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Strengthening of the United Nations system

Note verbale dated 14 November 2024 from the Permanent Mission of the Republic of Korea to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

The Permanent Mission of the Republic of Korea to the United Nations has the honour to transmit the Seoul Declaration of the Council of Presidents of the General Assembly, which was adopted at the end of the sixth meeting of the Council (see annex). The meeting was hosted by the Republic of Korea and convened in Seoul on 29 and 30 October 2024, under the chairship of the President of the fifty-sixth session of the General Assembly, Han Seung-soo.

The Permanent Mission of the Republic of Korea to the United Nations has the honour to request that the present note verbale and its annex be circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda item 123.



**Annex to the note verbale dated 14 November 2024 from the
Permanent Mission of the Republic of Korea to the United Nations
addressed to the Secretary-General**

SEOUL DECLARATION 2024

OF

THE COUNCIL OF PRESIDENTS OF

THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY

Seoul, Republic of Korea

30 October 2024

The Council of Presidents of the United Nations General Assembly (UNCPGA) convened its Annual Meeting in Seoul, Republic of Korea, from 29 to 30 October 2024, under the chairmanship of H.E. Dr. Han Seung-soo, President of the 56th Session of the United Nations General Assembly. The Seoul 2024 meeting was the sixth formal gathering since the Council's revival in October 2022.

The Council reaffirms the principles and purposes of the United Nations Charter and its furtherance of peace and security, economic and social development, and human rights.

Nine former Presidents of the United Nations General Assembly were in attendance. Their distinguished guest, H.E. Mr. Philemon Yang, President of the current 79th Session of the United Nations General Assembly, delivered the keynote statement. The Council expressed its full support of his priorities under the theme "Unity in Diversity" with particular attention to the revitalization of the General Assembly and strengthening of the Office of the President of the General Assembly.

The Council expressed deep concern about the growing number of armed conflicts around the world, increasing polarization in the international community, and the rising geopolitical divide that could lead to great power confrontation. The Council regretted the alarming trend of grave systematic violations of the United Nations Charter, international law, the Geneva Conventions, and resolutions of the United Nations General Assembly and Security Council. With terrorism and war crimes increasing and the United Nations itself under assault, the Council noted that multilateralism is in great danger and bold leadership in support of the United Nations is urgently called for.

Regarding conflict in the Middle East, the Council renewed its condemnation of the horrific attacks by Hamas which resulted in over 1,200 Israelis civilian casualties. Also, the Council condemned the ongoing systematic and indiscriminate destruction of Gaza by Israel which, one year thereafter, has resulted in a catastrophic humanitarian crisis inclusive of the deaths of over 43,000 innocent civilians including an estimated 16,000 children.

The Council strongly rejected the recent passing of the law by the Israeli Parliament declaring UNRWA illegal and banning UNRWA from carrying out its mandated operations. It noted that denying UNRWA its responsibility to provide care and support to the Palestinians and others in Gaza would only aggravate the already existing great humanitarian crisis and would constitute a violation of international

law as well as relevant UN resolutions. The Council called for immediate unimpeded humanitarian access to allow UNWRA and other humanitarian organizations to perform their indispensable duties. The Council expressed deep concern at the death of over 220 dedicated United Nations staff in Gaza, most from UNRWA, since the conflict began which represents the highest death toll of United Nations staff in any conflict.

Further regarding the situation in the Middle East, the Council also demanded the immediate release of all hostages and prisoners, and a permanent ceasefire as soon as possible. The Council welcomed ceasefire negotiations taking place in Qatar and urged all parties to the conflict to continue sincere diplomatic efforts as a first step towards creating the right conditions for implementing a comprehensive peace plan based on the two-state model, in accordance with relevant Security Council and General Assembly resolutions, as well as economic cooperation in the region.

Concerning the escalation of the war to Lebanon, the Council condemned Israel's attacks on the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) positions and noted with deep concern some 2,000 civilians already killed in the war. The Council was very concerned by the statement of the Israeli Prime Minister that the United Nations Secretary-General should move UNIFIL out of the combat zone. UNIFIL is mandated by the Security Council and all members of the United Nations should support it fully and not endanger its security in any way.

The Council noted with deep concern the ballistic missile attacks that both Iran and Israel have launched against each other. There is still increasing tension and grave potential escalation of further missile attacks which could also draw other regional and global powers into a wider regional war which should be prevented at all costs, including through well-established preventive diplomacy mechanisms of the United Nations Organization.

The Council concluded that the United Nations General Assembly could have a meaningful and even decisive role in the Middle East by considering the option to convene an emergency special session. The Council decided to monitor closely the situation in the Middle East and offered its good offices for the use of the President of the General Assembly in this regard.

The Council encouraged the United Nations Secretary-General to show strong leadership including to consider using powers granted to him in Article 99 of the United Nations Charter. In that vein, the Council reiterated its earlier call that the Secretary-General put forward a comprehensive peace initiative based on the two-state solution. The Council further deplored the action taken by Israel to declare the Secretary-General "persona non grata" and called upon Israel to rescind immediately this decision, considering it a grave violation the United Nations Charter.

Concerning the war between Russia and Ukraine, the Council noted with great concern that the war has continued unabated in Ukraine and that Ukrainian forces also have occupied a small area of Russia. Missile strikes by both warring sides continue hitting targets both in Ukraine and Russia, causing civilian casualties and destruction of civilian infrastructure. The Council was deeply concerned about the engagement of North Korean troops by Russia in the region and noted that their potential use in the territory of Ukraine would be a grave violation of international law and of relevant United Nations Security Council resolutions and would constitute a dangerous precedent.

The Council also noted that the war between Russia and Ukraine has dangerous escalation potential with major nuclear powers involved directly and indirectly. The Council emphasized that nuclear war should be prevented at all costs. The Council urged the United Nations Secretary-General to consider the option of using Article 99

as a way of alerting the United Nations Security Council to the escalatory potential of the war, including accidental or intentional use of nuclear weapons.

The Council called for an immediate cessation of hostilities between Russia and Ukraine and considered a ceasefire as an absolute necessity to prevent escalation and massive loss of life for both sides.

The introduction of armistice does not predict the outcome of the negotiated settlement nor the conditions to start formal talks. Also, some members of the Council repeated its call in its Doha Declaration of May 2024 for the launch of a credible peace process, based on the Istanbul principles of April 2022 for an eventual agreement to include the neutrality of Ukraine, along with a decision on the self-determination of the occupied territories in the form of a referendum under the auspices of the United Nations.

The Council repeated its request in its Declaration of September 2024 on the Summit of the Future to the United Nations Secretary-General to present options for a peaceful resolution of the war between Russia and Ukraine using various United Nations tools for resolving other major conflicts during past decades, noting that the convening of a Great Powers Peace Conference on Ukraine should be seriously considered.

The Council noted that the United Nations General Assembly has adopted a number of resolutions on the war between Russia and Ukraine and emphasized that the Assembly could have a key role in resolving the war in Ukraine. The Council considered the option that the Assembly ask the United Nations Secretary-General to undertake good offices and fact-finding missions to the capitals of warring parties and other relevant powers in the region and to consider whether and how the United Nations Organization's long experience in transitional administrations, organizing and monitoring elections, peacebuilding and peacekeeping could be used toward the resolution of the war. The Council offered its good offices to the current President of the General Assembly for any further action on the matter.

In addition to conflicts in Middle East and the war between Russia and Ukraine, the Council expressed its grave concern about the ongoing conflict in Sudan, particularly the deteriorating humanitarian situation and threat of impending famine and called upon the international community to support the efforts of the United Nations Organization to respond more effectively to the crisis.

The Council discussed the opportunities and challenges of the phenomenon of rapidly evolving artificial general intelligence. It decided to ask the Council's Chair to convene an expert panel on artificial general intelligence and to task it to provide suggestions on a framework for global regulations and purpose of governance of artificial general intelligence and how to make best use of this phenomenon in the United Nations system.

The Council agreed to authorize the development and creation of a trust fund to support the administration and program of work of the Council. It also decided to take steps to request an invitation from the United Nations General Assembly to participate as a permanent observer in its activities.

Finally, the Council of Presidents of the United Nations General Assembly expressed its sincere gratitude to its hosts, H.E. Han Duck-soo, Prime Minister of the Republic of Korea, and H.E. Foreign Minister Cho Tae-yul of the Republic of Korea, as well to their staffs for graciously and expertly hosting the Council's Annual Meeting and for generously supporting the Council's administration of its program of work.