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NOTE BY THE PRESIDENT OF THE SECURITY COUNCIL

The attached letter dated 26 September 1990 from the Permanent Observer of the Republic of Korea to the United Nations was addressed to the President of the Security Council. In accordance with the request therein contained, the letter is being circulated as a document of the Security Council.

Annex

Letter dated 26 September 1990 from the Permanent Observer of  
the Republic of Korea to the United Nations addressed to the  
President of the Security Council

I have the honour to take the occasion of the forty-fifth session of the United Nations General Assembly to restate the position of the Government of the Republic of Korea on the question of its United Nations membership.

The opening of the session has already witnessed a welcome development in that the Principality of Liechtenstein has been admitted to United Nations membership with the blessing of all of the Member States, thus leaving only the membership of the Republic of Korea on the pending agenda of the United Nations.

What draws our attention is the fact that many speakers, at the opening session as well as during the ongoing general debate, underlined the renewed importance of the principle of universality as enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations. They reaffirmed their conviction that all States able and willing to carry out the obligations of the Charter should be admitted to this universal Organization.

Such a prevailing atmosphere within the United Nations, together with the positive international political developments taking place around the world, further dictates that the admission of the Republic of Korea to United Nations membership should no longer be delayed.

It is simply an anomaly in the 45 years of United Nations history that the Republic of Korea, fully eligible for membership, should remain outside the United Nations despite its standing in and contribution to the world community.

The Republic of Korea now maintains diplomatic relations with 142 countries out of the 160 States Members of the United Nations. It also enjoys full membership in most of the international organizations, including 15 specialized agencies of the United Nations. For all its observer status, the Republic of Korea has also contributed to the important work of the United Nations.

The Government of the Republic of Korea has long maintained a position that the admission of both Koreas to the United Nations, as an interim measure pending reunification, would help reduce tension existing between the two Koreas and open the way to turn confrontation into co-operation between the two sides within the framework of the United Nations.

The recent unification processes of the two Yemens and the two Germanies, which maintained separate membership as divided countries in the United Nations for many years, eloquently attest to such a belief and, thus, disprove the North Korean contention that separate membership would perpetuate national division. It is hard to understand why only separate membership of both Koreas in the United Nations perpetuates national division, while simultaneous diplomatic relations of both

Koreas with more than 80 countries as well as their separate membership in various United Nations bodies do not.

North Korea has recently put forth a new proposal on joint United Nations membership with a single seat, arguing that "this proposal is the only reasonable approach to the solution of admission to the United Nations".

During a recent officials' meeting between the two Koreas, North Korea further proposed that both Koreas apply for joint United Nations membership with a single seat before the end of this year. The North Korean formula contains, inter alia, (a) alternating representation between the two Korean sides on a monthly basis or at mutually agreed intervals; (b) joint actions on matters of agreement but abstentions on issues which cannot be agreed upon.

One can easily conclude that the North Korean formula is unprecedented, as even North Korea admits, and impracticable. Among other things, it is incompatible with the provisions of the Charter of the United Nations. Regardless of North Korea's wishes, any agreement on single seat membership before unification between the two Koreas will not amount to the formation of a "State" as defined in the Charter and in generally accepted international practice. Furthermore, it is impossible to envisage any workable agreement on a wide range of complicated issues between the two sides, which have pursued different policies and interests for more than 45 years.

The Government of the Republic of Korea attaches great importance to the South-North dialogue. On any inter-Korean issues, it is willing to engage in dialogue with North Korea. This is the reason why we are making an effort in good faith to keep the first ever North-South Prime Ministers' meeting going.

However, it is necessary to draw a clear distinction between inter-Korean issues and the issue of United Nations membership. While all inter-Korean issues - political, military, economic, humanitarian, etc. - are to be resolved between the two Koreas, United Nations membership is essentially a matter between States Members of the United Nations and the States wishing to join.

If the United Nations is to wait until North Korea agrees to the admission of the Republic of Korea to United Nations membership, it will amount to giving North Korea the power to decide on the issue of the Republic of Korea's United Nations membership.

While the Republic of Korea seeks its admission to United Nations membership, desirably together with North Korea, it is entirely up to North Korea whether or not to join the United Nations. However, should North Korea, for any reason, choose to stay outside this Organization, this choice should not hinder in any way the entry of the Republic of Korea into the United Nations.

As the current session of the General Assembly progresses, the legitimate cause of Korea's United Nations membership will receive wide-ranging support from States Members of the United Nations.

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I should be grateful if you would have this letter circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(Signed) Hong-Choo HYUN  
Ambassador

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