



THE REPUBLIC OF KOREA

PERMANENT MISSION TO THE UNITED NATIONS

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Statement by H.E. Ms. BYUN Do Yoon

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Mr. Chair,
Distinguished delegates,

1. It is my pleasure to address the 53rd Session of the Commission on the Status of Women on behalf of the Republic of Korea.
2. I would like to take this opportunity to thank H.E. Mr. Olivier Belle and other members of the Bureau for their efforts in preparing for this session. I am confident that under your able leadership, this session will bear fruitful results for all member states.

Mr. Chair,

3. The international community has constantly emphasized the importance of the roles of men and boys in achieving gender equality. These roles have been recognized not only in conferences concerning women, such as the 4th World Conference on Women and the 23rd Special Session of the General Assembly, but also in major international conferences including the International Conference on Population and Development and the World Summit for Social Development.

4. I believe that true gender equality can only be achieved through a harmonious partnership between women and men. In this regard, I believe it is appropriate that the CSW has chosen 'The equal sharing of responsibilities between women and men, including care-giving in the context of HIV/AIDS' as the priority theme for the 53rd Session.
5. It is my sincere wish that our discussions and the efforts made here today will shed light on how women and men can equally share the burden of achieving gender equality. I hope that our efforts will ultimately contribute to the realization of our goal of gender equality, development, and peace.
6. Over the years, the status of women has undergone many changes. These changes have ensured that women enjoy greater participation in all spheres of life. However, women still take on a predominant role in household responsibilities and care-giving. This has been largely influenced by traditional stereotypes that attribute responsibility for care-giving mainly to women.
7. The government of the Republic of Korea has exerted multifaceted efforts to induce social and cultural changes against such gender stereotypes. Needless to say, promoting a culture of gender equality is a prerequisite in overcoming prejudice against gender roles. In this light, my government has focused on expanding the culture of gender equality nationwide by introducing gender equal education programs to central and local government officials, lecturers, women's organizations, military officials, and faculty members.
8. As indicated in the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) by the United Nations, education is a shortcut to the achievement of gender equality and empowerment of women, and the most essential tool in achieving equality, development and peace.
9. Specifically, we are making efforts to reinforce messages of gender equality by conducting wide-ranging evaluations of curricula, text books, and other educational materials so that both girls and boys, the future leaders of the world, can share equal roles. Furthermore, my government is currently in the process of developing and introducing various educational program models. It is our expectation that gender sensitive and gender appropriate educational materials and methods will help women and men enjoy equal opportunities when it comes to education and vocational training.
10. Furthermore, in accordance with the New Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) to eradicate all forms of discrimination in education by 2015, my government will endeavor to increase various training and educational opportunities along with Official Development Assistance (ODA) to women within the nation and in the Asian region.

Mr. Chair,

11. "Green growth and sustainable development" is the keyword for the 21st century in searching for new growth engines as a response to climate change issues that threaten humankind. Taking this into consideration, the Lee Myung Bak government has adopted the "Low carbon and green growth" as the national agenda. In this regard, the Ministry of Gender Equality is enforcing the integration of gender-sensitive perspectives into green growth and sustainable development and the cultivation of professional women.
12. In 2008, the economic participation rate of women in Korea stood at 54.7 percent. We are also seeing a steady increase in women's social participation. However, according to the Nationwide Survey on Families conducted by the Ministry of Gender Equality, the participation of men in unpaid daily household work is extremely low, amounting to merely one sixteenth of that of women.
13. Cognizant of the state's responsibility for creating a social environment where women and men equally share the burden of care-giving, including housework, my government remains committed to refurbishing related laws and expanding the social infrastructure.
14. For instance, in June 2008, my government amended the existing 'Equal Employment Act' to the 'Act on Equal Employment and Support for Balancing Work and Family Life' and introduced new articles on paternity leave, parental leave, and the adoption of flexible working hours for childcare. These changes have thus laid the legal groundwork to ensure that men play a greater role in housework and childcare as well as helping them balance both work and family.
15. The amendment has produced concrete and positive changes. In particular, it has raised people's overall awareness on parental leave and paternity leave and has expanded men's participation in childcare.
16. Moreover, my government also enacted the 'Act on Promoting a Family Friendly Social Environment' and introduced the Family Friendly Index and the Family Friendly Certification System to induce greater participation of the private sector in creating a family friendly social environment.
17. Apart from expanding the Gender Impact Assessment on government policies, which has been in place since 2004, my government incorporated a gender sensitive budget system into the 'National Fiscal Act' legislated in 2006. A gender sensitive budget system allows the incorporation of both women and men when it comes to government policies and promotes equal benefits and responsibilities.

18. In the Republic of Korea, many women with the will and ability to work continue to give up the opportunity to use their skills and participate in society due to the heavy burden of pregnancy, childbirth, and childcare. Taking this into account, my government enacted the 'Act on Promoting Economic Activities of Women with Career Interruptions' in June 2008 to alleviate this problem and to help women become more economically independent.
19. In tandem with the full-fledged enforcement of the Act, the Ministry of Gender Equality and the Ministry of Labor has collaborated with regional governments to open 50 new job centers for women in order to provide comprehensive employment support services to women. We plan to increase the number of these centers to 100 by the year 2012. Furthermore, the Ministry of Gender Equality launched the 'Task Force Team on Countering the Effects of Economic Crisis for Women' to assist the activities of the job centers for women and to provide focused support to women at risk due to the economic downturn.
20. The Government of the Republic of Korea has strengthened childcare service infrastructures by expanding public childcare facilities. The government also shares the national responsibility for care-giving by providing public care-giving services for families, including the elderly, the sick, and the disabled.

Mr. Chair,

21. The worldwide spread of HIV/AIDS is resulting in the unfortunate deaths of many girls and women. Of the 33 million suffering from HIV/AIDS worldwide, only about 3 million are receiving necessary treatment. Support for HIV/AIDS patients at the international level through the improvement of public health system is critical.
22. The HIV/AIDS prevalence rate in the Republic of Korea is less than 0.1 percent, which is relatively low compared to other countries. Still, my government has implemented several measures in an effort to lessen the burden shouldered by families due to HIV/AIDS infections. It has introduced various services, including free medical examination for patients, and operates support centers to assist patients with their daily lives and rehabilitation and to offer counseling. The government of the Republic of Korea also provides hospice services for those receiving professional treatment at medical centers.
23. Moreover, the government of the Republic of Korea encourages the participation of men in care-giving services for HIV/AIDS patients and is working toward further facilitating men's participation in this area.

Mr. Chair,

24. The government of the Republic of Korea firmly believes in granting women equal opportunity in the decision-making processes. Equal opportunity in this regard is particularly crucial if we wish to realize national, regional, and international efforts to ensure equal sharing of responsibilities between women and men. Taking this into consideration, my government amended related laws to guarantee greater representation of women in the national parliament and regional legislatures. The amendments mandate political parties to allocate half of the proportional representative seats to women. As a result, women have come to account for 14 percent of total membership in the Korean National Assembly following the 2008 general elections. The government of the Republic of Korea also makes continued efforts to encourage women to take up managerial positions in both public and private sectors and to create a supportive social climate for this purpose.
25. National development in the 21st century depends on how we strengthen and make use of women's capabilities. Accordingly, my government is striving for the development of women-friendly policies that will encourage women to utilize their talents and exert their potentials to the fullest. In addition, I assure you that my government will fully cooperate in exchanging experiences so that our advanced women's policies and model examples could be reflected in the advancement of women's policies in other countries as well as Asian countries and that these efforts would contribute to the international society.
26. I would like to conclude by expressing my heartfelt gratitude for the extensive recommendations and suggestions proposed in the Secretary General's Report. It is the sincere wish of the government of the Republic of Korea that the Commission on the Status of Women reach a consensus on adopting agreed conclusions on its key theme 'the equal sharing of responsibilities between women and men, including care-giving in the context of HIV/AIDS' based on those recommendations. Lastly, I would like to reiterate our strong support for the efforts to strengthen and consolidate gender entities of the United Nations and sincerely hope that we can reach an agreement on new Gender Architecture soon. I would also like to reconfirm that my government is committed to working with other member states toward our common goal of gender equality. Thank you.