



# THE REPUBLIC OF KOREA

PERMANENT MISSION TO THE UNITED NATIONS

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**Statement by H.E. Dr. Paik Hee Young**

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Mr. Chair,  
Distinguished Delegates,

1. It is my great pleasure to address the 54<sup>th</sup> Session of the Commission on the Status of Women on behalf of the Republic of Korea.
2. Today we gather here to celebrate the 15<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on Women and the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the 23<sup>rd</sup> Special Session of the General Assembly. I look forward to pooling together the wisdom that we have gained from the progress made thus far and looking ahead to future challenges. I believe that in our discussions we will be able to identify the best ways to work together to overcome those challenges.
3. I am also confident that our discussions in this session will prove to be yet another important milestone in our continued efforts to garner our strength to achieve meaningful progress in promoting gender equality, peace and sustainable development throughout the world.



4. The Beijing Platform for Action and the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) are the Bill of Rights for enhancing the status of women and ensuring the protection of their human rights. The Beijing Platform for Action has been regarded in particular, fundamental, since the governments have expressed their political will to achieve gender equality through concrete legislative and administrative measures.
5. The Republic of Korea has also faithfully participated in this universal step forward. Since the Fourth World Conference on Women, Korea has established comprehensive and systematic measures for the advancement of women, including the Framework Act on Women's Development and the Basic Plan for Women's Policies.
6. Taking this opportunity, I would like to share my government's experience in strengthening its institutional mechanisms for the efficient management of gender mainstreaming issues such as the launch of the Ministry of Gender Equality in 2001; the creation of the Women's Policy Coordination Committee in 2002 which deliberates on and coordinates major issues related to policies for women; the appointment of Senior Gender Policy Coordinator from 2003 who oversees the efficient implementation of policies for women; and the establishment of the National Assembly Committee on Gender Equality in 2003. These multi-layered mechanisms for implementing women's policies have been the driving force to take bold strides forward in the legal and institutional aspects of ensuring gender equality throughout the past 15 years.
7. Among others, the Ministry of Gender Equality was established in January 2001 as the national machinery responsible for planning and integrating all policies for women set forth by the respective government bodies. Since its creation, the Ministry has exerted sincere efforts to create jobs for women, abolish discriminatory practices and promote projects to empower women in order to establish gender equality in families, the workplace and society in general. The Ministry has also been working to strengthen gender mainstreaming policies to ensure gender equality in the establishment and pursuit of major national policies.
8. Efforts for gender mainstreaming have focused on the introduction of gender impact assessments and gender responsive budgeting. Gender impact assessments were first introduced in 2004 to 10 pilot projects managed by 9 government bodies. Since then, more government bodies have opted to have their projects undergo such assessments, and in 2009 the number reached 1,908 projects in 298 government bodies. It has been encouraging to see more cases where assessment results are reflected in statute amendments, policy improvements and the production of gender statistics.



9. Gender equality is taken into consideration in the process of establishing new policies since statistical data can only be approved when it takes account of gender in pursuant to the Statistical Data Act. Also, gender budgeting has begun in 2010 subsequent to the enactment of the National Finance Act in 2006.
10. This year, gender responsive budgeting is being applied to 195 projects, amounting to a total of 7.3144 trillion Korean won within the budget bill submitted to the National Assembly. I look forward to the expansion of the gender-sensitive perspective in the distribution of national financial resources in achieving greater gender equality within the budgets of all Korean Government bodies in the near future.
11. Gaining momentum from the abolishment of the *Huju* or family head system in 2007, the Ministry of Gender Equality has identified 385 discriminatory statutes, rules and ordinances. Based on the self-assessment, the Republic of Korea has doubled its efforts to revise them with a view to ensuring a further strengthened legal and institutional foundation for gender equality.
12. In order to maintain the momentum, gender equality in statutes and institutions should be translated into real action and be treated as an essential and mainstream element of all major national policies. A holistic approach in promoting gender equality should be applied in conjunction with overall social and economic development and issues pertaining to welfare.
13. Taking this into consideration, the Government of the Republic of Korea will reorganize the 'Ministry of Gender Equality' into the 'Ministry of Gender Equality and Family' to implement women's policies to the general public in a more comprehensive manner. The launch of the new Ministry on March 19, 2010, will allow us to integrate the policies for women, families and youths, opening the door to explore a new era in which men and women are partners in the family and in society. We also expect there to be a great synergy effect as the functions of the Ministry are strengthened and the base for women's policies is broadened.

Mr. Chair,

14. The Republic of Korea has also made great progress in dealing with violence against women and the human rights of women. Prostitution, sexual violence, domestic violence, sexual harassment and other forms of violence against women are treated as an infringement upon the human rights of women. These violations are dealt with through an integrated support system and wider prevention efforts with a view to realizing a violence-free society with full gender equality.



15. Through the legislation of the 'Act on the Punishment of Sexual Crimes and the Protection of Victims Thereof (in 1994)', the 'Special Law on the Punishment of Domestic Violence Crimes (in 1997)' and the 'Act on the Prevention of Domestic Violence and Protection etc. of Victims Thereof (in 1997)', violence and sexual violence are clearly stated as social crimes that most definitely call for active intervention by the government. The Korean Government has also continued its efforts to improve practices and awareness in the course of related investigations and trials.
16. Korea has implemented rules against sexual harassment through the 'Framework Act on Women's Development' and the 'Act on Gender Equality in Employment and Work-Family Balance', and has strengthened regulations against the sexual abuse of minors through the amendment (in 2000) of the 'Child Welfare Act'. In accordance with such legislative efforts, in 2001, the 1366 emergency call center was established to take calls from women in need of protection of their human rights, including victims of domestic violence, sexual violence and prostitution. Since 2008, Korea has also been implementing a 'Comprehensive Plan for the Protection of Children and Women'.
17. The Ministry of Gender Equality has also been operating '*Haebbaragi* (Sunflower) Centers' in 10 locations to provide counseling, medical and legal support to children under the age of 13, including those who are mentally-challenged and/or have been victimized by sexual violence. These centers focus on caring for and helping to heal the lifelong trauma that such horrendous crimes inflict upon children, and to protect the human rights of these young girls who will lead the future.
18. In the area of prostitution, we have established the 'Act on the Prevention of Prostitution and Protection of Victims Thereof' (in 2004) and the 'Comprehensive Action Plan against Prostitution', implementation of which is being overseen by the 'Task Force to Review the Implementation of the Prostitution Prevention Action Plan' comprised of 15 government bodies including the Prime Minister's Office, the Ministry of Gender Equality and the National Police Agency. Stronger punishments are in place for sex traffickers and brokers, while victims are offered support in their endeavors to break free from prostitution and protected through counseling centers, protection facilities and rehabilitation support centers. Efforts to prevent prostitution are also being made continuously through mandatory educational sessions in public organizations and expanded public awareness campaigns.

Mr. Chair,

19. For us to realize our collective commitment to enhancing the status of women, it is imperative that women are better represented in all areas of society, including the political, economic, social and



cultural realms. The patriarchal nature of traditional Korean society has hampered the participation of women in society. Even now, in the political world and in many other areas women are less active than their male counterparts. The government of Korea has been implementing various specified legal and institutional measures to rectify this situation and expand the participation of women in society.

20. In politics, the Civil Worker Electoral Act has been amended so that, for general elections and local council elections, political parties are required to include women in 50% or more of their nominations for the proportional seats. It also recommends 30% or more of the candidates up for election in local districts to be women. As a result, the ratio of woman parliamentarians rose considerably from 5.9% in the 16<sup>th</sup> (2000-2004) National Assembly to 13.7% in the 18<sup>th</sup> (2008-2012) National Assembly.
21. Target numbers have also been set for participation by women in government committees, and to raise the proportion of women in managerial positions of Grade 4 (director level) and higher within the central government bodies. We will continue until 2011 to implement a quota system that aims to place more women in higher governmental managerial positions. With these measures, we expect women to account for 40% of all government committee members, and that the number of women government employees at the Grade 4 level or higher will increase two-fold from the 2006 numbers to account for 10%.
22. Additionally, Korea has implemented such active measures as quotas for the employment of women, for gender equality in employment, for women professors, for women school principals and vice-principals and for women scientists in order to correct the imbalance in the workforce structure, particularly in fields where women have traditionally been underrepresented.

Mr. Chair,

23. Maximizing women's capabilities in the workplace is profoundly linked to achieving the MDGs and in ensuring sustainable development.
24. The Republic of Korea has recognized that the efficient utilization of women in the workforce is hindered by the departure of women from the labor market following childbirth and due to child-rearing responsibilities. We have, therefore, been focusing our efforts on establishing labor policies conducive to fully utilizing the potential of women in the workforce, and creating a social environment where women workers can work without any barriers.

25. The Korean government is expanding centers to assist women with their re-entry into the labor market after childbirth. We are working to create more “purple jobs,” specialize employment support functions, and build relevant infrastructure. We are also encouraging companies to become more women-friendly while seeking to better the public environment for childcare all in an effort to raise the economic activity participation ratio of women from the current 54.7% to 60% by 2014.

26. The Korean government is particularly focusing on gaining a firm acceptance of and further expanding ‘purple jobs’ to achieve a better work-family balance with flexible working hours that can be adjusted in accordance with child care needs and ensure job security and a full recognition of career experience.

27. In the long-term, we also hope to transform the social environment and workplace so that workers – both male and female- will have a more women-friendly mind-set and lifestyle. We will also continue to pursue the establishment of a new set of family values that are conducive to a better work-life balance.

Mr. Chair,

28. Despite many achievements at the national level since the adoption of the Beijing Platform of Action, the advancement of women still has a long way to go. Even though we have observed an extension in the average life span and an increase of awareness regarding the rights of women across the board, many new challenges and risks including climate change, an ageing society, urbanization and the increasing wealth gap impede the advancement of women’s rights.

29. As we witnessed the tsunami that hit South Asia in 2004 and the earthquake that struck Haiti this past January, natural disasters tend to disproportionately affect women more than men. We need to look into the complex effects of such distress impacting women and reflect our findings in the policy-making process, while continuing to engage more closely in international cooperative efforts.

30. In this regard, the government of the Republic of Korea pledges to support the capacity-building of women in developing countries through bilateral arrangements together with various international organizations. In particular, to achieve the MDGs of eliminating all inequality in education by 2015, Korea will fully devote itself to providing various education and training opportunities to women not only in Korea but throughout Asia, and also expand our ODA to this effect.

Mr. Chair,



31. We have seen much progress in promoting gender equality and enhancing the status of women in the 15 years since we adopted the Beijing Platform of Action. Unfortunately, however, not all countries around the world have experienced the same progress, and our efforts to fully implement the Beijing Platform for Action still face difficulties.
32. We need to be able to monitor the gender mainstreaming efforts of each country, establish an assessment mechanism, develop indicators to measure progress in gender equality, and continue to address practical tasks that can help reduce the gaps that exist between regions and countries. We need to establish the best possible strategy to address this common challenge and work together toward this goal.
33. I sincerely hope that the future-oriented strategies that arise out of this session will be put into action by each individual country, so that there are meaningful changes to the quality of life of women and all human beings.
34. I would like to conclude by once again reaffirming the Republic of Korea's unwavering commitment to a full and accelerated implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action. The Korean government will continue to actively participate in the global efforts to enhance the status of all women around the world.

Thank you.