



Security Council

Seventy-eighth year

Provisional

9514th meeting

Tuesday, 19 December 2023, 3 p.m.

New York

President: Mr. Montalvo Sosa. (Ecuador)

Members:

Albania	Ms. Dautllari
Brazil.	Mr. França Danese
China	Mr. Geng Shuang
France	Mrs. Paolini
Gabon	Ms. Koumby Missambo
Ghana	Ms. Oppong-Ntiri
Japan	Mr. Yamazaki
Malta	Ms. Gatt
Mozambique	Mr. Afonso
Russian Federation.	Ms. Evstigneeva
Switzerland	Mrs. Baeriswyl
United Arab Emirates	Mr. Abushahab
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland . .	Mr. Kariuki
United States of America.	Mr. Wood

Agenda

Non-proliferation/Democratic People's Republic of Korea

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The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Non-proliferation/Democratic People's Republic of Korea

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representatives of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and the Republic of Korea to participate in this meeting.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite Mr. Khaled Khiari, Assistant Secretary-General for Middle East, Asia and the Pacific in the Departments of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs and Peace Operations to participate in this meeting.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda.

I give the floor to Mr. Khiari.

Mr. Khiari: According to the official news agency of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and various government sources, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea launched a Hwasong-18-type intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) at 8.24 a.m. local time on 18 December. The missile flew a distance of approximately 1,000 km and reached an altitude of 6,500 km before falling into the sea.

This is the fifth launch of an ICBM in 2023, following the launch of a Hwasong-15 in February, a Hwasong-17 in March, and solid-fuel Hwasong-18 missiles in April and July. The systems are reportedly capable of reaching most points on Earth.

In November, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea also announced that it had carried out two successful tests of a new engine for a solid-fuel intermediate range ballistic missile.

On 18 December, the Secretary-General strongly condemned the launch of a long-range ballistic missile by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. He urged the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to fully comply with its international obligations under all relevant Security Council resolutions. He also reiterated his call on the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to reopen communication channels and to resume

dialogue without preconditions to achieve sustainable peace and the complete and verifiable denuclearization of the Korean peninsula.

The launch of yet another ICBM is of serious concern. Despite numerous meetings of the Security Council on this matter in 2023, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea did not heed the strong call from members of the Security Council to refrain from further launches.

In addition, regrettably, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea once again did not issue any airspace or maritime safety notifications. The unannounced launches represent a serious risk to international civil aviation and maritime traffic.

We recall that, on 21 November, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea successfully placed into orbit a reconnaissance satellite using ballistic missile technology, announcing it would launch several reconnaissance satellites in a short span of time. We reiterate that any launch by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea using ballistic missile technology is a violation of relevant Security Council resolutions, and we strongly urge the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to refrain from such actions.

At this particularly difficult moment in securing global peace and security, it is imperative to de-escalate the situation on the Korean Peninsula to create an environment conducive to cooperation. We call on Security Council members to unite and make full use of the tools of dialogue and negotiation, while fully complying with all Security Council resolutions. We also urge the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to embrace diplomacy, rather than choosing isolation, as the way forward.

In this respect, I would like to acknowledge the participation of the Permanent Representatives of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and the Republic of Korea in this meeting. I welcome the opportunity for all parties to speak, as the lack of communication channels hinders the possibility of progress.

I emphasize again the importance of reinstating communication channels, in particular between military entities. Exercising maximum restraint is critical to avoiding unintended escalation.

Once again, I want to underscore concerns regarding the humanitarian situation in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. The United Nations is ready

to assist the Democratic People's Republic of Korea in addressing the needs of its vulnerable populations. We note that international travel in and out of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea is now taking place at a growing rate. We urge the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to allow the re-entry and rotation of the international community, including the United Nations Resident Coordinator and United Nations agencies. A collective return will significantly enhance international support for the people of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I thank Mr. Khiari for his briefing.

I shall now give the floor to those members of the Council who wish to make statements.

Mr. Wood (United States of America): I thank Mr. Khaled Khiari for his briefing on why we are here.

From the outset, I want to affirm that the United States condemns in the strongest terms the Democratic People's Republic of Korea's intercontinental ballistic missile and short-range ballistic missile launches this past weekend. There is much to say about this ongoing and advancing threat to international peace and security, but I want to start by talking about why we are not here.

We are not here — regardless of what the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and its two defenders on the Security Council say — because of a meeting between the United States and the Republic of Korea. We are not here because we seek to punish the citizens of North Korea, whose Government continues to prioritize its unlawful weapons of mass destruction (WMD) and ballistic-missile programmes over the welfare of its people. And we are not here because we harbour any hostile intent towards the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. In fact, we continue to call for dialogue on any topic with the Democratic People's Republic of Korea without preconditions. No, we are here today because the Democratic People's Republic of Korea has for the fifth time this year launched an intercontinental ballistic missile in direct violation of multiple Security Council resolutions. That is in addition to the 26 other ballistic missiles that the Democratic People's Republic of Korea has launched this year alone.

We have used every word to describe the continued threats of the Democratic People's Republic of

Korea to international peace and security: flagrant, unacceptable, reckless and egregious. All of these words still apply, but today I offer another word: ridiculous. It is ridiculous to assert that this launch, in addition to the short-range ballistic missile launch, is in any way justifiable or an appropriate response to a meeting. Let me be extremely clear. The United States and our allies are working to protect ourselves from the very nuclear-weapon delivery systems that the Democratic People's Republic of Korea is testing and has repeatedly stated are made for attacking us.

Meanwhile, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea itself has announced that it is undertaking not defensive countermeasures, but offensive ones. No claim by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea can repudiate that fact. Neither can it change the reality that the Republic of Korea, unlike the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, recommitted to not pursue nuclear weapons when we expanded our military alliance. As we have heard the Secretariat brief the Council many times before, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea laid out its five-year plan in January 2021. Now, as it attempts to carry out that plan, it is searching for justifications. Blame the United States. Blame the Republic of Korea and Japan. Blame the sanctions. Blame the Council. Blame anyone, but the one that actually bears responsibility for pursuing weapons in violation of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons — the regime of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

It is on all of us to call out those excuses for what they are: excuses — ridiculous excuses. And indeed, we are grateful that most of the Council has condemned the mounting threat by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to international peace and security. Most of the Council is committed to upholding the resolutions that we have adopted. Most of the Council does share the same goal of denuclearization. It is now on Russia and China to join us and to act as if their credibility as responsible permanent members depends on it. Not only would we be sending a message to the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, and any proliferator, but we have seen first-hand the benefits of coming together to hold the Democratic People's Republic of Korea accountable.

We know that the Democratic People's Republic of Korea can advance its WMD programme, owing to its extensive efforts to evade sanctions. Six years ago was the last time the Security Council came together to

address this proliferation threat and related sanctions-evasion efforts. The year 2017 was also when we instituted the petroleum import cap, aimed at limiting the free flow of gas to the military of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and, by extension, its unlawful nuclear- and ballistic-missile programmes. This year we once again saw growth in multilateral support from 55 Member States in reporting breaches of the oil cap to the Committee established pursuant to resolution 1718 (2006). That effort helps us better understand how the Democratic People's Republic of Korea builds its weapons and how we can prevent it from doing so. It also illustrates the importance of all Member States addressing the loopholes that the Democratic People's Republic of Korea has created since 2017, fully implementing Security Council resolutions related to the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and refusing to ease measures that have slowed down the weapons development of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea so that we can meaningfully hold Pyongyang to account.

So why are we here? We are here because, until the day the Democratic People's Republic of Korea abandons its WMD programme and instead engages in meaningful negotiations, we will continue to call out its violations of this body's resolutions. We are here because the Democratic People's Republic of Korea must understand that the only viable path forward is through diplomacy and our continued commitment to the denuclearization of the Korean peninsula, and it cannot do that while the Council stays silent. And we are here because it is critical that the international community make crystal clear that this escalatory behaviour has consequences that affect each and every member on the Council and the broader United Nations membership. We urge all Council members to join us today in holding the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to account once and for all.

Ms. Dautlari (Albania): I thank Under-Secretary-General Khiari for the information that he provided.

Let me start by expressing Albania's condemnation in the strongest terms of the illegal launch of a long-range ballistic missile by North Korea on 18 December, as well as the launch of a short-range ballistic missile the previous day. Those tests were conducted by the regime within less than 24 hours of one another, placing directly at risk the lives of the people in Japan, South Korea and elsewhere in the region.

The Democratic People's Republic of Korea continues to openly ignore the United Nations, the Security Council, the international community and the established norms and rules that ban the Democratic People's Republic of Korea from acquiring and using ballistic technologies and developing nuclear weapons. The recent launches are another escalatory step by the regime. The events reaffirm once more that the Democratic People's Republic of Korea is seeking only escalation through endangering the region and the international community with its weapons of mass destruction (WMD) and ballistic-missile programme. We furthermore condemn the violations of the section regime of the Committee established pursuant to resolution 1718 (2006). Despite international sanctions, North Korea has continued to develop its nuclear-weapon and missile programmes, and it is not doing it alone.

Therefore, countries must implement the sanctions and prevent the regime's illegal programmes from expanding and proliferating. We regret that the voice of the majority of the members of the Council calling for a clear and strong response to the illegal, unprovoked and reckless actions by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea continue to be ignored. Such an attitude does not sound as though the escalation gives reason for caution anymore. On the contrary, it triggers the drive of the military State of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to continue with its illegal policies. Through its inaction, the Security Council has conveyed to North Korea that for them actions have no consequences.

The steadfast development of the WMD, ballistic-missile and nuclear programmes are taking a heavy toll on the people of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and the overall humanitarian situation there. We are concerned about the continuous deterioration of human rights and violations in the country and the regime's oppression in that regard. While the gravity of the humanitarian situation is as dire as human rights violations in the country, we reiterate our concern that the country's regime is committing brutal human rights violations to expand its capacities as a proliferator. As de-escalation measures, we call on the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to reinstate the moratorium on intercontinental ballistic missile launches, which was abolished last year, and its escalatory actions on the Korean peninsula, by taking steps to reverse its WMD and nuclear programme, cease cyberattacks, destabilizing activities in cyberspace and human rights violations and abuses, including censorship,

discrimination, abductions and killings, and focus on addressing the humanitarian situation of its own people, as well as reopen communication channels and allow the return of the United Nations international staff, including the Resident Coordinator in the country.

In conclusion, we urge North Korea to refrain from further tests, to fully implement the Security Council resolutions and to open the door to unconditional dialogue for ending fully, transparently, comprehensively and irreversibly its WMD, ballistic and nuclear programme, thereby contributing to the denuclearization of the Korean peninsula and global peace and security.

Mrs. Paolini (France) (*spoke in French*): I thank Mr. Khiari for his briefing.

France condemns in the strongest possible terms North Korea's launches of a short-range ballistic missile and an intercontinental-range ballistic missile, on 17 and 18 December, respectively.

As the year draws to a close, our assessment of the situation is cause for particular concern. Never before has North Korea launched so many missiles, including intercontinental-range ballistic missiles — 31 ballistic missiles in 2023, including 5 intercontinental ballistic missiles, and three attempts at space launches using ballistic missile technology. At the same time, North Korea is pursuing its illicit nuclear activities, in particular at the Punggye-ri test site.

The Security Council must not remain silent in the face of those flagrant and repeated violations of its resolutions. In the face of this dangerous escalation, it is unacceptable for the members of the Council to ignore the consequences of failing to unanimously condemn North Korea's illegal actions — to do so would be to give North Korea carte blanche to continue its provocations and would send a disastrous message to the entire international community.

Today's meeting must not be reduced to an exercise in rhetoric. We must remind ourselves of what is at stake. Resigning ourselves to inaction means allowing North Korea to pursue its *fait accompli* strategy, to the detriment of international and regional peace and security. We cannot accept a future global reality in which proliferation is commonplace and proliferation crises increase. The Council must therefore not allow the authority of its resolutions to be called into question. We must work together to restore unity

and to urge North Korea to put an immediate end to its destabilizing actions and to comply with its international obligations immediately.

The progress in North Korea's nuclear programmes is a threat to regional stability, international security and the international non-proliferation architecture. The international community must respond to that challenge in a united, responsible and resolute manner. To stop the escalation, the Council must enforce its own decisions. It must fully enforce all international sanctions adopted unanimously and combat all forms of circumventing them, especially in cyberspace.

France calls on North Korea to resume political dialogue with the international community and to comply with its international obligations. All players in the region must play a role in that regard. North Korea must accept the proposals for dialogue that have been put forward and return to the negotiation table in good faith. Our objective — the complete, verifiable and irreversible denuclearization of North Korea — remains unchanged.

Finally, France calls on North Korea to prioritize the well-being of its population rather than the development of its nuclear arsenal and to accelerate its efforts to reopen its borders and enable the return of humanitarian aid workers.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I would like to welcome to the Security Council Ambassador Kazuyuki Yamazaki, the new Permanent Representative of Japan, with whom we look forward to working closely in the coming days.

Mr. Yamazaki (Japan): I would like to thank you, Mr. President, for your very warm introductory remarks.

I thank Assistant Secretary-General Khiari for his briefing.

I must begin by expressing once again our condemnation in the strongest possible terms of the utterly unacceptable provocations by North Korea, in violation of multiple Security Council resolutions. The latest intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) is estimated to have impacted in the waters near Japan, just 250 km from Hokkaido. A number of fishing vessels were out at sea, and a number of aircraft were flying at the time of the launch. This irresponsible launch once again endangered vessels, exposed aircraft in the surrounding area to great risk and terrified Japanese citizens. We do not have any words to describe that

outrageous act other than to call it a grave threat to peace and security in the region and beyond.

In previous Council meetings this year, North Korea repeatedly and recklessly tried to justify its provocative acts. However, the simple fact remains that such acts are undoubtedly clear violations of the relevant resolutions of the Council. Let us squarely face what has happened. We must not forget the fact that North Korea has continued to ignore and deny its international obligations by pursuing its military ambitions at the expense of the welfare of the people of North Korea, who have great unmet needs. We should not ignore North Korea's violations and abuses of human rights, including of abductees from countries such as Japan and the Republic of Korea. We will no longer tolerate North Korea's disrespect of the Council and the Charter of the United Nations.

It is high time to stop North Korea from making false claims. Now is the time for the Council to recall our heavy responsibility and restore the unity displayed in 2017. Otherwise, the international community will not regard us as responsible Council members, to whom they have entrusted the responsibility to maintain international peace and security.

In a number of previous Council meetings this year and last year on the topic of non-proliferation and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, we witnessed that certain Council members expressed their views while blocking the Council from taking action. However, let us recall the fact that resolution 2397 (2017) and others were adopted unanimously in the Council. Those resolutions are not merely designed to exert pressure on or to punish North Korea, but to fight against the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. Under our heavy and collective responsibility for non-proliferation, which we all must value and uphold, those resolutions were adopted, they are still in force, and we have passed no resolution to override them. In short, all Member States, including North Korea, as well as all of us in the Chamber, should fully respect and abide by the existing resolutions, no matter how different our views may be.

Japan once again calls on all Member States, including each Council member here in the Chamber, to fully implement all the relevant resolutions and demand that North Korea immediately and fully comply with all the relevant resolutions, engage in diplomacy and resume substantive dialogue.

Ms. Gatt (Malta): I thank Assistant Secretary-General Khiari for his briefing.

The Democratic People's Republic of Korea has violated multiple Security Council resolutions twice in less than 12 hours. On Monday morning, local time, it tested yet another intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM), reportedly its solid-fuelled Hwasong-18, which travelled for about 1,000 km. That followed its launch of a short-range ballistic missile on Sunday.

Malta is deeply concerned about those latest developments. That is why we once again joined others in calling for a meeting of the Council. We condemn the launch in the strongest possible terms, and it is high time for the Council to do the same. The threat posed by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea extends beyond threatening stability in the region. Its nuclear and ballistic-missile programmes threaten international peace and security and gravely undermine the non-proliferation regime.

For more than a year, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea has continued to advance its nuclear and ballistic-missile programmes at an unprecedented pace. In 2023 alone, it has launched more than 30 ballistic missiles, including five ICBMs. It has conducted three satellite launches, successfully placing one in orbit in November. And it has engaged in technology and arms transfers with another country. All of those are in violation of multiple Council resolutions and the resolution 1718 (2006) sanctions regime. That is what happens when the Council fails to fulfil its responsibilities. Our collective silence and failure to act have emboldened the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. We can no longer afford that. We again call on the Council to speak with one voice to condemn the Democratic People's Republic of Korea's violation and to call on its leadership to return to diplomacy.

We call on the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to cease all confrontations, engage in meaningful dialogue towards denuclearization and adhere to its obligations under all relevant Security Council resolutions. It must completely, verifiably and irreversibly abandon its nuclear and ballistic missile programmes, return to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons and the safeguards under the International Atomic Energy Agency and to sign and ratify the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty.

Malta also remains deeply concerned about the dire humanitarian situation and the grave human rights violations perpetrated by the regime. They are inextricably linked to the advancement of its programme of weapons of mass destruction and require a holistic approach. According to the most recent estimates, more than 10 million people are thought to be malnourished and in need of emergency aid. The reopening of borders is essential to allow the re-entry of United Nations humanitarian staff and to carry out an urgently needed rapid needs assessment in the country.

In conclusion, we reiterate that our collective goal is peace and the denuclearization of the Korean peninsula. To achieve that, we must act decisively to ensure that the Democratic People's Republic of Korea refrains from further provocations and dangerous actions. As 2023 draws to an end, we hope that the Council's inaction on this file will do the same.

Mr. Abushahab (United Arab Emirates): I thank Assistant Secretary-General Khiari for his informative briefing, and I welcome the participation of both the Republic of Korea and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea in today's meeting.

The United Arab Emirates strongly condemns yet another unlawful intercontinental ballistic missile launch by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea on 18 December. The missile was reportedly the solid-fuelled Hwasong-18, signalling further advancements in the country's capabilities.

As 2023 draws to an end, we are mindful that the Democratic People's Republic of Korea has become increasingly emboldened and threatening, both to its neighbours and to the broader international community.

We are disappointed that, throughout the two years that the United Arab Emirates has served on the Council, a series of meetings and attempted products have been the sum total of the Council's action on this file, despite the country's actions continuing to gravely endanger international peace and security and undermine the global non-proliferation regime.

Undoubtedly, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea's missile tests and satellite launches over the past two years are directly linked to the implementation of its 2021 five-year military plan and the advancement of its nuclear weapons programme. The Democratic People's Republic of Korea has amplified its nuclear rhetoric and adopted a constitutional amendment that

further solidifies its policy on nuclear forces. As the Council has heard repeatedly, the country consistently demonstrates its intention to pursue nuclear weapons and ballistic missile programmes, in direct violation of relevant Security Council resolutions.

The latest launch is not an isolated incident but a continuation of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea's pattern of defiance against international law. This year alone, there have been 28 missile tests, including several of intercontinental range.

The Democratic People's Republic of Korea's failure to provide advance notice for its missile tests constitutes reckless behaviour, elevating the risk of accidental or miscalculated incidents. This not only endangers international civil aviation and maritime traffic, but also poses an imminent threat to civilians.

In the face of those challenges, it is imperative that diplomatic efforts and dialogue intensify to address the situation. The Council must unite in urging the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to return to the negotiating table without preconditions, to commit to complete, verifiable and irreversible denuclearization and to re-engage with international treaties and obligations, including the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons.

Amid those security challenges, it is crucial not to overlook the dire humanitarian situation within the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. We urge Pyongyang to facilitate the expedited and unimpeded return of international aid organizations and United Nations staff, including the Resident Coordinator, to the country.

The Security Council must act if we are to effectively address the threat posed by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and nuclear proliferation. It is vital that the members of the Council work together to present a united front against such violations of international law and work tirelessly towards peace and stability throughout the Korean peninsula.

Mr. Kariuki (United Kingdom): I thank Assistant Secretary-General Khiari for his briefing.

Unfortunately, we are once again gathered here to discuss the Democratic People's Republic of Korea's latest violation of Security Council resolutions. The United Kingdom unequivocally condemns the Democratic People's Republic of Korea's launch of yet another intercontinental ballistic missile, on

18 December, and the launch of a short-range ballistic missile, a day prior.

This is the Democratic People's Republic of Korea's thirty-first ballistic missile launch this year. It is the fifth launch of an intercontinental ballistic missile in 2023 — the most in any given year — and the third launch using solid fuel, demonstrating the country's desire to test its advanced capabilities. It is the latest in a series of the country's blatant acts of defiance of the Council's decisions — a clear and worrisome pattern of escalation since the start of the year.

The Democratic People's Republic of Korea's actions violate multiple Security Council resolutions and demonstrate a flagrant disregard for the international nuclear non-proliferation regime. The international community must be firm and united in our response to those violations.

And yet the Democratic People's Republic of Korea continues to be shielded by two Council members, further emboldening its unlawful behaviour. That cannot become the status quo. All States Members of the United Nations must respect and implement all relevant Council resolutions, including with regards to the transfer of technology to and from the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

We also call on the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to, first, abandon its illegal nuclear and ballistic weapons programmes, which are impoverishing its own people and destabilizing the wider region; secondly, to refrain from further provocations and return to compliance with the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons; thirdly, to sign and ratify the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty and; finally, to take up repeated and unconditional offers of dialogue. Diplomacy is the only viable option to making progress towards a sustainable peace on the Korean peninsula.

Mr. França Danese (Brazil): I thank Assistant Secretary-General Khaled Khiari for his briefing, and I welcome the participation of the representatives of the Republic of Korea and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea at this meeting.

Brazil condemns, in the strongest terms, the launch of an intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea on 18 December, in violation of Security Council resolutions. As this is the fifth ICBM test this year, we are especially concerned at indications that the Democratic People's Republic

of Korea may be increasingly using ICBM launches as political signalling to express its dissatisfaction at military exercises in the region. That is especially risky in the absence of notices to airmen and seamen or pre-announced launch windows. The lack of advance notice poses unacceptable risks to commercial air and maritime traffic, as well as to civilian populations.

As we close another year of high tensions in this file, the time is ripe for yet another inflection point. We must begin the new year by recognizing that tensions have reached an unacceptable level and must be brought down. It is incumbent on all of us to aid in that task.

The main actors in the region must all dial down their rhetoric and actions. The members of the Council must explore new methods to build confidence and promote de-escalation. Finally, members outside the Council can play an active role in supporting those efforts and expressing the international community's interest in a Korean peninsula that is peaceful, stable and free of nuclear weapons. Brazil will continue to do everything it can to support that goal.

Ms. Oppong-Ntiri (Ghana): I thank Assistant Secretary-General Khalid Khiari for his briefing and welcome the participation of the Permanent Representatives of the Republic of Korea and the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

The Security Council's meeting today takes place against the backdrop of heightened tensions on the Korean peninsula following the Democratic People's Republic of Korea's test of an intercontinental ballistic missile, the fifth such launch this year alone. That act by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea is in violation of its international obligations, as expressed in multiple Security Council resolutions. We deplore the latest launch, which has come on the back of several others, and we call on the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to fully comply with its international obligations under all relevant Security Council resolutions by refraining from further launches with ballistic missile technology.

I do not need to employ any hyperbole or find any fancy words to state the reality of the situation on the Korean peninsula. The threat posed by the tensions in the region to international security is serious and growing. The region is teetering on the brink of a major escalation in tensions. We are gravely concerned about the risk of military confrontation, including as a result of unintended effects or a miscalculation of actions. The

escalating tensions and threats of military action could lead to devastating consequences for the peninsula and for international peace and security. We therefore urge all the parties concerned to take immediate and concrete actions to de-escalate the tensions on the Korean peninsula.

We continue to urge the international community to implement pragmatic measures while simultaneously pursuing long-term engagement within a multilateral regional framework arrangement to restrict the Democratic People's Republic of Korea's weapons development programme. It is time for regional actors to lead the effort to address the security and development challenges of the region — regional solutions to regional problems. For our part as the Security Council, we must embrace our responsibility with unity of purpose and action to steer the region away from the path of catastrophe and preserve the peace and lives on the peninsula.

Mr. Fernandes (Mozambique): Mozambique would like to commend Ecuador for convening this open briefing. I wish to thank Mr. Khaled Khiari, Assistant Secretary-General for the Middle East, Asia and the Pacific, for his information and important update on the topic under consideration. We acknowledge the presence of the representatives of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and of the Republic of Korea in this meeting.

The situation in the Korean peninsula remains very delicate, and Mozambique emphasizes the importance of re-establishing communication channels, especially between military entities, to prevent unintended escalation. In its pursuit of peace, security and stability, Mozambique emphasizes the need for the utmost prudence and responsible actions by all stakeholders adopting a non-sanctions approach regarding the Korean peninsula. We therefore urge parties to refrain from any unilateral actions that might further strain the delicate state of détente in the region. As the seventieth anniversary of the Korean War Armistice Agreement approaches, it is a sobering reality that tensions persist, even after seven decades. Practical measures, such as dialogue and cooperation, are crucial to maintaining peace and stability in the region.

The recent launch of intercontinental ballistic missiles by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea has raised global concern. Those missiles, including the long-range solid-fuel intercontinental ballistic missile,

have the capability to reach most points on Earth. The international community, represented by the United Nations, calls upon Pyongyang to fully comply with its international obligations under the relevant Security Council resolutions. Let us collectively work to ensure a peaceful and secure Korean peninsula where dialogue prevails over confrontation and cooperation prevails over conflict.

The issue of non-separation of nuclear weapons is critical, not just for the Korean Peninsula but for the whole world. Achieving nuclear disarmament remains a thorny issue, and the non-proliferation of nuclear weapons faces ongoing challenges in balancing the dual goals of disarmament and non-proliferation. Mozambique echoes the vision reflected in the Secretary-General's Agenda for Disarmament to guarantee our common future. We strongly urge that all of us adopt the agreements we have made to prevent the use of new technologies as weapons. We believe that, with sufficient commitment, the excessive accumulation of weapons of significant destruction can be reversed, making the world a safer place. Indeed, commitment and collective effort can lead to positive change. In this world of complexities, where nations grapple with security concerns, finding common ground becomes essential. Let us envision a world where dialogue prevails over conflict, where cooperation transcends competition and where the safety of all humankind takes precedence.

In conclusion, as we strive for a safer planet, let us remember that everyone's actions contribute to the collective whole. Whether it is advocating for arms reduction, promoting dialogue or supporting peace, every effort matters. As we clearly stated yesterday in this Chamber (see S/PV.9511), peace-loving nations, including my own country, unequivocally advocate the total elimination of nuclear weapons and uphold the principle of general and complete disarmament.

Ms. Koumby Missambo (Gabon) (*spoke in French*): I would like to thank Deputy Secretary-General Khaled Khiari for his briefing.

The Democratic People's Republic of Korea again launched ballistic missiles on 17 and 18 December, the first short-range and the second long-range, both within the space of 24 hours. Those launches bring to four the number of intercontinental ballistic missile tests conducted in 2023 and confirm the escalation of the security threat to the Korean peninsula and the

world. My country condemns those umpteenth missile launches and remains concerned by their frequency and escalation, which go hand in hand with an equally disturbing escalation of belligerent and provocative rhetoric on both sides. We are all the more concerned that the increase in the number of those launches increases the risk of disaster resulting from an accident or miscalculation. The potential consequences are too great for such risks to be taken on such a regular basis. The cycle of actions and reactions, of invective and threats, must come to an end, and a realistic, lasting and viable solution must be found through dialogue and diplomacy in order to lead the world out of this zone of turbulence that has already lasted too long.

The language of firing is not a mode of expression with which the Council can be satisfied. We call on the parties to do their utmost to break out of this stance of confrontation and engage constructively in the quest for peace. The Security Council must fully play its role as guarantor of international peace and security, and that means enforcing its own resolutions. My country deplores the fact that, despite the parties' declarations of intent to resume talks on the North Korean nuclear issue, no concrete proposal to that end has been submitted to the Security Council thus far. We likewise deplore the lack of progress in the talks since 2018 and urge the parties to work towards the necessary de-escalation and rebuild the trust that is essential to diplomatic efforts.

I reiterate that, for Gabon, diplomacy and negotiation remain the preferred means of bringing the positions of the various parties closer together and achieving the denuclearization of the Korean peninsula. It is essential for the international community to reaffirm its determination to work towards the complete and verifiable denuclearization of the Korean peninsula, with a view to the peaceful coexistence of the countries of the region.

Mrs. Baeriswyl (Switzerland) (*spoke in French*): We thank Assistant Secretary-General Khiari for his briefing, and we welcome the participation of the representatives of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and the Republic of Korea in our deliberations.

Once again, the Council is meeting because of a ballistic missile launch by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. The Democratic People's Republic of Korea's development and operationalization of nuclear

delivery systems, together with its nuclear programme, represent a threat to the entire international community.

Switzerland condemns this fifth launch this year of an intercontinental ballistic missile. It takes place against the backdrop of a tense security situation, and Switzerland is concerned about the risk of escalation inherent in such an act. The use of nuclear weapons would have catastrophic humanitarian consequences. Their use would be difficult to envisage in compliance with the relevant rules of international law in general and international humanitarian law in particular. We must reinforce our efforts in favour of non-proliferation, disarmament and the maintenance of the nuclear taboo.

In the face of those repeated challenges, we must not waver in our collective duty. That is why the Council must assume its responsibilities.

In that regard, I would like to highlight three aspects.

First, those launches are a violation of legally binding resolutions and therefore of international law. It is therefore our collective duty to condemn the Democratic People's Republic of Korea's ballistic missile tests. The Democratic People's Republic of Korea is obliged to implement its obligations under the resolutions of the Council and to take concrete steps to abandon its nuclear weapons, ballistic missiles and related programmes in a complete, verifiable and irreversible manner. We recall that while the obligations arising from the resolutions apply primarily to the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, they also apply to all other States, which are required to effectively implement the Security Council's sanctions.

Secondly, the people of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea must not be left behind. Serious and systematic human rights violations and impunity for the perpetrators must cease. There is a link between the nuclear programme and human rights violations, and the Council should consider how it might further address that link. We welcome the signs of easing of the heavy restrictions put in place by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea in connection with the pandemic. Those restrictions should no longer be a major obstacle to humanitarian assistance. The opening of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea's borders must go hand in hand with rapid, safe and unhindered access for humanitarian aid. To achieve that, the entry of international personnel into the Democratic People's Republic of Korea is essential.

Thirdly, the Council and the United Nations as a whole have an important role to play in encouraging dialogue, de-escalation and the search for diplomatic solutions. There is a willingness to conduct and support a dialogue with the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, and we welcome any willingness on the part of the parties to engage in exchanges, as well as any de-escalation measures on their part. We also welcome the Secretary-General's call for good offices and encourage the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to engage in constructive dialogue with the Council and the United Nations system.

Disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation have always been a priority for the United Nations and the Council and are also a key recommendation in the New Agenda for Peace. We must not fail in that task. To find a political solution, the Council must break its silence. To be effective, the call for dialogue must be articulated around a united position. Switzerland encourages and supports all efforts in that direction.

Ms. Evstigneeva (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We thank Assistant Secretary-General Khaled Khiari for his briefing. We welcome the Permanent Representatives of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and the Republic of Korea to this meeting.

Russia is following with concern the new round of escalation on the Korean peninsula. We are particularly concerned about the pace of escalation on both sides, which is bringing the situation to a dangerous brink. A group of delegations, led by the United States, has been equally active in requesting Security Council meetings on the issue. Barely three weeks have passed since the most recent meeting on today's topic in this Chamber (see S/PV.9485), yet there has been no change in the content of the statements of the initiators of the debate nor in their approaches. Today they repeated their talking points almost verbatim, and there are no signs that they actually recognize that the current situation is at an impasse.

On 27 November, we already drew attention to the serious distortions in the remarks of certain Council members when considering the situation in the region, aimed only at condemning Pyongyang. We are convinced that such one-sided approaches are the root cause of the Council's inability to choose the right optics for discussing the mounting threats.

We are seeing both sides justify their mutually hostile moves in the current situation by invoking

their sovereign right to self-defence. We understand the motives behind such rhetoric on the part of both Pyongyang and Seoul. However, what cannot be explained is the inclusion of the United States among the so-called victims of North Korean provocations even though its borders are thousands of kilometres away from the Korean peninsula.

At the same time, we have been witnessing the American military machine being actively deployed in the region since the middle of last year. The Freedom Shield and Ssangyong exercises led by Washington were nothing but a show of force, which by definition cannot have a positive impact on the situation. The exercises involved two United States B-52 strategic bombers. Suffice it to mention that this aircraft was designed to deliver thermonuclear warheads and, during the Viet Nam war, it was used to brutally wipe out the civilian population of that country. A month ago, a United States carrier strike group led by aircraft carriers *USS Carl Vinson* and *USS Ronald Reagan* visited the port of Busan. And the day before yesterday, on 17 December, the United States submarine *USS Missouri* visited the South Korean port. The picture is looking more and more like preparations for an offensive operation. Claims that there are no hostile intentions in those actions appear ridiculous. Nevertheless, the United States delegation continues to insist that those steps have been taken in accordance with Article 51 of the Charter of the United Nations. One wonders what steps the United States believes would be commensurate for Pyongyang to take in response to such manoeuvres near its territory.

Russia has always called for a peaceful settlement of the entire range of issues on the Korean peninsula exclusively through political and diplomatic means, without external pressure or blackmail. We strongly urge the direct participants in the confrontation to come to the negotiating table.

External actors, first and foremost the United States, must make the only correct decision in the current situation, which is to refrain from further aggressive steps, including threats to overthrow the Government and shows of force and to create conditions for mutually respectful dialogue between the North and the South.

The Russian-Chinese draft political and humanitarian resolution remains on the table. By adopting it, the Council can contribute constructively to the process of regional settlement.

Mr. Geng Shuang (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): I thank Assistant Secretary-General Khiari for his briefing, and I welcome the Permanent Representatives of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and the Republic of Korea to this meeting.

At present, the Korean peninsula is witnessing ongoing tensions and intensified confrontation. That is not in the interest of any party and is something that China does not wish to see.

China takes note of the recent launches by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. We also note the moves made by a certain country to provide extended deterrence to its ally, as well as its dispatch of strategic weapons to the peninsula. If this vicious cycle of aggressive assertion of power cannot be broken, I am afraid the peninsula could see further escalation. Building mutual political trust and a favourable atmosphere is indispensable to the resolution of the peninsula issue. Current developments have fully proved that the efforts by a certain country to merely pursue stronger military alliances and increase deterrence and pressure will not help to resolve the problem. Such efforts are counterproductive and will trigger more problems and aggravate tensions, thereby making it harder to realize the goal of a denuclearized, peaceful and stable peninsula.

The urgent priority now is for all parties to stay calm, exercise restraint and work together to cool down the situation and create conditions for the resumption of talks. History has shown us that dialogue and negotiation is the fundamental way to resolve the peninsula issue. As long as the parties concerned can restart talks and work for the shared goal, the situation on the peninsula will remain stable and there will be hope for a political settlement. A certain country should face up to the cracks in the peninsula issue, discard the myth of exerting military pressure, put forward concrete, visible plans for dialogue and turn its remarks about unconditional dialogue into reality. Through practical actions, it can help advance the process of finding a political solution to the peninsula issue and thereby safeguard peace and stability on the peninsula.

In handling the peninsula issue, the Council should aim at easing the situation and facilitating talks and negotiations instead of simply imposing sanctions and exerting pressure or making its voice heard for the sake of voicing its opinion. Promoting a political settlement and enhancing solidarity and mutual trust

is crucial to safeguarding the Council's reputation. The draft resolution on the Democratic People's Republic of Korea jointly put forward by China and Russia focuses on the humanitarian front, which is relatively less sensitive. It is about showing goodwill and sending a positive signal. It is also about creating conditions and ramping up momentum for resuming talks and turning around the situation, thus facilitating a political solution. We call on those countries that have been demanding Council action on the peninsula question to seriously consider this draft resolution.

In conclusion, let me reiterate, as a close neighbour of the peninsula and a responsible major country, that China has been consistently committed to maintaining peace and stability on the peninsula and to realizing its denuclearization, and it will remain active in maintaining stability and promoting talks. China will also play a constructive role in promoting a political settlement, the early resumption of talks and engagement between the parties and the realization of long-term peace and stability in North-East Asia.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I shall now make a statement in my capacity as representative of Ecuador.

I thank the Assistant Secretary-General for the Middle East, Asia and the Pacific, Mr. Khaled Khiari, for his briefing.

Ecuador condemns the launch of an intercontinental ballistic missile by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea on 17 December. This new launch constitutes an act of provocation that violates Security Council resolutions and undermines the international disarmament and non-proliferation architecture. The actions of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea not only threaten the stability of the region, but also international peace and security. We express our solidarity with the Republic of Korea and Japan, whose populations are subjected to the risks posed by these tests.

Ecuador has stressed the need for the Council to issue a unified and clear message regarding the obligation of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to comply with international law, the Charter of the United Nations and the resolutions of this organ. At the beginning of this year, we expressed our concern about the high number of missile launches by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea recorded in 2022, an activity that has unfortunately continued in 2023. It is alarming that the Council has not been able

take concrete action in the face of all those tests. Given that, it is worth asking whether the inactivity on this issue will continue in 2024.

The Council should effectively contribute to the prevention of the proliferation of nuclear weapons in all its aspects in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, not encourage it. That is why Ecuador supports all efforts aimed at establishing dialogue and cooperation that seek to obtain a diplomatic and peaceful solution allowing for a decrease in tensions and the achievement of the complete, verifiable and irreversible denuclearization of the Korean peninsula.

I now resume my functions as President of the Council.

The representative of the United States has asked for the floor to make a further statement.

Mr. Wood (United States of America): I apologize for taking the floor, but I needed to respond to some points that were made by our Russian colleague.

She raised the issue of the United States being active, I believe, in increasing briefings on this issue. The reason we are active in raising this issue in briefings and calling for briefings is because of the repeated violations of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea of Security Council resolutions. And we will continue to raise them whenever those resolutions are violated by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. This is a matter of a threat to international peace and security, and Council members have a duty to raise this issue when there are violations of these resolutions.

Our Russian colleague pointed to a one-sided approach here in the Council to these issues. I would just remind our Russian colleague that it is the Democratic People's Republic of Korea that is under Security Council sanctions, not the United States. And we are raising these issues in the Council because of violations by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

Our Russian colleague also raised the issue of the United States being militarily active in the region. If she is referring to our military exercises, they are long-standing and defensive in nature. She knows that. We have raised this repeatedly in Council meetings. Raising that issue is just another excuse for the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to continue its threatening behaviour. Our exercises are going to continue, and they are to prepare to defend ourselves and our allies from

this increasing threat from the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

She raised the Russia-China draft resolution that would provide sanctions relief to the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. That would in essence be rewarding the Democratic People's Republic of Korea for its threatening behaviour. We do not believe that is the answer to trying to convince the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to end its provocative behaviour.

I would just say to our Russian colleague that the Council has an obligation to deal with this issue and we, as I said earlier, will continue to do that when we see these types of launches. I would hope that our Russian colleague will change course and support Council members in our efforts to try to get the Democratic People's Republic of Korea to change its threatening and provocative behaviour.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): The representative of the Russian Federation has asked for the floor to make a further statement.

Ms. Evstigneeva (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): I would like to say that the Security Council's main objective is resolving problems and threats to international peace and security, including on the Korean peninsula. Simply raising these problems in the Security Council is not enough. We call on the United States to change its approach and to truly prioritize political methods and dialogue and to stop sabre-rattling and increasing tensions in the region.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): The representative of the United States has asked for the floor to make a further statement.

Mr. Wood (United States of America): I apologize for taking the floor once again. I will be very brief. I just want to make it clear — if I did not do so earlier — that the United States has tried on numerous occasions to have a dialogue with the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. It has refused an unconditional dialogue. We have tried to be constructive here. I would agree that we do not want to just talk about the issue in the Council — we want to do something. What the Council needs to do is act on these violations. Therefore, I once again call on all Council members to take this major threat to international peace and security seriously. We need to take action via a Council product to deal with the reckless behaviour by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

Mr. Kim Song (Democratic People's Republic of Korea): The United States and other hostile forces have persistently committed acts constituting a military threat against the Democratic People's Republic of Korea throughout the year. They have become all the more undisguised and extremely dangerous, including as we speak now in December, close to the year's end.

The latest intercontinental ballistic missile launch conducted by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea is a warning counter-measure in the face of the grave situation. That notwithstanding, the United States and a few countries that are blindly following it have forcibly convened yet another meeting, to be recorded as a shameful one in the history of the United Nations, while illegally and unlawfully taking issue with the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, which exercised the undeniable just and legitimate rights of a sovereign State to self-defence, recognized by international law, including the Charter of the United Nations, and equally conferred upon all United Nations Member States. I strongly denounce and categorically reject the unfair and abnormal practice repeated yet again in the Security Council to deal unjustly with the legitimate exercise of the right to self-defence of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, at the brigandish demand of the United States and its followers.

Only 11 days ago, right here in this Chamber (see S/PV.9499), the United States wielded the veto on the draft resolution on a settlement of the Middle East situation (S/2023/970) on the grounds that it failed to mention the right of Israel to self-defence, patronizing and shielding Israel's crime of the mass killing of civilians as a legitimate exercise of the right to self-defence. Such being the case, it makes a mockery of and shows disregard for the Charter of the United Nations and is the height of tragicomedy in itself, as today the United States picks on the Democratic People's Republic of Korea's exercise of the right to self-defence, a warning measure taken to cope with the United States' military provocation.

Had it not been for the intolerable provocation by the United States and the Republic of Korea — who introduced a nuclear-powered submarine into the region of the Korean peninsula while talking about the end of the regime of the Democratic People's Republic

of Korea, against the aspirations and desire of the international community to see out this complex and unhappy year in tranquillity — then the representatives of United Nations Member States would not have to sit in this absurd and unwarranted meeting to argue for and against the just exercise of the right to self-defence of a United Nations Member State while wasting precious time that would be better spent on the discussion of substantial issues directly related to the maintenance of international peace and security, such as the mass killing atrocities of Israel, just days before the start of the new year.

At this juncture and as 2023 draws to a close, the international community needs to seriously reflect upon whether the situation on the Korean peninsula this year would have reached such an extreme phase as it has today if the United States and the Republic of Korea had ceased their acts of military provocation against the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, waking themselves from the illusion of an extended deterrence posture.

As witnessed by the world, this year is bound to be recorded as the most dangerous year, with the military security landscape on the Korean peninsula and the region plunged into an unprecedentedly serious crisis due to the frenzy of reckless military confrontation. From the beginning to the end of the year, the United States conducted joint military exercises of a clearly aggressive nature one after another with the Republic of Korea, including Ssang Yong, the “combined joint fire annihilation drill”, and Ulchi Freedom Shield. It also issued the Washington declaration, which made it a policy to use nuclear weapons against the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, and set in motion the so-called Nuclear Consultative Group, the mission of which is to plan, operate and implement a pre-emptive nuclear attack.

This year, the United States introduced six nuclear-powered submarines, including the strategic nuclear submarine *USS Kentucky*, into the area of the Korean peninsula under the guise of enhancing the regular visibility of strategic assets. It also pushed in nuclear aircraft carrier strike groups in succession, such as the *USS Nimitz* and *USS Ronald Reagan* and deployed B-1B and B-52H strategic bombers on more than 20 occasions.

The area of the Korean peninsula has literally been turned into a general depot for the strategic nuclear

assets of the United States and the most unstable zone in terms of nuclear war danger owing to the deployment of strategic nuclear assets and large-scale joint military exercises conducted incessantly by the United States all year round.

That reality clearly shows that the vicious cycle of the aggravated situation in and around the Korean peninsula is attributable to none other than the United States and the Republic of Korea, which have unilaterally heightened the level of military tensions in both rhetoric and action.

Certain countries lend their ear only to the one-sided argument of the United States and the Republic of Korea — that they were compelled to strengthen their extended deterrence posture under the pretext of countering so-called nuclear threats from the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. That is a typical example of the extreme double standards that undermine the truth. The international community needs to think at least once about the security concerns of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, on the opposite side from the United States and the Republic of Korea.

The United States and the Republic of Korea have brought in vast aggressive armed forces, including nuclear submarines and strategic nuclear bombers, that are more than enough to reduce the entire territory of our country to ashes, and are conducting provocative nuclear war exercises before us and at all times. If that is not a violation of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea's security interests, then what is it? Who would surrender to an enemy attacking with a sword? What country would remain indifferent or defenceless in the face of large-scale military exercises waged by an enemy State on its doorstep? A man without a future such as the lame duck President of the United States might remain indifferent to it, but that will never be the case for the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, which is a dignified sovereign State. Any reasonable person can easily judge that the Democratic People's Republic of Korea's counter-measures vis-à-vis the security threats from the United States and the Republic of Korea are an absolutely reasonable, normal and reflective response.

Overwhelmed by the high-handedness and arbitrariness of the United States, the Security Council has now been reduced to a mechanism of injustice that openly allows such brigandish logic and double

standards as to call into question who did it instead of what was done. The prevailing reality clearly shows that the biggest threat to international peace and security is coming from the Security Council itself. As long as the illegal and unlawful acts and double standards of the United States and its followers are allowed, the Security Council has no moral or legal qualifications to deal with issues pertaining to international peace and security.

If the United States and the forces that follow it seek again to divest our State of its sovereignty, clamouring about the implementation of the unlawful and unwarranted sanctions resolutions of the Security Council against the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, it will inevitably provoke the just exercise of the right to self-defence of a sovereign State enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations.

We take this opportunity to send a stern warning once again to the United States and the Republic of Korea. If they continue with their reckless and irresponsible military threat in an attempt to infringe upon the sovereignty and security interests of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, its armed forces will never remain an onlooker to it and the provokers will be held entirely responsible for all consequences arising from it. In future, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea will also continue to build up its strategic power to a more advanced level to contain and control any threat from the United States and its followers with immediate, overwhelming and decisive countermeasures. It will also work hand in hand with the righteous international community to establish a new, independent and peaceful international order based on the principles of respect for sovereignty, non-interference in internal affairs, justice and equality.

The President (*spoke in Spanish*): I now give the floor to the representative of the Republic of Korea.

Mr. Hwang (Republic of Korea): I thank you, Mr. President, for convening this urgent meeting of the Security Council. I also thank Assistant Secretary-General Khiari for his briefing.

The Republic of Korea condemns in the strongest possible terms the Democratic People's Republic of Korea's inter-continental ballistic missile (ICBM) launch on 18 December and its short-range ballistic missile launch on 17 December, intended to directly target the Republic of Korea. The Democratic People's Republic of Korea is continuing its reckless provocations

and the development of its unlawful nuclear and ballistic missile programmes in violation of multiple Council resolutions. It is indeed deplorable to see the Pyongyang regime wasting its scant resources on developing its weapons of mass destruction (WMD) programme, while turning a blind eye to the suffering of its own people and only taking care of a handful of the ruling class who are loyal to the regime in Pyongyang. If left unchecked, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea could be emboldened to engage in further provocations, threatening the entire international community. I am sure that no Council members want that.

The Council has expressed its determination to take further significant measures in the event of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea's provocations regarding resolution 2397 (2017). Yet we have done nothing over the years, and in the meantime, the frequency and intensity of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea's provocations have been drastically ramped up. More than 100 ballistic missile launches, including 13 ICBMs and three so-called satellite launches, since last year are unprecedented, even compared with the Democratic People's Republic of Korea's missile launch activity over the past three decades. As I pointed out at the previous meetings, it is deeply concerning to see this body locked in a stalemate and being ridiculed by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. Seeing the Council's continued failure to unite in condemning those dangerous provocations, let alone taking action in response, the Pyongyang regime is now rushing towards the point of no return.

Furthermore, my delegation also emphasizes that the Democratic People's Republic of Korea issue is no longer a regional one. It has already been spreading insecurity to other parts of the world and threatening the lives of ordinary people around the globe. We see Democratic People's Republic of Korea armaments and weapons in wars and conflicts, many banks and companies around the world attacked by North Korean hackers and revenues generated by illicit activities such as cryptocurrency theft and overseas workers, in direct violation of relevant Council resolutions, are then siphoned off to its WMD programmes.

My delegation would like to bring to the Council's attention the fact that the Democratic People's Republic of Korea nuclear threat has entered a new phase since last year. The Democratic People's Republic of Korea officially indicated the possible use of tactical nuclear weapons in 2022 and then passed a law in September

of that year that lowered the threshold for using nuclear weapons and even opened the door for a pre-emptive nuclear attack. Furthermore, the North Korean leader, Kim Jong Un, has overseen and guided numerous drills of North Korean military units on the spot for the deployment and operation of tactical nuclear weapons. From the security perspective of the Republic of Korea, not only ICBMs, but the entirety of its ballistic missile programmes, including short-range ballistic missiles, pose a grave threat to our national security. Against such a menacing and existential threat, the Republic of Korea must, and will, take all necessary measures to protect the lives and safety of our people by maintaining a robust, combined defence and deterrence posture. We will be relentless in response to the Democratic People's Republic of Korea's continued provocations in cooperation with the United States and Japan. We will be tireless and will prevail in the contest of resolve vis-à-vis the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. At the same time, we reiterate our position that the door for dialogue and negotiation remains wide open without any preconditions.

The Democratic People's Republic of Korea is again attempting to shift blame to others in a false endeavour to establish a pretext for the unlawful launches of ballistic missiles. However, we should not put the cart before the horse. The Democratic People's Republic of Korea's ever-growing unlawful nuclear and missile threats are the very reason that we are strengthening extended deterrence cooperation with the United States, not the other way around. On 17 December, which was one day before the ICBM launch and the twelfth anniversary of the passing of Kim Jong Il, the father and predecessor of the current North Korean leader, the *Rodong Sinmun*, the official newspaper of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea's Workers' Party, exalted the late leader for the nuclear weapons programme's great national historic achievement. That is yet another example that clearly shows that the Democratic People's Republic of Korea's missile launches, including the ICBMs this time, are based on its own playbook.

Faced with such a grave threat, the Council must stand united and speak with one voice. In that regard, my delegation urges the two permanent members that are hesitant to take additional sanctions measures at least to join us in sending the following three messages. This is the common ground that I am sure the Council, which bears the primary responsibility for maintaining

international peace and security, can agree upon despite different views on additional sanctions.

First, the Council must condemn the Democratic People's Republic of Korea's continued provocations and continued development of its nuclear and ballistic missile programmes.

Secondly, the Council must reaffirm the goal of the complete, verifiable and irreversible denuclearization of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, as repeatedly agreed in multiple Council resolutions.

Thirdly, the Council should stress the importance of the full implementation of all relevant Council resolutions, whose sanctions regimes are the most sweeping and comprehensive in terms of subject, scope and level.

That is the absolute minimum for which the Council must stand united and the starting point needed to reverse the trend of impunity regarding North Korea. Let us take a unified stand to reverse the current trend. Let us take a determined step in the name of the Security Council.

The meeting rose at 4.30 p.m.