. And so the question is why is it necessary to take next step or two steps, which in fact may be destabilizing. Which may, in fact, tip the situation over and into something less stable than it is right now, God forbid. I am reminded of what the DPRK did in July 1993, in our Framework Agreement talks, when they suddenly reversed course and said: oh, we recognize that the graphite moderator reactors are a threat and therefore we are prepared to go to light-water reactors. It seems to me that something like that would be very effective at this moment and breaking the tension and helping ease our path into, towards some sort of a dialogue. Not negotiating the end of the whole thing, but just getting us through the door, so we can sit down and begin to talk again. Somebody has to take a step, and I think that the DPRK is in a good position to do that.

[**KHLOPKOV**] Madam Choe, you have the final word.

[**CHOE**] I guess there was a question addressed to me. I think the statement made by my Foreign Minister during the UN General Assembly session was quoted. I think our Foreign Minister was referring to the possible nuclear reaction from the DPRK, pointed at the United States possible nuclear attack and not any other countries who are not related to such attacks by the United States. So our nuclear weapons are directed at the United States and we view that this nuclear attack might come from the United States and not from other countries. So our nuclear response would be targeting at the United States and not the third country.

[**KHLOPKOV**] Thank you. I think it was a very useful session. Still I am sure that many of us have questions what are the risks and what should be done, and I think it was a very good point by Bob Carlin, who already started thinking what should be done to address those challenges and the risks in the region we face. Now the session is over.

Before we will have our coffee, I do have a special point for the media. At this stage madam Choe Son Hui is not ready to give any comments to the media. As I mentioned at the beginning, we expect that if any participant has such a position, journalists accredited for the Conference, would respect that. Thank you for your understanding.