



THE REPUBLIC OF KOREA

PERMANENT MISSION TO THE UNITED NATIONS

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Full employment

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Mr. Chairperson, distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen,

1. On behalf of my delegation, I would like to congratulate you and the bureau members on your election to the 46th session of the Commission for Social Development, and to assure you of our full support and cooperation throughout the session.
2. Every human being has a right to enjoy happiness. Employment and decent work are fundamental elements in attaining this. However, considering that 1.5 billion people, or one-third of the worldwide working-age population, are either unemployed or underemployed, we cannot claim that the overall level of happiness among average people is at all high.
3. Last year, the Commission identified constraints, obstacles, best practices and possible approaches for achieving full employment and decent work. This year, it is time for this Commission to focus on policy options and practical measures to facilitate the implementation of the goal of full employment and decent work.
4. The Secretary General's report for this session rightly notes that global informalization of employment and "jobless growth" are linked to "de-industrialization." This phenomenon has become characteristic of all developed countries. The trend toward global informalization means that each country should pay greater attention to social protections for workers in the informal economy. Furthermore, "jobless growth" provides a theoretical and practical challenge for both economists and governments to tackle.
5. Jobless growth is evident in the Republic of Korea. As economic growth has less impact on achieving full employment than in the past, economic planning and employment strategies centred on growth prove to have limitations. Recognizing the seriousness of the issue, representatives of labour, management and government signed the "Social Pact for Job Creation." In February 2004, the Government of the ROK

established the "Comprehensive Measures for Job Creation" and invested approximately 7 trillion won (7 billion dollars) from 2004 to 2007. These measures were aimed at building an employment support infrastructure, providing support for skills development, creating social service jobs, and upgrading youth career guidance services.

6. A newly-elected president will be sworn in on 25 February 2008 in my country. Economic growth and employment creation are among the top priorities of the new administration and a matter of primary concern to the general public. The government is planning to ease economic regulations that restrict business activities and overhaul financial supports for job creation based strictly on assessing effectiveness.

7. The flexicurity of the labour market will be increased through career guidance for young people, and through lifelong skills development and employment support services for college graduates, middle-aged employees, and older workers preparing for retirement. By doing so, job seekers will have easier access to better and more jobs.

Mr. Chairperson,

8. Let me turn to the issue of gender-based discrimination in the area of employment. The inactivity rate is strikingly high among women. Five out of 10 women worldwide are not part of the labour force. The message is clear in Document E/CN.5/2008/8 entitled "Note by the Secretariat: Full employment and decent work: intensification of efforts to eliminate all forms of violence against women." Addressing gender-based inequalities and discrimination in employment can make a critical contribution towards eliminating all forms of violence against women through their economic empowerment. We could not agree more with this analysis. Thus, the policy framework of immediate and longer-term measures the document recommends warrants our attention.

9. I would like to highlight a few policies the Korean government has pursued in this regard. In order to prohibit indirect discrimination, the Equal Employment Act has been revised. Furthermore, in 2005, the Affirmative Action Plan to improve employment practices, mainly focusing on the Female Employment Target Policy, was introduced. As a result, real steps are being taken to reduce indirect forms of discrimination against women in employment.

10. Providing employment and decent work for women is not just desirable for their protection and welfare from the standpoint of traditional paternalism. A nation's competitiveness in the 21st Century is in fact dependent on fully utilizing women in the work force. In order to make full use of women's capabilities and develop their potential, the Korean government is increasing its commitment to addressing gender discrimination in employment and fostering an environment conducive to job-creation for women.

Mr. Chairperson,

11. In conclusion, we believe that this Session of the Commission for Social Development provides a valuable opportunity to pool our wisdom on "Promoting full employment and decent work for all" and to encourage each member country to pay due attention to the job crisis. We must give serious thought to what decisive steps to take next. I sincerely hope that we will further strengthen our dialogue and cooperation on these vital issues. Thank you.