Virtual Seoul Defense Dialogue 2020 - Session 3:
“The Peace Process on the Korean Peninsula:
Achievements, Prospects, and Challenges”

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Dear colleagues and friends,

We know that the situation on the Korean Peninsula remains tense. In 2019 and the first four months of 2020, the DPRK launched dozens of short-range ballistic missiles and artillery rockets. The DPRK has declared an end to its self-imposed moratorium on nuclear testing. Cooperation mechanisms between the DPRK and the Republic of Korea have been severed.

The COVID-19 pandemic has severely impacted the global geopolitical and socioeconomic landscape and has redirected attention and resources away from other issues. Northeast Asia, like much of the world, has been greatly affected.

During this global health crisis, we marked the 70th anniversary of the start of the Korean War on 25 June. Regrettably, permanent peace on the Peninsula still remains a distant prospect.

All parties should reflect on the millions of soldiers and civilians who lost their lives in the Korean War, as well as recall the renewed diplomacy that led to the summits of 2018. That diplomacy eased tensions and raised expectations that peaceful solutions benefitting all were within reach.

I call on the parties to continue what they have started. This will require perseverance, political courage and painstaking diplomacy. I also echo the many calls made by the Secretary-General on the DPRK to comply with relevant Security Council resolutions and allow space for the resumption of sincere dialogue.

Resumed diplomatic efforts, however, will need to address and work towards the complete and verifiable denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula. It is the only way to ensure sustainable peace and will help alleviate many of the other challenges facing the Korean Peninsula.

In addition to addressing denuclearization, diplomatic efforts should be accompanied by progress on humanitarian and human rights issues, including engagement with international mechanisms.

The UN system stands ready to support the diplomatic efforts in any way.
In addition to providing a platform for dialogue and technical assistance, we are ready, together with the key parties, to engage in new and creative areas of cooperation that would help to break the impasse and reopen communication channels.

The path towards sustainable peace on the Korean Peninsula may not be easy, but it remains critical. As I said before, it will require perseverance from the parties. It will also require continued unity from the Security Council. We hope that others will also join in our calls to the parties to collaborate and support all diplomatic efforts aimed at achieving sustainable peace and complete and verifiable denuclearization.

Thank you.