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Statement by H.E. Ambassador SHIN Dong-Ik

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On agenda item 3: Follow-up to the Fourth World Conference on Women and to the twenty-third special session of the General Assembly, entitled “Women 2000: gender equality, development and peace for the twenty-first century”

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Madam Chair, Distinguished Delegates,

At the outset, I would like to extend my gratitude to the members of the Bureau and the staff of UN Women for their leadership and efforts in preparing for this year's session.

With the adoption of the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action and the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women in 1993, the international community has vowed to stamp out violence against women and made ongoing efforts in this regard. Nevertheless, violence against women still prevails across the globe. Indeed, it is clear that violence against women is still one of the most critical challenges of our time.

Madam Chair,

The role of government in the intervention, prevention, and punishment of violence against women is vital. The Korean Government has been working tirelessly to address various forms of violence against women in a comprehensive and coordinated manner, with the Ministry of Gender Equality and Family taking the lead.

In this regard, we have introduced a series of laws concerning sexual and domestic violence since the 1990s. Recently, in 2010, the Act on the Prevention of Sexual Assault and Protection of Victims Thereof was enacted, aiming to offer stronger support for victims of sexual assault. Last year, the National Assembly took the initiative to fight against sexual violence, which resulted in the amendment of the Criminal Act so that sexual assaults are prosecuted *ex officio* to prevent victims from being pressured to drop charges.

In addition, considering the high recidivism rate of sexual crimes, the Korean Government has toughened employment restrictions on high-risk sex offenders along with various deterrence measures, including the use of electronic tracking devices, mandatory post-prison supervision, and chemical castration.

We have also paid special attention to the prevention of sexual exploitation and violence against children. This year, the revised Act on the Protection of Children and Juveniles from Sexual Abuse came into effect to ensure the punishment of sex offenders committing crimes against children and young people even if victims do not explicitly request it. The Korean Government also enforced an all-out crackdown on child pornography.

With regard to domestic violence, the "Comprehensive Plan to Prevent Domestic Violence" was introduced in 2011. The Plan aims, among other things, to strengthen the initial response taken by law enforcement personnel in cases of domestic violence. It also features measures to better protect victims, including enhanced training of investigation personnel and an increase in the number of shelters for victims.

Madam Chair,

An effective policy response to violence against women requires accurate analysis and adequate data. To this end, the Korean Government conducts nationwide surveys every three years on domestic violence, sexual assault, and prostitution. The Republic of Korea is also committed to the international efforts to enhance gender-responsive data accumulation for the purposes of promoting gender equality. The Korean Government has provided financial support to the Evidence and Data for Gender Equality (EDGE) initiative, which was jointly launched by UN Women and the UN Statistics Division last year.

Madam Chair,

The Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action also stipulates that “[v]iolations of the human rights of women in situations of armed conflict are violations of the fundamental principles of international human rights and humanitarian law.”

Moreover, UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on women, peace and security adopted in October 2000 calls for an increase in the participation of women as active agents in conflict resolution, peace processes, and protection of women from gender-based violence. Fully committed to the resolution, the Government of the Republic of Korea, in consultation with civil society experts, is establishing a National Action Plan to ensure a more systematic implementation. Among other acts, the plan is expected to include measures to support the so-called “comfort women,” victims of military sexual slavery during the Second World War, whose suffering still reminds us of the brutality of sexual violence in wartime.

Madam Chair,

President Park Geun-hye, who was inaugurated as Korea's first female President on February 25th, has made the building of a safe society without violence a top priority of her agenda, underlining it as the very foundation of the welfare and well-being of the citizens of Korea. Condemning sexual and domestic violence as "social evils" that threaten public safety, President Park promises to implement multifaceted policies in order to root out all cases of such violence.

The Republic of Korea believes that the full realization of gender equality and eradication of gender discrimination are crucial to end violence against women. To this end, the Korean Government has also implemented a number of gender mainstreaming policies, including the five-year Basic Plans for Women's Policies, first launched in 1998. The recent introduction of gender impact assessments and gender-responsive budgeting and accounting is a notable development in this direction.

Madam Chair,

I am confident that during this year's session, we will be able to come up with strategies that will help all Member States find the way forward. The Republic of Korea remains committed to protecting women from all forms of discrimination and violence. It will cooperate with other Member States for the full and effective implementation of every pledge that is made during this year's session.

Thank you.

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