

Korea

Statement

by

**H.E. Dr. Jang Hajin
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The Republic of Korea**

at

**The East Asia Gender Equality
Ministerial Meeting**

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Madam Chair,

It is a great pleasure for me to address the East Asia Gender Equality Ministerial Meeting on behalf of the Government of the Republic of Korea.

Since the Fourth World Conference on Women, gender mainstreaming has been firmly established as the key strategy to achieve gender equality, and countries around the World have worked hard to integrate gender perspectives into all policies and programmes. The Government of the Republic of Korea has also strived to fulfill the goals of the Beijing Platform for Action.

Having said that, I am pleased to announce that my government has made another big step toward the advancement of women last April by appointing the first female Prime Minister Han, Myeong Sook , who was the first Minister of Gender Equality.

After the Fourth World Conference on Women in 1995, my government developed and implemented a comprehensive plan for the advancement of women. In particular, my government has focused on ensuring the introduction of gender perspective to government policies as well as setting up the necessary machineries for the advancement of women.

Beginning with the enactment of the Women's Development Act in 1995, my government has taken some of the measures including the adoption of the Basic Plan for Women's Policies, the designation of Women's Policy Officers across government ministries in 1998, the founding of the Ministry of Gender Equality in 2001 and the Women's Policy Coordination Committee in 2002 respectively, and the establishment of the Women's Affairs Committee of the Korean National Assembly in 2003.

In particular, the Ministry of Gender Equality(MOGE) was established in 2001 as a full-fledged government body to ensure that gender

perspective is introduced in all government policies. MOGE has made significant achievements in increasing the representation and competitiveness of women as well as mainstreaming the gender perspectives through the amendment of the maternity protection law, implementation of social sharing costs for maternity protection, and the escalation of women's participation in society.

And in June 2005, the Ministry was reformulated as the Ministry of Gender Equality and Family(MOGEF) in order to actively respond to family issues on a national level and work on comprehensive family policies which embrace various forms of families newly emerging as a result of socio-economic changes. As the Ministry responsible for developing, coordinating and supporting family policies across ministries, MOGEF is committed to structuring a social support network on childcare, senior support, family nursing and other areas and to create 'equal and happy families'.

MOGEF has launched various measures, including the proposed legislature of a "family-friendly environment enhancement law" and developed the Family Friendliness Index(FFI), with a focus on creating a family-friendly social atmosphere where work and family life can be compatible.

Also in response to changes in the family environment, MOGEF is providing educational and economic supports for various new forms of families such as international marriage families and single-parent families. In particular, the Ministry is operating International Marriage Support Centers in 21 locations across the country to support international marriage families and conducting a survey on international marriage families trying to prepare a legal and institutional foundation to support multi-cultural families to become an integrated part of the society.

As the issues of low birthrate and the aging society emerge in Korea, the importance of gender equality is being emphasized as an essential part of national development, and the role of women is becoming increasingly important. MOGEF aims to raise the women's participation rate in the

labor force, which is currently at 50.1%, and to maximize the use of female human resources with the establishment of a “Comprehensive HRD Plan for Women” to strategically increase the employment of women. Additionally, the characteristics of women’s lifecycle will be incorporated into the plan to further develop the capacity of women. Moreover, a mechanism including the central and local governments will be established to systematically overlook the implementation and evaluation of the related policies.

The Government of the Republic of Korea has also been actively promoting childcare policies to share families’ burden of childcare which is a key reason behind the seriously low birthrate and women’s limited presence in the labor force. As of 2006, USD 790 Million was allocated for childcare, which is a 400% growth from 2002 and child-care support for low income families has been substantially expanded. A basic subsidy program has been introduced to improve the quality of service at private child-care facilities and to reduce financial burden of parents. In addition, my government has implemented comprehensive and systematic childcare policies based on the 1st Mid- and Long-Term Childcare Plan covering the period between 2006 and 2010.

Madam Chair,

The Government of the Republic of Korea has been working to mainstream equality as a major and fundamental part of national policies through analyzing the influence of government policies on men and women, developing gender sensitive measures.

Through various rounds of key meetings, including cabinet meetings and women’s policy coordination meetings, consensus on the need for gender-based analysis has mounted within the cabinet. Based on the consensus, pilot projects were carried out in 2004 on 9 government agencies. Gender-based analysis was further adopted by all central and local governments in 2005 and gender-based analysis was conducted on 85 policies. In 2006, the scope was expanded to also include municipal governments and a total of 278 policies will be reviewed.

Gender disaggregated data and statistics are critical in adopting gender perspective in policy making and to monitor the implementation of progress. To facilitate the development and gathering of gender statistics, the Ministry of Gender Equality and Family concluded a MOU with the National Statistical Office in December 2005.

Madam Chair,

Since the Beijing Platform for Action was adopted, gender mainstreaming has become an important factor in the policy-making of many states and gender stereotyping has been abated to some degree in the last ten years. No doubt these are remarkable achievements.

However, in this world of infinite global competition, feminization of poverty is becoming more serious and there are many new issues that call for international cooperation such as women's unemployment, trafficking in persons and migration of women workers.

In this sense, this Meeting is a timely opportunity for us to assess past progress and to build a new paradigm for the advancement of women in the future. I would like to take this opportunity to reiterate the commitment of the Government of Republic of Korea to working toward our common goal, the empowerment of women throughout the world.

And I would like to conclude by expressing the gratitude of my government to the Japanese Government for holding this meaningful Meeting to reconfirm the importance of gender equality and exchange opinions and policies on facilitating gender equality in the region.

I thank you. Madam Chair.