



THE REPUBLIC OF KOREA

PERMANENT MISSION TO THE UNITED NATIONS

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Statement by Ambassador PARK In-kook

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Mr. President,

1. I would like to begin by expressing my sincere appreciation to you for your leadership in chairing this high-level segment of the ECOSOC substantive session. My government also appreciates the opportunity given to us to make a national voluntary presentation on gender equality and the empowerment of women, which led to a meaningful exchange of views with Member States.

2. As we shared with the Council, from our national experience we have learned that gender equality is of primary importance in achieving economic growth, poverty eradication, and sustainable development. Investing in women has had a clear, direct and positive impact on the national development process. Taking this opportunity, we would like to highlight the most important issues that we have to give more weight throughout this session of ECOSOC.

3. First, expanding women's role in the economy, especially during this economic downturn, cannot be overemphasized. We learned from our experience that elevated women's economic status benefits their families, communities, and countries. To facilitate and accelerate their participation, better access to credit and microcredit, banking and financial services, and facilities should be ensured. My government has introduced a support program specifically targeting female heads of household, who are their family's sole breadwinner. Our *Business Start-up Subsidy Programmes for Female Heads of Household* has proven its effectiveness in this regard. We encourage others to look at various methods to help and invest in women.

4. Second, women's health issues deserve the full attention of the international community. Guaranteeing the health of women, who are the primary family caretakers, is the best way to ensure healthy populations. However, in this context, the slow progress on improving maternal mortality is of great concern. Each year between 10 and 15 million women are left with long-term disabilities due to complications during pregnancy and childbirth. In this regard, we welcome the Muskoka Initiative of the G-8. Through this Initiative, the G-8 countries and several others, including the Republic of Korea, successfully raised an additional \$7.3 billion

for the next five years in order to support the activities for achievement of MDGs 4 and 5. We also appreciate the ongoing efforts of Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon in preparing the Joint Action Plan for Women and Children's Health for its launch this September. We believe these actions are proof that the international community takes this issue seriously and has the political will necessary to solve these issues by 2015.

5. Third, women's full and equal participation in political and economic decision-making at all levels makes a significant difference in any situation, including during conflict and post-conflict situations and state emergencies. I am impressed by the WFP's successful results in post-earthquake Haiti when it changed its food distribution channel from men to women. After this occurred, distribution became more peaceful while food successfully reached family members without being sold or gambled, which had been a risk attributed to male heads of household. With this example, I would like to highlight again that women are located in a key position where they provide services necessary for family members, so they best understand the real needs, shortages, and problems. Therefore, guaranteeing women's participation in any decision-making means meeting not only their own needs but also those of the entire family.

6. Although all sectors of Korean society had noticeable gender inequalities just two decades ago, better educational opportunities for women and their increased economic and political participation have drastically changed this situation. In particular, women's participation in politics and public and economic affairs has dramatically increased during this decade. This progress was made possible by the introduction of affirmative action plans, such as the "Gender Equality Recruitment Initiative in Public Service" and the Recruitment Target System for Women. We hope other countries examine and actively introduce similar initiatives for women's empowerment.

7. Among the most critical issues that we should not forget about is violence against women, even though it is not directly related to the MDGs. The international community has already achieved much progress in this area, but more is needed to fully eradicate violence against women. Women and girls are especially at risk to suffer from domestic violence and sexual assault during times of hardship. The international community should spare no effort in addressing priority issues such as gender-based violence against women in conflict, post-conflict, and post-crisis situations.

Mr. President,

8. We strongly believe that our capacity to tackle the many issues ahead of us hinges upon the UN system's efficient activities and operations. As such, strengthening Gender Architecture is all the more important in moving forward. In this regard, my delegation would like to express our satisfaction regarding the successful conclusion of the recent negotiations on the UN Gender Entity. We are confident that the establishment of the new Gender Entity, UN Women, will greatly contribute to the UN's capacity on Women's issues by streamlining the work and initiatives of various existing agencies into a more cohesive and synergistic whole.

9. Finally, Mr. President, we hope that ECOSOC can continue its important work and provide more useful guidance and recommendations for action to support progress in the area of gender equality and empowerment of women. Thank you.