

THE 6th EAST ASIA MINISTERIAL FORUM ON FAMILIES

“Creating Family-Friendly Social Environment”

SEOUL, REPUBLIC OF KOREA

3-5 DECEMBER 2014

The Seoul Declaration: Joint Statement by the Ministers and Heads of Delegation for the 2014 EAMFF

INTRODUCTION

We, the Ministers and Heads of Delegation responsible for family policy from Brunei Darussalam, the Kingdom of Cambodia, the People's Republic of China, the Republic of Indonesia, the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Malaysia, Japan, the Republic of the Philippines, the Republic of Korea, the Kingdom of Thailand, Timor Leste, and the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam gathered at the sixth East Asia Ministerial Forum on Families (EAMFF) held in Seoul, the Republic of Korea on 3-5 December 2014, and discussed plans to build a family-friendly social environment that facilitates improving the quality of life for citizens and promoting work-family balance. Recognizing that this Forum represents a significant progress and endeavors in advancing work-family balance and establishing a family-friendly social environment, we have reached the following agreements and call for stronger volition, partnerships, and specific actions to achieve our common goals.

Acknowledging that families have always been the utmost mode and value of life in East Asia and will continue to play a crucial role in creating a sustainable Asian community for the future;

Respecting that families have their own religion, cultural traditions, social

norms, and particular circumstances in East Asian nations;

Recognizing that gender equality and women's empowerment are essential to enhance the well-being of families and societies, and that the shared responsibility of parents is crucial for the full participation of women in society;

Agreeing that family related issues arising from international marriages and migration deserve collective attention of the East Asian community as a whole;

Understanding that family care over our life span and work-family balance have become significant social issues as a consequence of active participation of women in economic activities, population aging, and the higher demand for better lives, and that the creation of a family-friendly social environment serves as a key solution thereto;

Expressing concerns that a family-friendly environment is not yet fully established in our society due to insufficient work-family balance policies, long working hours, and inflexible organizational culture at the workplace level, and due to inadequate support for family care and weakened solidarity at the community level;

And expecting that a family-friendly social environment, where families can enjoy a safe and happy life, will be created by promoting work-family balance and by expanding social support for family care, thereby enabling families to enjoy better quality of life and ensuring sustainable social development;

We, the Ministers and Heads of Delegation at the sixth East Asia Ministerial Forum on Families, are determined to:

1. **Encourage** families, companies, communities, and governments to share the value of creating a family-friendly social environment in order to balance work and family life;
2. **Strengthen** our efforts in crafting and implementing policies for creating a family-friendly workplace and community, and facilitating related financial and human resources;

3. **Encourage** employers to implement and reinforce family-friendly workplace policies, including flexible working arrangements, maternity and paternity leave, parental leave, on-site childcare facilities, family care leave and employee support programs, and to ensure employees' work-family balance by creating a family-friendly organizational culture;
4. **Facilitate** communities to build family-friendly infrastructure for family care, to provide counseling and educational services, and to establish a safe environment for protecting children, women, and the aged from violence;
5. **Develop** policies that enable family members to enjoy family time and activities, and protect children from harmful elements in cyberspace, which are emerging threats to a healthy family life and child-friendly environment;
6. **Acknowledge** the importance of helping young people appreciate family values by incorporating the significance of family values into school education.
7. **Strengthen** social safety nets that support the vulnerable families including families living in poverty and deprivation;
8. **Support** men's work-family balance and positive male role models in order to enable them to actively participate in family care and housework;
9. **Strive** to establish sustainable cooperation and partnerships among East Asian nations to allow their own multicultural family members to enjoy their due rights and to live in harmony within their community;
10. **Enhance** networking and collaboration among EAMFF members to share and archive information on family policy, research, and best practices;
11. **Agree** to consolidate the East Asia Ministerial Forum on Families and the East Asia Gender Equality Ministerial Meeting in 2016 to make more effective contributions to creating a family-friendly and gender-equal society.

12. Support the proposal to develop an international family-friendly social environment index which can be used in East Asia nations, and to start research of which findings will be discussed in the next Forum in the Kingdom of Thailand in November 2016.

CONCLUSION

We consent to make joint efforts to create a family-friendly social environment through continued policy sharing and cooperation among the participating nations in East Asia by tasking our senior officials to follow up on this Declaration.

We thank the government of the Republic of Korea for hosting this meaningful forum and express our sincerest gratitude for its warm hospitality. We look forward to meeting again at the next Forum to be held in the Kingdom of Thailand in 2016.