

Statement

by

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at

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all Forms of Discrimination against Women

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Madame Chair, Distinguished Members of the Committee,

1. On behalf of the delegation of the Republic of Korea, I am honored to address the Committee as part of its review of Korea's implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women.

2. Since ratifying the Convention in 1984, Korea has achieved continuous progress in eliminating gender-based discrimination and raising the status of women. Compared to the situation of Korean women in 1984, the women today enjoy a considerably advanced degree of freedom and rights across all sectors of society, economy, politics, and culture.

3. Even with all the improvements, however, we are aware that additional efforts have to be made if all forms of discrimination are to be completely stamped out. Many women still face obstacles while trying to secure their fundamental human rights, and encounter new forms of challenges that have risen with the change of time.

4. After the consideration of Korea's 5th and 6th periodic reports in 2007, the Korean Government promptly took steps to deal with newly surfacing discrimination issues in our society. Much effort went into establishing institutional mechanisms to achieve full adherence to the Convention. Strong actions were also taken to improve public recognition on women's issues.

5. At today's Committee meeting in particular, I wish to share with you some concrete examples of the Korean Government's policy initiatives and achievements since submitting the 7th periodic report in 2010.

Madame Chair and Members of the Committee,

Please allow me to start by introducing our Government's policy progresses in solidifying the infrastructure to promote gender equality.

6. In March 2010, the Ministry of Gender Equality expanded into the Ministry of Gender Equality and Family, enhancing our role as the Republic of Korea's central government body to oversee all policies for women, youths, and families. With the expansion, the Ministry's staff increased from 100 to 211, and again to 220 as of today. The budget also grew from 107.7 trillion Korean won to 405.9 trillion won and to 456.7 trillion won in 2011. Backed by an enlarged organization and budget, and a closer linkage between women, youth, and family policies, the Ministry is now executing a more effective and active policy function in promoting women's rights.

7. We find it is important to embed gender mainstreaming in policies across all government agencies, not only in the Ministry of Gender Equality and Family. This is the understanding that underpins our current implementation of gender impact assessments in pan-

governmental policy formulation and a gender-responsive budgeting system.

8. In this context, the gender impact assessment is presently applied to 2,400 programs run by the central and local governments, and metropolitan/provincial offices of education. The number has increased by about 500 compared to 2009. Assessment results are given back and monitored, enabling further improvement in women's policies. This year, we are conducting gender impact assessment in two policy areas—government supported employment and safety in addition to self-selected programs. We consider that the two areas are important for improving the status of women in our society. After conducting gender impact assessment in these areas, the measures for policy improvement will be developed accordingly.

If we find a need to change the budget allocation for changes needed to administrate for more gender equal outcomes, we plan to link it to gender responsive budget system. These new procedures aim to improve the previous practices of our gender mainstreaming procedures which have been considered inefficient in bringing changes.

9. The National Finance Act has been revised to gender-sensitive budgeting in a larger number of government projects. At the local level, steps are being taken to revise the Local Finance Act and to carry out

pilot programs that will lead to the adoption of gender-responsive budgeting.

10. Another noticeable policy effort has been to rearrange and expand the ‘Women-friendly City Project,’ which has brought together and systemized individual gender equality programs that had been carried out in part by local governments. This is a representative region-based gender mainstreaming policy that seeks to establish a gender-sensitive approach in the everyday lives of local women, as well as in governmental policy decision procedures. We have high expectations that the project will provide a significant policy foundation to propel gender impact assessment, gender-responsive budgeting, and gender mainstreaming in all regions.

11. To keep abreast with changing policy environments, the Government has also completed a full revision of the Women’s Development Act which is being considered in the National Assembly. In the version submitted by the government, establishing the Committee on the Status of Women that is co-chaired by the Prime Minister and a member from the private sector, managing the National Gender Equality Index and women-friendly cities are included. We are endeavoring to build a more concrete basis of our policies and programs to improve status of women in our society.

My discussion now moves on to the Korean Government's policy efforts and achievements with regard to enhancing women's representation in society.

12. In the field of public administration, a policy that has long been in effect is the 'Five-year Plan to Increase the Proportion of Female Public Officials at Rank 4 (director-level) or Higher' in central government bodies. Local governments are also implementing the '2nd Five-year Plan to Expand Manager-level Female Public Servants' from 2007 to 2011, as a way of raising the appointment rate of women in high-ranking public positions.

13. In national defense, under the 'Military Reform Plan for 2020,' we have set an objective to expand the proportion of women amongst high-ranking military officers to 7.7 percent and the proportion of female non-commissioned officers to 5.5 percent by the year 2020. Women are also eligible for the ROTC policy that selects a certain number of undergraduate students and appoints them as high-ranking military officers after a two-year training period. Under the policy, 60 female ROTC cadets are currently in training. We intend to gradually increase the number in the years to come.

14. In the science sector, we are steadily implementing the ‘2nd Plan for Fostering and Supporting Women in Science and Technology.’ Employment information and networking opportunities are provided for women through the National Institute for Supporting Women in S&T(WIST). Status surveys of women in S&T are also carried out and the results are reflected in advancing policies to nurture women in the respective fields.

15. In addition, attention is given to raising the participation rate of women in national strategic R&D projects that have high growth potential. Our aim is to maintain a minimum of 20 percent female participation rate in the ‘Strategic Technical Manpower Development Project,’ and thus promote the input of women in major technology fields.

16. As for the education sector, though women’s participation is relatively more active here than in other areas, a persisting problem is that the female proportion still stands low amongst the managerial teaching staff and faculty in higher education. We are addressing this problem by requiring educational institutions to establish their own female employment targets according to the Personnel Management Guidelines on Manager-level Female Public School Teachers, and to

monitor their target achievement rates. In 2010, we also introduced the ‘Plan to Expand Women Resources at Universities and Support their Capability Enhancement.’ The Plan was carried out by 41 national and public universities, and the five best performing universities were awarded with budget assistance.

17. In the years to come, the Korean Government will remain committed to expanding women’s participation in all sectors of society and encouraging them to grow to their fullest potential. We will strive continuously to improve the current systems and to identify the areas that need additional attention and supplementation.

Honorable Madame Chair and Members of the Committee,

When we discuss gender equality, we cannot leave out the task of preventing violence against women and assisting female victims.

18. Although women’s status in society has definitely improved, the most extreme form of oppression that is, violence against women, unfortunately persists in our society. This clearly reflects the gendered power relations entrenched between men and women. In recent years, we have achieved remarkable progress in terms of establishing an institutional infrastructure.

19. As a first step to preventing violence against women, a joint task force team was created by the public and private sectors to map out a comprehensive plan to prevent domestic violence. The ‘Comprehensive Plan to Prevent Domestic Violence’, announced in 2011 focuses on strengthening initial actions against cases of violence and better protecting victims. At the end of June, the Assembly passed the revised the Act on the Prevention of Domestic Violence and Protection of Victims. Under the Act, judicial police officers are given the power to take temporary emergency measures and also entitled to the right of victim confrontation. A system of ‘court order for victim protection’ has been introduced as well, enabling a victim to independently request direct protection aside from the criminal proceeding.

20. The Act on the Punishment of Sexual Violence Crimes and Protection of Victims was revised on stronger and more systemic approach to protecting and supporting women victimized by sexual violence. For example, the identities of child and youth sex offenders are now made public both offline and online. Sex criminals are subject to more stringent punishments that can extend to a maximum of 30 years of imprisonment.

21. To prevent human trafficking committed under the guise of international marriages, the Act on the Regulation of Marriage Brokerage Agencies was revised. Under the new version of the Act, couples are now obliged to exchange personal information prior to marriage. The measure is helping to reduce the damage caused by false information.

Next, I would like to present some major issues and recent measures taken by our Government to support the rights of disadvantaged women.

22. Government policies should address not only to the gender gap between men and women, but also to solve the gap that exists among women in the society. The Korean Government offers specialized aid for underprivileged women who are exposed to much social discrimination, including women with disabilities, single-mothers, and rural women.

23. In 2010, we designated Networking Centers for Women with Disabilities throughout the country, bringing together welfare services to provide a one-stop service. The Centers provide disabled women with counseling according to their stages in life. They are informed of core laws, medical services, residential options, vocational rehabilitation, education, and employment. The Centers also offer

education programs aimed at enhancing the employment capabilities of disabled women, customized to types of disability and characteristics of the regions they reside. Through the Centers, we will continue to provide systemized welfare services that are tailored to the specific needs of physically and mentally challenged women.

24. Single-mothers are assisted with living expenses, childcare services, and residences. They suffer from the double burden of childcare and household management, which often results in restricted opportunities for quality employment. As a countermeasure to the problem, for single adolescent mothers aged up to 25 who earn less than 150 percent of the minimum standard cost of living, we provide special financial assistance for a period of five years. The aid program includes child-rearing costs, fees to facilitate self-supporting financial activities, and expenses for studies to take school diploma qualification examinations, all of which provide a building block for young mothers to better support their children and themselves.

25. For rural women, policies are directed towards protecting the rights of women workers in agricultural and fishery industries, raising their professional status, protecting their maternity, and promoting their quality of life.

26. During the five-year period between 2011 and 2015, the Government is carrying out a ‘Basic Plan to Develop Women Farmers and Fishers.’ As part of the Plan, we are nurturing female farmers into professional agricultural specialists and rural development leaders, by running training programs that enable women to acquire upgraded management and leadership skills. Plans are also in place to increase the support for small business incubators initiated by rural women. Childcare services will also expand to create favorable conditions for working mothers to concentrate on agricultural and fishery management. Female-friendly agricultural machinery is being developed, which will help to raise agricultural productivity and ease the labor burden of women. And in the interest of improving the quality of life for rural women, we will provide more domestic helper services before and after childbirth, and foster cultural engagement including small-scale club activities among the women.

I will now move on to describe Korea’s major policy measures geared at removing elements of gender inequality in employment.

27. We announced the Employment Equality Index, according to which the status of male and female employees of approximately 1,500

businesses are analyzed every year. For enterprises that fail to meet female employment standards, we organize meetings and conferences to guide and promote affirmative actions for recruitment. In this way, more effectiveness is ensured at the workplace in implementing stronger action for female recruitment.

28. In 2011, the ‘2nd Five-year Comprehensive Plan on Women Resources Development (2011~2015)’ was launched with a view to maximizing the capacity and utilization of women throughout their lives. The enactment of the Act on the Promotion of Economic Activities in Career-interrupted Women also led to the introduction of a five-year basic plan from 2010 to 2014 to reduce women's career breaks. The budget for this plan has risen by 56 percent over the year, from 379.4 billion Korean won in 2010 to 591.8 billion won in 2011.

29. One particular policy progress is the establishment of Women’s Reemployment Support Centers as a core infrastructure to support the re-entry of career-interrupted women. So far, 90 regional centers and 8 economic regional offices have been designated. These Centers assist women who seek re-employment with a full range of customized programs, including career counseling, mock interview practices, and

internship experiences. For career-interrupted women who have high educational attainment levels, in particular, the centers ran trial programs in 2010 to assist employment in specialized professional positions. The pilot programs will see further expansion this year.

30. For career-interrupted women, we also operated a pilot Online Career Coaching Program in 2010. Earlier this year, the program won the United Nations Public Service Award for its effective coaching outcomes.

31. Alongside such measures that address career break problems, several policies are in place to fundamentally prevent women's career interruptions. We are increasing childcare support, fostering an institutional environment that encourages women to balance work and family responsibilities, and working to induce public awareness and support for the economic participation of women.

32. As for childcare support, the coverage of Government's support of the total cost of childcare has expanded to all children aged 0 to 4 in the lower 70 percent income bracket, compared to the previous eligibility criteria of the bottom 50 percent income bracket. In

particular, children aged 5 or younger of all multicultural families are eligible for total childcare cost benefits.

33. The childcare leave system is also reaching out to more parents with eased eligibility requirements. Wages paid during maternity leave have changed from a flat rate system to a fixed rate system, according to which 40 percent of the general wage is paid during the leave period. We anticipate that the new measure will facilitate working women to actually use the leave system. Maternal protection is another area of core interest for the government, especially for women who stand in the blind spot of support such as non-regular women employees and female laborers at small- and medium-sized businesses. For example, women in non-regular positions are provided with subsidies for continued employment before and after childbirth, and SMEs are subsidized to build more childcare facilities. But even with the policies, women still face much difficulty in accessing maternal protection at the actual workplace. With a strong will to continuously improve the situation, we intend to conduct regular status surveys and to strengthen the supervision of labor environments.

34. As before, promoting work and family balance remains an equal priority for Korea. The Government and public sector have introduced a part-time and flexible working hour system so as to bring changes to the tradition of long working hours, which is a primary hindrance for working women. We continue to encourage private sectors with publicity and individualized consulting to adopt flexible working hour system more extensively.

35. We are also improving the Family-friendly Enterprise Authorization System and organizing family-friendly forums, in the interest of encouraging enterprises to voluntarily foster a culture that values both work and family life. For example, enterprises are induced to adopt the part-time and flexible working hour system, facilitate childcare leave, and refurbish childcare facilities at the workplace. However, in Korean society, where the general norm is highly work-oriented, most corporations yet are reluctant towards developing an atmosphere where work and family are compatible. Therefore, we are working to expand government-level surveys, education, and consultation to convince the private sector of the necessity and positive effects of family-friendly policies

Next, I would like to introduce some major policy efforts that have been made for the improvement of equality in marriage and family relations.

36. Traditional Korean families were built on a patriarchal system centered on the head of the household, which was often the husband or father. With the change in society, however, family members are increasingly developing more gender-equal relationships. Our Government recognizes the need to spread a family model that is better tuned to the current and future times. It values gender equality and equalized the roles and responsibilities of men and women in the household. To this end, we are providing family-unit programs at our 138 Healthy Family Support Centers across the nation. Further expansion is planned for ‘paternal education programs’ aimed at promoting the participation of fathers in child rearing. We are also developing ‘on-site parent education programs.’

37. Another notable change in the Korean family structure is the increase of multicultural households, following the annual inflow of international marriage migration. The ‘Basic Policy Plan to Support Multicultural Families (2010~2012)’ represents our determination to systemize policies that support such families. Based on this Plan, we

are implementing diverse policies to aid the different types of multicultural families and to foster an equal relationship between family members. Our particular focus is on preventing and helping to resolve family conflicts. An important step in this direction is to sensitize internationally married men and couples on human rights. Our Government intends to strengthen the ‘Happiness Program for Internationally Married Couples,’ which is aimed at enhancing the understanding of multicultural societies and preventing domestic violence. Visitation services for multicultural families will also be expanded in the future.

Finally, allow me to explain how our Government has been working with great interest to foster international cooperation on gender equality initiatives, and how we have been incorporating gender-sensitive perspectives in our official development assistance programs.

38. In combating discrimination against women, our focus is placed not only on securing rights of Korean Women but also resolving the many barriers that women around the world, including those in less-developed countries, are facing today. Through policy input and financial contribution, the Korean Government has continued its efforts to strengthen international collaboration for gender equality.

39. The Korean Government has strongly supported the creation and mandate of UN Women, the UN entity mainly responsible for promoting gender equality and women's empowerment. As part of our supportive efforts, we have pledged 4.7 million US dollars to UN Women for this year, more than 150-fold the 30,000 dollars contributed to UNIFEM in 2010. We are also planning to develop joint projects with UN Women to support women in partner countries, and are undertaking an active role as a member of the current UN Women Executive Board.

40. In 2010, the Korean Government joined the OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC), becoming the first OECD country to transform itself from a partner country to a donor country. While increasing the Official Development Assistance (ODA), our Government is working to incorporate gender mainstreaming into our ODA programs.

41. In regard to this, the Ministry of Gender Equality and Family is conducting preparatory research and institutional arrangements for a gender impact assessment of the ODA programs. The Korea International Cooperation Agency (KOICA), the governmental grant

aid agency, has adopted a corporate gender equality regulation based on the Framework Act on International Development Cooperation. In line with the regulation, KOICA has introduced gender-sensitive measures such as the Gender Desk Officer system and the 30-percent female quota system for invited trainees from partner countries.

42. In addition, the Korean Government is seeking to ensure more economic opportunities and empowerment for the women in the developing world. For instance, we are operating a technical cooperation assistance program aimed at sharing Korea's know-how of establishing and operating Women's Reemployment Support Centers. Furthermore, as the host of the 4th High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness (HLF-4), to be held this coming November in Busan, our Government is leading the initiative to highlight the gender agenda during the forum, under the rationale that focus should be placed on this issue if we are to bring in real-life improvement to the lives of the women in the partner countries and to raise aid effectiveness. For this objective, the Korean Government is working closely with UN Women and OECD/DAC GENDERNET, and also plans to identify and share best practices in official aid with the international community.

Madame Chair, Distinguished Members of the Committee,

43. Over the last four years, the Korean Government has been dedicated to refining existing women's policies and introducing new ones tailored to social changes. We have also been aided extensively by NGOs and their proposals that reflect the practical demands of the sector. Indeed, the role of NGOs has offered an important momentum for our Government to continuously improve and implement policies. Our partnerships with domestic and foreign NGOs, academic societies, and international organizations have been active over the years. In preparing for today's CEDAW consideration, in particular, we have discussed and collaborated extensively with several related NGOs, including the Korea Center for United Nations Human Rights Policy (KOCUN).

44. I must mention that the in-depth examinations and recommendations provided by the Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women have been one of the strongest driving forces behind the Korean Government's concrete actions to tackle discrimination. After the Committee's consideration of our

report in 2007, the Korean Government organized large-scale reporting sessions to share the results with various government offices, judicial authorities, NGOs, and the Korean Women's Development Institute. The National Human Rights Commission of Korea also held conferences to discuss matters related to the Optional Protocol to CEDAW. In 2009, the Commission published a casebook of 13 individual petitions made by women. These are some examples of our efforts to clearly inform the Convention's objectives and consideration outcomes to the National Assembly, media organizations, and legal circles, so that the Convention may be better implemented at the government level. This year's consideration results and recommendations will also be widely distributed to the public through reporting sessions, conferences, and various materials. By doing so, we seek to induce more interest and input among the government and private sectors in implementing the Convention.

45. As before, the Korean Government awaits today's consideration with eagerness and sincerity, knowing that the critical recommendations you offer will serve as a valuable foundation upon

which Korea may attempt new steps forward in eliminating discrimination.

46. I close my remarks by expressing the Korean delegation's deepest respect for the unremitting efforts of all Committee members in calling governments to achieve the shared goals of women's freedom and rights.

Thank you very much.