

Statement by H.E. Dr. Jang Hajin
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The 39th Session of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination
Against Women

July 31, 2007

New York

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<Introduction>

Honorable Chairperson and Members of the Committee,

I am very glad to have this opportunity to talk to you on the subject of the 5th and 6th Periodic Reports submitted by the Government of the Republic of Korea on the implementation of the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women. This occasion holds particular meaning for me as I am for the first time representing the Government of the Republic of Korea as head of the Ministry of Gender Equality and Family, which replaced the Ministry of Gender Equality in 2005.

The impact of the CEDAW in the formulation of policies by the Government of the Republic of Korea has been profound, with the ROK government displaying a strong political will to achieve gender equality.

Since ratifying the CEDAW in 1984, the Government of the Republic of Korea has taken proactive measures to achieve the advancement of women through comprehensive and systematic means, submitting six reports to date and holding three sessions of constructive dialogue with the Committee. In particular, the Government of the Republic of Korea has concentrated on putting in place the institutional mechanisms for the enhancement of the status of women and focused on ensuring that such institutions become firmly established.

As a result of such efforts there has been remarkable progress in achieving gender equality in laws and institutions. Indeed, the last ten years have yielded remarkable advances in women's rights, marking a time of fresh impetus for real change and achieving actual improvements in women's rights.

I would now like to briefly comment on the matters set out in the 5th and 6th National reports as well as key measures that the Korean government has taken to implement the Convention following the submission of the 2006 report.

<**Substance**>

Strengthening Gender-Discrimination Laws and Policies

In 2005, we abolished the family headship system, which was an archetypal policy discriminating against women. The elimination of the family headship system, a long cherished hope of Korean women, signifies a drastic change in the family structure. It has paved the way for the achievement of gender equality for future generations. This has cleared the way for the withdrawal

Establishing a system for women's policies has been the driving force behind our efforts to advance women's policies over the past decade. As a result, women's policies now encompass a wider range of policy areas, and great progress has been made in laws and institutions.

Under the First Basic Plan for Women's Policies that was implemented from 1998 to 2002, an Office of Women's Policy was established in six central government ministries. In addition, various laws, regulations and rules that discriminated against women have been identified and revised. In particular, through a review of the entire legislation of the ROK, which took place in two stages from the second part of 2005 to the first part of 2006, 385 gender-discriminative provisions have been identified and these are currently being improved.

Following the Second Basic Plan for Women's Policies, implemented from 2003 to 2007, we have now achieved the institutionalization of the Women's Policy Coordination Committee under the Office of the Prime Minister. In addition, public officials at the level of Deputy Minister in central government organizations have been appointed as Senior Gender Policy Coordinators. An inter-ministerial system for the promotion of women's policies is therefore in place.

It is with the aim of achieving fundamental advances in reducing discrimination against women that the Government of the Republic of Korea launched the Korean Institute for Gender Equality Promotion and Education (KIGEPE) in 2003. We are also developing a variety of educational programs customized according to life stages and target population groups, and disseminating these programs to educational institutions nationwide.

In particular, the KIGEPE is conducting gender-sensitivity training for public officials across the nation in order to ensure that equality is achieved between men and women in the realization of government policies.

As for the Korean Women's Development Institute, which was established in 1983, following the 1975 International Year of Women and the recommendations of the United Nations, it has been modified in 2000 to function purely as a women's policies research organization. During the past 2 decades, approximately 90 researchers, including doctorate level specialists from diverse sectors, have been formulating and advising on government policies on women's issues of various fields such as law, politics, education, labor, family and health.

The Ministry of Gender Equality and Family is pursuing a number of initiatives to support and cooperate with women's groups. Since 2001, we have been strengthening such cooperation through joint cooperative initiatives between the private sector and the government. We are forming close networks by supporting the Korean Women's Conference and the National Women's Conference and thereby strengthening partnerships for the effective pursuit of women's policies.

Honorable Chairperson and Members of the Committee,

The Republic of Korea is deeply committed to embracing gender mainstreaming and is resolved to abide by the Beijing Platform for Action and to implement the CEDAW in concrete ways.

In December 2002, the Women's Development Act was revised with the aim of ensuring that gender impact was taken into account in the formulation of all government policies, thereby serving as a foundation for the

pursuit of women's policies. And an analysis of gender-impact in policy in central government bodies and local government is currently under way.

Moreover, in order to ensure that the gender equality perspective is taken into consideration in the policy-making process, the Statistical Act stipulates that gender-disaggregated data be incorporated as part of the criteria for the approval of statistical data. In accordance with the National Fiscal Act enacted in 2006, gender-sensitive budget policy will enter into effect in 2010. This represents a milestone in reinforcing gender equality in the budgets of government ministries by fully reflecting gender sensitivity in the allocation of the nation's financial resources. To ensure the success of the policy, the Korean Institute for Gender Equality Promotion and Education (KIGEPE) is conducting training on gender budgets for public officials in central ministries and local governments.

Special Measures to Eliminate Discrimination against Women

Traditionally the participation of women in society has been relatively low in Korea and due to the remnants of the patriarchal in T

childcare support in the workplace and increasing the percentage borne by society for maternity protection costs. By adopting the Policy of Subsidies for Continued Employment after Childbirth, we are enhancing job security for female temporary workers and forming the basis for the practical protection of maternity rights.

To fully utilize the female workforce, it is a prerequisite to have social facilities such as childcare centers that women can safely entrust their children to. We are strengthening the public contribution to childcare by increasing childcare subsidies and providing childcare services for infants, disabled children and children of working mothers. We are also improving the quality of childcare services with the adoption of the Childcare Evaluation and Accreditation policy.

The Childcare Budget has been increased up to 500% in 2007 from that of 2002, reaching 1.16 Billion US Dollars (1.1435 trillion won), and Childcare facilities have been provided free of charge for low income families. Since 2006, basic subsidies for children under 2 years of age are being provided and as from next year, basic subsidies will be provided to 3 to 5 years old children as well.

Nevertheless, the reality is that discrepancies in male and female employment ratios and wages, a gender-discriminating labor market and labor practices still continue.

It is no exaggeration to say that a nation's competitiveness in the 21st century is dependent on the utilization of the female workforce. In order to make full use of the capabilities of women and develop their potential, the government of the Republic of Korea will further increase its commitment to addressing gender discrimination in employment and fostering an environment conducive to creating jobs for women.

Addressing Disproportionate Concentration in Career Choices

We are seeking to move beyond the conventional job choices for women following stereotypical gender roles. To this end, we are making efforts to prompt women, who represent a resource pool of great potential in the knowledge-based society of the 21st century, to choose the field of science and technology, and encouraging female students to ente

We have established the Act on Healthy Families and the Five-Year Family Policy Plan to build the foundation for a universal and comprehensive family policy. Furthermore, we have supported initiatives for low-income single parent households and welfare centers for single parents and children. This is to help low-income single parent households and unmarried mothers who are in need of a social safety net.

As part of efforts to bring about change in the male-oriented family culture and create a family-friendly social environment, we have developed and applied the Family Friendliness Index (FFI), an indicator to measure a company's operation of family-friendly programs.

Recently, there has been a steep rise in international marriages in Korea. As a result, we are facing new challenges and are seeking to come up with ways to provide support to and protect the rights of female immigrants in international marriages.

The government of the Republic of Korea has established the Policy for Social Integration of Families with Migrant Women in 2006 and has formed a Task Force, comprising representatives of 12 Ministries, to monitor progress made. In cooperation with the International Organization for Migration (IOM), we are establishing a system to prevent the infringement of the human rights of migran

