



THE REPUBLIC OF KOREA

PERMANENT MISSION TO THE UNITED NATIONS

335 East 45th Street, New York, N.Y. 10017
Tel (212) 439-4000, Fax (212) 986-1083

Statement by H.E. Dr. Paik Hee Young
Minister of Gender Equality and Family
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Mr. Chair,
Distinguished Delegates,

1. It is my great pleasure to address the 55th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women, its first official gathering since the historic creation of UN Women, the United Nations entity for gender equality and the empowerment of women.
2. On this occasion, I would like to extend my deepest gratitude to UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and Executive Director Michelle Bachelet for their vision and leadership in the establishment of UN Women. Without their strong political will, we might not have seen the creation of UN Women, an embodiment of a concentrated global aspiration for gender equality and the empowerment of women.
3. In order to play a substantial role in accelerating our goals on gender equality in accordance with the expectations of women worldwide, UN Women may need to formulate future-oriented development strategies and result-oriented programs, while securing the necessary resources for the implementation of the aforementioned strategies and programs.

4. The Government of the Republic of Korea has already played a constructive and contributive role in the creation of UN Women. As the first Executive Board member, it sincerely hopes to broaden its policy support and financial contributions for the success of UN Women.

5. In 2011, the Korean Government plans to significantly raise its financial contributions to about USD \$4.7 million, more than 100 times the current level, while voicing wholehearted support for the fulfillment of the duties of UN Women.

Mr. Chair,

6. Education and employment have been highlighted as key strategic priorities for gender equality and the empowerment of women, as demonstrated in the Beijing Platform for Action, the UN Millennium Development Goals, and the World Summit.

7. Beyond the national level, efforts to ensure the greater access and participation of women and girls in non-discriminatory education, to mainstream women from marginalized positions, and to enable women to demonstrate their potential are critical means to realize the hope of mankind around the world.

8. In this regard, the Government of the Republic of Korea heartily welcomes today's discussion about the "Access and participation of women and girls to education, training, science and technology, including for the promotion of women's equal access to full employment and decent work."

9. The Beijing Platform for Action has highlighted education as a human right and an essential tool for advancing the status of women. In particular, education for girls is not only the most effective tool to empower women, but also the most crucial investment for the future of mankind. This is mainly because education is the fundamental factor in determining not only the future of an individual, but also the fate of society, the nation, and the entire world.

10. The Republic of Korea provides equal opportunities for education to girls and boys in order to enable them to develop their individual potential through education.

11. The primary school attendance rate in Korea exceeded 100% as of 2009, and there is almost no gender gap in the ratio of enrollment at primary, middle, and high schools. The enrollment of female students in university reaches 82.4%, higher than the level of male students, which is 81.6%. In terms of the ratio of investment in female education, Korea is one of the top countries in the world.

12. Regardless of such phenomenal success, the Korean Government continues to offer the optimal environment for women so that they do not face any discrimination in education and vocational competence development. To nurture both girls and boys to become the future generation of leading figures of society, the Korean Government is placing greater emphasis on gender equality through its multifaceted analysis of curriculum, textbooks, and other educational materials.

13. The Government encourages female students to enter the fields of law, science and technology, which were traditionally dominated by men, with the aim of eradicating the social practice of career selection according to gender stereotypes. The efforts have been more prevalent in the legal arena, as evidenced by the success rate of women in the National Bar Examination, which soared from 4% in 1990 to 42% in 2010.

14. Moreover, in 2002, Korea enacted the *Act on Supporting Women in Science and Technology* to promote female participation in engineering, science and technology, which were traditionally dominated by men. Based on this Act, the 1st and 2nd Basic Plan for Fostering and Supporting Women Scientists and Engineers (2004~2013) were established and implemented with the aim to encourage female engineering students to enter careers in the field of science and technology as well as to support the nurturing of excellent female scientists and engineers.

15. As part of the affirmative action for women scientists, the Government implemented a recruitment goal system for women scientists, while focusing on the infrastructural development for women scientists and technicians via the National Institute for Supporting Women in Science and Technology.

16. In particular, the Government endeavors to solidify the foundations for the advancement of women in science and technology through the so-called 4W Projects: the mentoring scheme titled “Women into Science and Engineering (WISE),” “Women's Academy for Technology Changer in the 21st Century (WATCH21),” “National Institute for Supporting Women in Science and Technology (WIST),” and “Women into Engineering (WIE)” for supporting top engineering universities. As a result, additional female employment in public institutions of scientific and technological research rose from 18.2% in 2003 to 26.6% in 2009.

Mr. Chair,

17. To put a strong will for the empowerment of women into practice, we should improve female representation in all areas of society. In particular, to enhance female representation in the economic sector, equal access to full employment and decent work should be preceded.

18. The Korean Government has already embarked on the 2nd master plan for the development of female resources, titled “Dynamic Women Korea 2015,” as part of its government-wide attempt toward the full and equal participation of women in key policymaking processes.

19. The major priorities of the master plan include the reinforcement of the employment competence of female youth, support for career building and for balance of work and family for working women, increased job opportunities for middle-aged and elderly women, expansion of female employment into future-oriented industries and jobs, and integrated policy coordination for developing female resources. The master plan will help to secure the driving forces behind future growth at the national level, enhance women’s status in society, and improve quality of life for women and families at the individual level.

20. The Program of Action of the World Summit on Social Development states that women’s full participation in economic, social, and political activities is indispensable for social progress. It also highlights the government’s efforts toward the elimination of obstacles to female employment and the formation of an equal partnership between men and women.

21. To build a comfortable working environment for women, the Korean Government is proceeding with labor policies specifically geared toward the maximum utilization and cultivation of potential and talented female manpower. These labor policies include the adoption of a flexible working hour system (purple job scheme), the expansion of family-friendly enterprises, and the reinforcement of public childcare.

22. With the aim of strengthening support for work-family balance, in 2007, the Government amended the existing *Equal Employment Act* to *Act on Equal Employment and Support for Balancing Work-Family Life* and introduced new articles on paternity leave, reduction in working hours during the childcare period, and allotment of working hour curtailment during temporary absence and childcare periods.

23. Pursuant to the *Act on Promoting Family-Friendly Social Environment*, the Government is currently implementing measures to adopt a family-friendly index and a family-friendly certification scheme, thereby stimulating the private sector’s involvement in the creation of a family-friendly social environment.

24. Over the long haul, the Government’s intended policy goals are mainly centered around the expansion of women-friendly social and working conditions for a changed mindset and lifestyle of men and women, as well as the re-establishment of family values, with their focus on a harmonious balance between work and family.

Mr. Chair,

25. Under the banner of “Progress for women is progress for all,” the Korean Government is making substantial efforts toward international coordination and implementation. Based upon its status shift from a poverty-stricken country to a donor country, the Republic of Korea endeavors to broaden various educational opportunities and official development assistance (ODA) for developing nations to utilize Korea’s advanced know-how and best practice cases for women’s policies.

26. In 2003, the Korean Government launched IT education programs for women in developing countries in the Asia-Pacific Region. In 2010, it further expanded these programs into IT, e-Biz, and vocational capacity-building programs. This year, the Government plans to create a customized version of Korea’s Women’s Re-employment Support Center, tailored to local needs and with the aim of supporting the economic competence development of women in developing nations.

Mr. Chair,

27. On this occasion, the Korean Government expresses its sincere gratitude for the comprehensive recommendations included in the Secretary General’s Report. We eagerly hope that the Commission on the Status of Women will reach a consensus concerning key agenda during this session, based on the mentioned recommendations.

28. We also expect that future-oriented strategies from this session will translate into the concrete actions of individual countries, thereby bringing significant changes to quality of life not only for women, but also for mankind as a whole.

29. Lastly, the Korean Government reaffirms its ongoing commitment to global action for the empowerment of women and close cooperation with other nations, including the Executive Board of UN Women.

30. I would like to conclude by expressing my congratulations and gratitude once again to Executive Director Michelle Bachelet and the other staff members of UN Women for the creation of this entity.

Thank you.