

Statement by Dr. J. Enkhsaikhan, Chairman of Blue Banner on
“Mongolia’s nuclear-weapon-free status: a regional dimension”

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Allow me first of all to thank RECNA and other organizers of this Third workshop on “Denuclearization of Northeast Asia and of the World – Developing a Comprehensive Approach to a NEA-NWFZ for inviting me to participate in this important forum and to speak at the session on “Players for the Denuclearization of NEA”. I was asked to speak on Mongolia’s nuclear-weapon-free status: a regional dimension.

Background

1. *Mongolia’s nuclear-weapon-free status* (NWFS)

Mongolia is located between two nuclear-weapon states. Throughout the second half of the XX century, especially during the *cold war*, it was allied with one of the neighbors and hosted the latter’s military bases. As such, it was held hostage to the tense relations between the two neighbors and at the height of their dispute could have easily been drawn into their armed conflict. Hence in September 1992, when the last Russian troops were being withdrawn from the country, Mongolia declared its territory a nuclear weapon-free zone.

The objective of the initiative was to ban stationing of nuclear weapons or parts of such weapons system on the Mongolian territory and, in return, acquire security assurances from the five nuclear-weapon states (P5).

In early 1990s, with the normalization of Sino-Russian relations and the virtual end of the *cold war*, the external environment has undergone fundamental changed. The two neighbors have agreed not to use territories and airspace of neighboring third countries against each other. That served as a convenient external political condition for Mongolia’s initiative.

Internally, Mongolia introduced basic political and economic reforms. In foreign affairs, it discarded the ideologically driven policy and reliance on one state or a group of states for its security and, instead, has put its own national interests and those of the international community as the basis of its foreign policy. Instead of relying on alliance with one great power for its security, it has opted to ensure its security primarily by political and diplomatic means, responding to the imperatives of common security.

It is in this spirit, and bearing in mind its *cold war* era experience, including witnessing over 25 percent of nuclear weapon tests on its doorsteps and the risk of being drawn into possible conflict of its nuclear-armed neighbors, in 1992 the President of Mongolia has declared at the United Nations General Assembly the country a NWFZ and that it would have that status internationally

guaranteed. Mongolia's initiative was welcomed by the international community as contributing to regional stability and confidence-building.

However, the *main challenge* in materializing the initiative was connected with its geo-political location since it could not form part of any traditional (regional) NWFZ that could be established in the Asia-Pacific region. Though the P5 recognized Mongolia as a 'unique case', they were and still are hesitant to acknowledge it as a single-State NWFZ since, in their view, that might set a precedent that could discourage others from establishing traditional NWFZs.

Despite the above challenge, in the past two decades Mongolia worked tirelessly with the P5 and UN membership, as a result of which its nuclear-weapon-free status (NWFS) has received wide international recognition and support. Hence, in 2000 the P5 have made a joint statement whereby they provided Mongolia with a political assurance that they would not use or threaten to use nuclear weapons against it. Mongolia welcomed the joint statement not so much as an assurance, but as a significant step in institutionalizing the status. Further talks with the P5 resulted in 2012 in signing of parallel Mongolian and the P5 joint declarations, whereby Mongolia reaffirmed its commitment not to allow stationing of nuclear weapons on its territory, while the P5 - to respect its unique status and not to contribute to any act that would violate that status.

Mongolia welcomed the 2012 P5 joint declaration as a valuable commitment tailored to its geo-political location and relevant to its actual security needs. When providing the assurances, however the P5 have pointed out that they would have difficulties in providing legally based assurances, since that would set a precedent..

2. Present state of the status. In 2000 Mongolia has adopted a legislation that defined the status at the national level and criminalized acts that would violate the status. In 2006 and 2014 the Government has submitted reports to the State Great Hural (parliament) on the implementation of the legislation as well as the measures to be taken for its fuller implementation.

At the international level, the UN General Assembly in its resolution 53/77 D in 1998 entitled "Mongolia's international security and nuclear-weapon-free status" has welcomed Mongolia's initiative and has since been considering every second year the item with a similar title.

Mongolia believes that its nuclear-weapon-free status would be truly credible and viable, and could, like other regional NWFZs, contribute to regional peace and security when it is gradually integrated in the regional cooperative security arrangement or structure.

3. ARF factor. The ARF was designed to foster constructive dialogue and consultations on political and security issues of common interest and concern, and make significant contributions to confidence-building and conflict prevention in the APR.

Due to its mixed membership, the ARF is an ideal forum where non-proliferation and disarmament issues could effectively be considered, if not actually negotiated, since almost one third of its membership are parties to the Bangkok or Rarotonga NWFZ treaties, while some of its other non-nuclear-weapon states might not be able to join these zones due to political considerations or geographical reasons. Also ARF membership includes three recognized and three *de facto* nuclear-weapon states, while other three nuclear capable states are under extended nuclear umbrella. For these reasons Mongolia believes that regional approach to non-proliferation and nuclear disarmament could be relevant and useful.

4. Essence of Mongolia's nuclear-weapon-free status. The main aim of Mongolia's initiative was and still is to ensure its own nuclear security, contribute to the common efforts to promote greater transparency and confidence-building in the region as well as to nuclear non-proliferation in the region.

In 2000, following Mongolia's adoption of its legislation, when the P5 have made a joint statement providing it with negative and positive political security assurances, Mongolia has indicated that to be properly institutionalized, the status needed to have legally-binding assurances and that, bearing in mind Mongolia's location, the assurance needed not be generic or broad, but Mongolia-specific. It explained that what was meant was that the P5 needed to officially recognize the status, vow to respect it and not to contribute in any way to the performance of acts that would violate it.

As a result of joint efforts and bearing in mind Mongolia's reasoning, in 2012 the P5 and Mongolia were able to sign the parallel declarations that defined the status. While Mongolia reaffirmed its pledge not to allow the stationing of nuclear weapons on its territory, the P5 in their joint declaration have taken note of Mongolia's legislation, and pledged, as agreed, to respect the status and not to contribute to any act that would violate it.

5. Today Mongolia's status is part and parcel of the nuclear non-proliferation regime. Like the traditional NWFZs, its obligations go further than the NPT commitments. Bearing in mind the developments in some other parts of the world, Mongolia's commitment is not limited only to prohibiting stationing of nuclear weapons on its territory. It would prohibit placing on its territory of nuclear-weapon-related support facilities, such as communication, surveillance and intelligence-gathering facilities as well as air navigational installations designed to serve nuclear strategic systems. This is important since the current trend among the nuclear-weapon states is still to modernize their nuclear forces, develop and deploy new types of nuclear weapons or missiles in line with their policies of enhancing survivability of their nuclear weapons, their ability to penetrate missile defenses, introducing new generations of missiles or developing military technology to counter such weapons or systems. Nuclear concepts and policies still do not preclude the use or threat of use of such weapons. The recent disturbing developments in and around Ukraine and the *cooling* of relations between Russia on the one hand and the US and the most of Europe can lead to another *cold war* with all the possible harmful consequences,

including perhaps accelerating works on building the destabilizing missile defenses and resultant counter-measures in Europe and Asia.

Therefore I believe that such meetings as this one, with the active participation of scholars and experts in the fields of nuclear non-proliferation, disarmament and regional security, is seen by Mongolia, and by the Blue Banner in particular, as an important forum to exchange views and generate helpful ideas. Thus discussion of a possible comprehensive agreement for security in Northeast Asia, with its six elements (termination of the state of war, creation of a permanent council on security, mutual declaration of no hostile intent, provisions of assistance for nuclear and other energy, termination of sanctions and establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone) provides a good opportunity to share ideas on how to approach the issue, what would be the challenges and how they could be addressed. Blue Banner, on its part, is prepared to share Mongolia's experience in establishing an internationally recognized and accepted nuclear-weapon-free status, the challenges it faced and how they are being addressed. Our experience shows the important role that committed NGOs can play in promoting the goals of non-proliferation.

6. Parallel regional initiatives of Mongolia. Besides promoting its nuclear-weapon-free status at the regional level, Mongolia has also proposed to initiate dialogue process (*Ulaanbaatar dialogue*) on Northeast Asian multilateral security, the main aim of which is to contribute to the extent possible to enhancing trust among the states of the region. It is not intended to take up the issues discussed at the Six Party Talks, but address broader issue of common interest such as some issues of economic cooperation, environmental challenges and how to address them, non-traditional security threats, military transparency, regional stability, etc. Mongolia's previous initiative was intended to promote dialogue at the governmental level, to which some states were to ready. Hence this initiative is intended to start informal dialogues at the 1.5 track level. In order to create free environment to express personal views and opinions from the very beginning in June of this year the Institute for Strategic Studies of Mongolia has organized a workshop in Ulaanbaatar. It was attended by representatives of the academia and experts of 9 countries, including all NEA-n countries and the United States. The informal character of the meeting served as a useful forum for exchange of views and it was decided to hold such fora annually, perhaps focusing on specific sets of issues.

Another idea put forward by Mongolia is to see if and how a *nuclear-weapon-free zone* could be established in Northeast Asia, an issue that is also being considered here as an essential element of a comprehensive approach to security in Northeast Asia. This is seen in Mongolia as a practical measure in promoting security by political and legal means. As President of Mongolia has pointed out during his statement at the High-level meeting on nuclear disarmament last year, such an endeavor would not be easy and would require courage, political will and perseverance, but it is doable, if not right away. The geopolitics in the region and prospects of possible regional arms race requires that an attempt be made to see if and under what conditions a NEA-NWFZ could be established. Despite some degree of skepticism and doubt, it is an issue that needs to be

addressed. I am happy that this comprehensive approach to security in Northeast Asia includes NEA-NWFZ as an important part of the package.

When Mongolia in 1992 put forth its nuclear-weapon-free zone initiative, there were some skeptics and doubters, including in Mongolia itself. But common sense and common interest can overcome the sense of pessimism. The NEA-NWFZ issue is not a new one; it has been discussed many times at the academic and expert levels and now needs to be looked at from practical reality and necessity. A number of NEA-n civil society organizations, including the Blue Banner, have organized informal discussion of this issue on the margins of NPT Prepcoms. Perhaps the issue could be taken up in a separate forum, not necessarily on the margins of other conferences, which address other equally important issues. As representative of the Blue Banner had pointed out, if need be it could look into the possibility hosting such an informal meeting.