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XX CONSULTATIVE MEETING

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XX REUNION CONSULTIVA

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OPENING ADDRESS BY MR. CHUN YONG-DUC
HEAD OF THE DELEGATION OF THE REPUBLIC OF KOREA

(Agenda item 3)

(submitted by the Republic of Korea)

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Mr. Chairman,

On behalf of the Government of the Republic of Korea, which hosted the XIXth ATCM last year, I wish to extend my warmest congratulations on your election as Chairman of the XXth ATCM. May I also take this opportunity to express my appreciation and gratitude, through you, to the Netherlands Government for hosting the XXth ATCM in this historic city of Utrecht.

I look forward to a significant progress to be made, as was done in the Seoul Meeting, on many important items of the agenda. Crucial among those issues, in my view, are the implementation of the Protocol on Environmental Protection to the Antarctic Treaty, the setup of a liability regime, and the establishment of a permanent Secretariat to the Treaty.

Mr. Chairman, the need for the Protocol to enter into force as soon as possible seems to become increasingly pressing. At the last ATCM, the Republic of Korea stated that it would ratify the Environmental Protocol upon completing the necessary legal procedures. I am now delighted to report that the Republic of Korea became the 20th Consultative Party to ratify the Protocol on 2 January of this year. We are approaching the number which is required for the Protocol's entry into force, and, therefore, the remaining Parties yet to ratify it are urged to conclude their ratification procedures without delay.

I am also pleased to inform you of our approval of the Measures. Subsequent to having approved last year those 186 Recommendations out of 204 that had been adopted up to the XVIIIth ATCM, my Government was in a position to approve on 18 April 1996 the five Measures adopted at the last Seoul ATCM, i.e. Measures 1(1995)-5(1995). Thus, we fully supported the elements contained in the said Measures for the purpose of the protection of the Antarctic environment.

Deeply aware of the importance of the Protocol, the Republic of Korea neither did wait nor is waiting for the formal coming into force of the Protocol, and has been steadily implementing a broad range of environmental measures at its Antarctic station relying on both its own resources and international cooperation. A joint inspection team, which is a good example of such cooperation, visited our station and noted the general environmental standards of the station.

Mr. Chairman, we established the Transitional Environmental Working Group (TEWG) as an interim arrangement so that it may essentially pave the way for the Committee for Environmental Protection (CEP) that is to be constituted by the Protocol when it comes into effect. Since the advent of the TEWG in the last ATCM, and throughout this year's ATCM, the TEWG has done tremendous work. I appreciate its significant contributions.

Every Consultative Party is committed to the full-fledged environmental protection system under the Protocol. However, as it stands with its present five Annexes, the Protocol is lacking a liability regime. The Republic of Korea, in this respect, acknowledges the substantial progress made in identifying the issues on adding another Annex to the Protocol

on Environmental Protection. We highly commend the work accomplished so far by the Experts Group under the able leadership of Prof. R. Wolfrum. We are eager to see that the group's objectives are achieved within a reasonable period of time, so that the Protocol may have its sixth Annex in due course.

The Republic of Korea continues to support the earliest possible establishment of a permanent Antarctic Treaty Secretariat. A Secretariat will enhance the efficient exchange of information among the Parties, and improve the awareness of the global community with regard to the measures taken in the Antarctic to preserve its unique ecosystem.

Mr. Chairman, the Republic of Korea has rather a short history in Antarctica having acceded to the Treaty only in 1986. However, the Republic of Korea attaches great importance to its membership in the Antarctic Treaty and to its active participation in the Antarctic Treaty System. The Korea Antarctic Research Program (KARP), initiated with the construction of King Sejong Station in 1988, has evolved in many different research areas such as geology, biology, oceanography, and meteorology. Through the Program, the Republic of Korea has participated actively in the Antarctic Treaty regime, including the major components thereof like CCAMLR, SCAR, and COMNAP. The KARP will continue its progress toward the understanding of the Antarctic environment and the best protection of our last pristine continent.

At the last ATCM in Seoul, we produced such good results as, first of all, a good start of the TEWG, secondly, the restructuring of the ATCM Recommendations as measures under Article IX of the Antarctic Treaty, thirdly, the invention of the pre-sessional document circulation system, just to name a few. We sincerely hope that this XXth ATCM will also be successful bringing a fruitful conclusion in each and every agenda item under your able chairmanship.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.