

Opening Address by the Head of the Delegation of the Republic of Korea

Mr. Chairman,

On behalf of the Korean delegation, I would like to congratulate you on your election as Chairman of the XXIII Antarctic Treaty Consultative Meeting. My delegation is confident that under your able guidance, this meeting will succeed in making substantial progress in major tasks before us. May I also take this opportunity to express my sincere gratitude to the Government of Peru for its warm hospitality, as well as for its excellent preparation for this meeting. In particular, we welcome the establishment of XXIII ATCM Homepage as a virtual secretariat that electronically distributes documents and information.

Mr. Chairman,

We are at the threshold of a new millenium. In the last century, Antarctica was discovered and landed by humans. Putting the conflicting sovereignty claims behind, we cherish this pristine continent devoted to peace and scientific research as stipulated in the Antarctic Treaty. For the last four decades, international cooperation on Antarctica has met and survived many challenges. ATCM has successfully kept its role as the coordinator of a wide range of values and expectations in regard to Antarctica. The recent introduction of comprehensive environmental protection regime for Antarctica is its notable achievement. Thus, peace, science and environmental protection have been the three pillars of Antarctic governance. My delegation believes that this meeting in Lima is a golden opportunity for us to assess the past and present, and to chart the future of the Antarctic Treaty System that will be timely and appropriate to the new millenium. In this regard, my delegation should acknowledge the significance of the initiative of New Zealand for organizing the invaluable ministerial visit to Antarctica in January of this year.

Mr. Chairman,

At this critical juncture in the history of Antarctica, there are many unfinished tasks before us. The first priority for this meeting is to make tangible progress toward the establishment of a liability regime. The key policy issues identified in the final work of Legal Experts Group wait for new approaches and conceptions for early solution. My delegation fully supports the idea that practical understanding of risks in Antarctica should be the basis of our discussion, thus a liability annex should reflect the real necessity of liability regime in Antarctica. At this stage, my delegation welcomes contributions made by a certain Parties to reorient liability discussion to sort out least common denominator by which we may move forward to consensus.

Another important task before us is to address the question of the permanent secretariat. My delegation urges the Parties not to let this issue continue to be a stumbling bloc to the efficient operation of Antarctic Treaty System. Given the urgency and significance of this question, my delegation sincerely hopes that substantial progress will be made during this meeting in a spirit of cooperation and compromise.

Another critical task on our agenda is to streamline the role and organizational aspects of the CEP and to help the CEP get started on its work at the earliest possible time. My delegation is of the opinion that this issue should be considered from the perspective of efficiency and future consideration. In light of the importance of priority works currently before the CEP such as the Environmental Impact Assessment, the State of Antarctic Environment Report and Protected Areas, this restructuring of ATCM needs to be finalized at this meeting.

Mr. Chairman,

Regarding Article 6 of the Protocol, the Republic of Korea has endeavored to promote collaboration with other Parties in scientific research and other related activities ever since it became a Consultative Party in 1989. During the 1998/99 season, Korea conducted a field survey jointly with Uruguay to monitor the ice-cliff retreat in the Marian Cove where the King Sejong station is located, and a geological survey jointly with Bulgaria on Livingston Island. On 18-19 May 1999, Korea hosted the sixth

International Symposium on Antarctic Science in an effort to promote international cooperation and exchange of scientific information.

The Environmental impacts of human activities at Antarctic bases have been a growing concern. Mindful of this, an environmental monitoring program at the King Sejong station has been implemented.

Mr. Chairman,

The Republic of Korea will remain committed to making continuous efforts in cooperation with other Parties to keep Antarctica a continent devoted to peace and science. Let me in conclusion assure you of my delegation's full commitment to ensuring the success of this meeting under your chairmanship.

Thank you.

