



THE REPUBLIC OF KOREA

PERMANENT MISSION TO THE UNITED NATIONS

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The 56th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women

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Honorable Chair,
Distinguished Delegates,

I am delighted to address the 56th Session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women on behalf of the Government of the Republic of Korea.

On this occasion, I would like to convey my sincere appreciation to UN Women Executive Director Michelle Bachelet, and pay tribute to her for leading the entity with distinction since its launch in 2011 in such a way that it has secured its place at the forefront of efforts for gender equality and women's empowerment.

In the space of just over a year, UN Women has accomplished a great deal in advancing gender equality and empowering women. Yet sufficient and stable resources are needed for UN Women to continue the role of coordinator in gender equality policies and to increase its field presence to adequately address the needs of women worldwide.

As a committed partner of UN Women and chair of this year's Executive Board, the Republic of Korea will continue to render its policy and financial support for the work of UN Women in playing a pivotal role in advancing gender equality and empowering women.

Madame Chair,

Despite continued progress in women's empowerment, many women, including indigenous and rural women, remain vulnerable and live in disproportionately poor conditions, due to limited access to government services and the prevailing culture of gender-based discrimination in rural

areas. Women do not enjoy the same economic opportunities as men. For instance, women often have limited access to resources, and lack a voice in the decision-making process.

A Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) Report states that if women are ensured equal access to productive assets, this may result in a reduction of levels of people facing starvation from a figure of 12 to 17 %.

Furthermore, various materials, including the Secretary General's Report on the Empowerment of Rural Women show that it is largely women who have a deep understanding of local ecosystems and that they provide a disproportionate share of care labor in local communities, playing a key role in food security, poverty reduction and sustainable development.

Therefore, eliminating discrimination against rural women and empowering rural women is not only of great value in the efforts to realize gender equality but also to address global issues, including food shortages, poverty and climate change.

In this regard, I welcome this opportunity to discuss the priority theme of "The Empowerment of Rural Women and Their Role in Poverty and Hunger Eradication, Development and Current Challenges."

With the 2012 UN Conference on Sustainable Development (Rio+20), fast approaching, today's discussions will also help to focus on the importance of advancing gender equality and empowering women in sustainable development.

The issue of unlocking women's potential is also emerging in the Republic of Korea. In particular, amid growing diversification in agricultural sector, increasing attention is being accorded to the role of female farmers and fishers.

Since the enactment of the Support of Female Farmers and Fishers Act in 2001, the Korean Government has developed and implemented Framework Plans every five years to support women in the agriculture and fisheries sector. This has yielded a set of tangible outcomes, including the issuance of farmers certificates to enhance the standing of the agricultural profession amongst the public, more training programs for female farmers, and maternity support services for women in the agriculture and fisheries sector.

Building upon what has been achieved so far, Korea is now implementing the third Framework Plan for the period of 2011-2015 to advance the rights and interests of rural women and improve their quality of life.

According to this plan, the government ensures affirmative action in government-subsidized programs to enhance the status of female farmers and fishers with a view to increasing their participation in the policy-making process. The Korean Government is also working to gradually expand female representation and leadership in agricultural policy-related committees at the local and national level and in producer organizations such as agricultural, forestry and fishery cooperatives.

Concurrently, vocational and leadership training programs are provided to respond to the various learning needs of women farmers in different income groups and life-cycle stages. Moreover, a variety of targeted initiatives have been launched to support rural women's entrepreneurship and empowerment.

Rural women are disproportionately burdened with childcare and domestic labor, which significantly limits women's capacity-building opportunities. The Korean Government has established daycare facilities, *instituted* financial incentives for daycare instructors working in rural areas, and offered farming and domestic services for rural women in particularly vulnerable situations.

Over recent years, international marriage has become a defining phenomenon of Korea's rural communities.

In response, Korea has adopted a set of support strategies for multicultural families. These measures include providing Korean language classes and vocational training, and promoting entrepreneurship among immigrant women. After-school programs and career counseling services are also provided for immigrant children.

At the same time, one-to-one mentoring services, along with agricultural training and family programs, are provided to facilitate immigrant women's integration into local communities.

Aware of the double challenge immigrant women face of cultural differences and the patriarchal culture prevailing in rural areas, Multicultural Family Support Centers nationwide are running a "Happiness Initiative for Internationally Married Couples" targeted at male members of multicultural families, and cross-border couples to enhance their understanding of diversity and gender equality.

With the number of immigrant women set to grow in rural areas, the Government of the Republic of Korea is committed to offering support to immigrant women so that they can achieve their full potential in their new homeland by diversifying measures and strengthening existing programs.

Madame Chair,

The Korean Government has actively mainstreamed gender in policy design and implementation to further strengthen the social institutions for gender equality.

To this end, the Korean Government has, since 2004, conducted Gender Impact Assessment for a number of policy measures. The Act on Gender Impact Assessment, enacted in September 2011, calls on local and national governments to conduct gender impact assessment in designing and implementing relevant laws and initiatives deemed to have a considerable impact on gender equality.

Starting this March, gender impact assessment will be conducted on policies with serious gender ramifications. The Act on Gender Impact Assessment provides that the findings from gender impact assessments conducted be reflected in improved policies and gender sensitive budgeting.

First introduced in 2010 at the central level, gender budgeting will be incorporated into local policies and programs starting this year with a view to ensuring coherent and effective implementation of gender policies.

Since 1998, the Government of the Republic of Korea has adopted and implemented Framework Plans for women's policies on a five-year basis as part of the efforts to promote women's advancement and empowerment in a coordinated and systematic manner. The 4th Framework Plan to be launched next year for the period 2013-2017, will address new policy issues, such as women's health and elderly women's engagement in society, to respond to graying demographics and a changing social environment.

The Korean Government developed a Gender Equality Index in 2010, tailored to the domestic needs and conditions. The Index measures the level of gender equity by sector and provides statistical input to be incorporated into policy making.

Since 2009, the Korean Government has designated a total of 30 women-friendly cities across the country and is in the process of adding 10 more cities to the list. It will continue to incorporate gender awareness at the local level, including by identifying best practices, offering policy consulting, and enhancing public awareness and understanding of gender issues.

Women-friendly cities are selected based on such factors as the commitment and concrete action plans of local governments to carry out comprehensive gender mainstreaming in all dimensions of political and everyday life. These cities are expected to effectively channel the central gender policies and practices into local communities.

Recognizing that elimination of violence against women and girls is vital in safeguarding women's rights, the Republic of Korea has set up a response mechanism to combat gender-based violence and strengthened the enforcement of anti-violence measures.

Since 2008, the Republic of Korea has implemented a "Comprehensive Plan for the Protection of Children and Women" to prevent gender-based violence targeting women and children. To reduce recidivism, identifies of sex offenders have been made available and are notified to local residents and educational facilities per post, and background checks are required for personnel working at educational institutions for children and teenagers.

The Korean Government has introduced emergency relief measures and facilitated the use of protection orders to enhance access to public safeguarding services against domestic violence.

To avoid possible secondary harassment during the investigation and court procedures, witnesses are now allowed to use pre-recorded video statements and public attorneys are appointed for victims of sexual crimes. The Korean Government has also established infrastructure for various

cases of trauma and post-traumatic treatment to support the rehabilitation of survivors of sexual violence.

Despite such policy efforts, women and girls remain vulnerable to many forms of violence. This indicates that strengthening punishment alone is not enough to address gender-based violence.

Therefore, while continuing to strengthen the social safety net and support infrastructure for survivors of sexual crimes, the Korean Government works to raise social awareness of violence against women and girls such as by expanding gender sensitive programs on the prevention of gender-based violence and harassment, and prostitution, and providing customized sex education.

In addition to the government efforts, the National Human Rights Commission of Korea works to further enhance the status of women and strengthen their rights by continuing to investigate various forms of discrimination and harassment against women and providing help for the survivors of gender-based violence.

Madame Chair,

Committed to improving the rights of women not only at home but also abroad, the Republic of Korea has actively cooperated with the international community and continued to expand official development assistance (ODA).

Since 2003, the Korean Government has extended invitations on an annual basis to female public servants and gender issues experts from partner countries to participate in training and educational programs. In 2011, the Ministry of Gender Equality and Family cooperated closely with its counterparts in Vietnam to help to establish a Vocational Training Development Center for women in *Cun Tho* City, Vietnam. The newly established Center is modeled after Korea's New Employment Center for Women, which is designed to provide employment opportunities and services for career-interrupted women.

Last year, the Republic of Korea contributed approximately USD 4.7 million to support the work of the newly established UN Women. This year Korea will commit a similar level of contributions to contribute even more fully to UN Women's efforts to advance the status of women worldwide.

Over a relatively short time, the Republic of Korea has achieved considerable progress in advancing the status of women. Korea looks forward to sharing its experience in gender policies and best practices with partner countries.

Madame Chair,

For years, the UN Commission on the Status of Women has served as a global platform to address important gender issues. During the previous sessions, we have pooled and coordinated our efforts to bring about concrete results in empowering women and furthering their rights.

The 56th Session will continue the tradition of galvanizing discussions and providing guidance to empower women as principal agents of growth. We will discuss a broad range of issues relating to the advancement of women's rights and interests, review previous agenda and actions and present our agreed commitments.

There is a growing body of evidence and research showing that unlocking the full potential of women opens the path to a better world.. This can never be realized, however, if the potential of women remains untapped.

The Republic of Korea is committed to joining international efforts to translate this into reality. At this Session, Korea will actively engage in the dialogue and cooperate with the international community to deliver on the agreed commitments. I firmly believe that the resulting efforts will not only serve to further improve women's lives but indeed also generate momentum for sustained global development.

Thank you.

Madame Chair

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