

Candidature of the Republic of Korea to the Human Rights Council, 2020-2022

Voluntary pledges and commitments pursuant to General Assembly resolution 60/251

1. Introduction

The Republic of Korea has a unique experience of improving its human rights situation in the process of democratization and economic development over the last decades. These achievements were made possible not only by the strong will of the Korean people to overcome crises, but also by the close cooperation with the international community. Based on these valuable assets, the Republic of Korea would like to contribute to the improvement of the human rights situation around the world. Particularly for least developed countries, the Republic of Korea would like to play an active role as a bridge in the Human Rights Council. In this regard, the Republic of Korea has strengthened a people-centred approach in implementing development cooperation projects, with a focus on protecting and promoting the human rights situation, and further supported the achievement of Sustainable Development Goals.

The Republic of Korea firmly upholds the universal value of human rights as a centrepiece of its policy goals. As a State Party to seven core international human rights conventions, the Republic of Korea is earnestly striving to implement the provisions of the relevant conventions at the national level in cooperation with various stakeholders. Furthermore, the Republic of Korea has actively participated in the activities of the UN Human Rights Council and the Third Committee of the UN General Assembly, working closely with the international community for the protection and promotion of human rights around the world.

At the national level, the Republic of Korea drew up the *third National Action Plan for the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights 2018-2022*. The plan covers 272 human rights-related tasks and outlines the commitment of the Republic of Korea towards better human rights protection in line with its international human rights obligations.

2. Contribution to International Efforts to Promote and Protect Human Rights and Development of National Human Rights Policies

A. Women's Rights

(a) The Republic of Korea has continued to support and contribute to global efforts to promote gender equality and empowerment of women. We have co-sponsored resolutions of the Human Rights Council and the UN General Assembly on elimination of violence and discrimination against women.

(b) As for international cooperation in promoting and protecting women's rights, the Republic of Korea has served as a member of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) and actively participated in discussions on promotion of gender equality, elimination of sexual violence and empowerment of women and shared our efforts and best practices. We also have been participating in the Executive Board of UN Women since its establishment in 2010.

(c) The Republic of Korea drew up the *second Basic Plan for Gender Equality Policy 2018-2022* as a comprehensive national plan for promoting gender equality. In addition, the Republic of Korea established the *Plan for Improving Women's Representation in Key Public Sectors 2018-2022* in 2017 and already reached its target ratios in some sectors including director-level at central and local government agencies in 2018. We will continue our efforts to increase women's participation in key decision-making processes in the public sector.

(d) In drafting, implementing and evaluating its development cooperation projects, the Republic of Korea is expanding gender perspectives in policies and projects. The Korea International Cooperation Agency (KOICA) set up the *Gender Equality Mid-Term Strategy 2016-2020* with a vision to promote gender equality and women's dignity in society and is trying to contribute to the empowerment of women and elevation of their status in developing countries. By employing this strategy, the Republic of Korea will contribute to international efforts to promote gender equality and sustainable development, in the spirit of equity and universality of the Sustainable Development Goals.

(e) Regarding the "Women, Peace and Security" agenda, the Republic of Korea has expressed its strong support for the UN Security Council Resolution 1325. In 2018, we established the *second National Action Plan to implement the Security Council resolution 1325 on women, peace and security, and its subsequent resolutions*.

(f) The Republic of Korea has launched an "Action with Women and Peace" Initiative to contribute to international efforts to promote the "Women, Peace and Security" agenda including the elimination of sexual violence in conflict in June 2018 and under this initiative, we will embark on projects to address the particular needs of women and girls in and post-conflict situations and hold an annual international conference to discuss issues of critical importance under the Women, Peace and Security agenda.

B. Children's Rights

(a) The Republic of Korea sets a good example to the world with its transition from a recipient of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) in the 1950s to a major donor today. The Republic of Korea is a member of the Executive Board of UNICEF, contributing to UNICEF's policy-making process and projects for children in need. Moreover, the Republic of Korea has held annual bilateral meetings with UNICEF since 2004 and signed the ROK-UNICEF Framework Agreement in 2009, paving the way for strengthened international cooperation for the protection of children's rights.

(b) At the national level, the Republic of Korea has strived to promote the rights of children. The Republic of Korea has achieved many accomplishments, including but not limited to: withdrawing the reservation to Article 21 paragraph (a) of Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) by legislating a new adoption law; drawing up the *first Master Plan for Child Policy 2015-2019* which prioritized the best interests of children; and establishing the Child Rights Committee as an independent monitoring institute under the National Human Rights Commission of Korea.

(c) As for child abuse, the Republic of Korea will promote the *Act on Special Cases Concerning the Punishment, etc. of Child Abuse Crime* enacted in 2014 and operate the Inter-Ministerial Committee on Countering Child Abuse

launched in 2015 to develop prevention measures of child abuse through continuous consultation and cooperation. Furthermore, the Republic of Korea will participate sincerely in the upcoming meeting with the Committee on the Rights of the Child to review the fifth and sixth national reports on the implementation of CRC in 2019.

C. Rights of Persons with Disabilities

(a) The Republic of Korea assumed the presidency of the Conference of States Parties to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) for the period of 2015-2016. During its tenure, the Republic of Korea led the UN General Assembly resolution 70/170 on “the full realization of an inclusive and accessible United Nations for persons with disabilities.” and upgraded the Accessibility Centre at the UN Headquarters in New York in 2016.

(b) On the occasion of the Pyeongchang Paralympics in 2018, the Republic of Korea hosted an international forum on the rights of persons with disabilities. During the forum, participants from governments, experts and NGOs discussed ways to promote the participation of persons with disabilities in society and share their experiences.

(c) Striving to make the society more inclusive for persons with disabilities, the Republic of Korea drew up the *fifth Comprehensive Policy Plan for Persons with Disabilities 2018-2022*. In implementing the Plan, we will continue our efforts to be fully engaged in the international human rights instruments including Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD). Serving as a co-chair of the Steering Committee on Accessibility (SCA) with Antigua and Barbuda, the Republic of Korea will continue its efforts to enhance accessibility of persons with disabilities at the UN in cooperation with the President of the General Assembly, UN Secretariat, UN Member States and other stakeholders.

D. Rights of Migrants and Refugees

(a) The Republic of Korea has contributed to global efforts for refugee protection since it joined the Executive Committee of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in 2000. In 2016, we joined the UNHCR “20+ million club,” an informal forum for donors who contributed more than USD 20 million to the organization. Moreover, the Republic of Korea has worked closely with the International Organization on Migration (IOM) including the support for the implementation of the *IOM Private Sector Partnership Strategy 2016-2020*.

(b) In 2013, the Republic of Korea enforced the stand-alone *Refugee Act* to enhance its expertise in refugee status determination procedures and provide social care for refugees and asylum seekers. In addition, the Republic of Korea has been carrying out “the pilot refugee resettlement program” since 2015. The Republic of Korea established the *third Basic Plan for Immigration Policy* and the *third Basic Plan for Multi-cultural Family Policy* for the period of 2018-2022, respectively.

(c) The Republic of Korea joined the *Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration* and *Global Compact on Refugees* in 2018 and seeks to continue its cooperation with related international organizations, governments

and other stakeholders including the participation in the Global Refugee Forum in 2019.

E. Democracy

(a) As a core sponsor of the resolutions on “Human Rights, democracy and the rule of law” and “Role of good governance in the promotion and protection of human rights,” the Republic of Korea is contributing to advancing the democratic principles to achieve the UN 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda which acknowledges the importance of human rights, rule of law, good governance, peace and security for achieving sustainable development.

(b) The Republic of Korea will continue its contribution to promote and consolidate democracy by playing an active role in the work of the Community of Democracies as a member of its Governing Council and Executive Board, and by supporting the United Nations Democracy Fund as a member of its Advisory Board.

3. Contribution to Expand the Frontier of Human Rights Issues

A. Local Government and Human Rights

(a) Since 2013, the Republic of Korea has led the adoption of the resolution on Local Government and Human Rights to encourage the role of local governments in promoting and protecting human rights. In the margins of the 35th session of the Human Rights Council in 2017, we held an Intersessional Panel Discussion on the role of local government in the promotion and protection of human rights to share experiences and best practices of the human rights policy of local governments.

(b) The Republic of Korea will continue to make its efforts to seek a more active role of local government in promotion and protection of human rights including through leading the related resolutions on human rights. Along with central governments, local governments can play an important role in promoting human rights and further achieving Sustainable Development Goals.

B. New Technology and Human Rights

(a) To identify human rights opportunities and challenges presented by the fourth Industrial Revolution and new technology and explore ways to respond them, the Republic of Korea held a side event on New Technology and Human Rights in cooperation with the OHCHR in the margins of the 39th session of the Human Rights Council in 2018. The Republic of Korea also hosted an international forum on new technology and human rights in Seoul in December 2018, where participants could discuss the impact of new technology on human rights and roles of international organizations, governments, NGOs, experts and related-stakeholders.

(b) The Republic of Korea will seek to expand the scope of human rights discussions in the Human Rights Council through various fora and resolutions on human rights issues which emerge with the advent of new technology.

4. Participation in Human Rights Instruments and their Implementation

(a) The Republic of Korea has ratified and implemented the seven fundamental international human rights treaties and Optional Protocols: CERD, CEDAW and its Optional Protocol, ICESCR, ICCPR and its Optional Protocol, CRC and its two Optional Protocols, CAT and CRPD.

(b) Following its pledges for the HRC election for the period of 2016-2018, the Republic of Korea withdrew the reservation to Article 21 paragraph (a) of the Convention on the Rights of the Child in 2018. We also ratified the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children (The Palermo Protocol) in 2015.

(c) The Republic of Korea has cooperated and worked closely with human rights treaty bodies through timely submission of national reports and implementation of concluding observations. We will continue our efforts to cooperate with treaty bodies including through upcoming review procedures and ensure the full compliance with the human rights instruments to which the Republic of Korea is a party.

(d) The Republic of Korea will seek to ratify additional human rights instruments and withdraw reservations made to the human rights instruments in line with the recent advancement of human rights in the Republic of Korea, including legal amendments and institutional developments in a wide array of fields:

- Examining the possibility of becoming a party to the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearances;
- Examining the possibility of accession to the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment;
- Considering the withdrawal of its reservations to Article 16, paragraph (g) of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and Article 25, paragraph (e) of the Convention on Rights of Persons with Disabilities;
- Considering the ratification of the Hague Convention on Protection of Children and Cooperation in Respect of Intercountry Adoption;
- Considering the ratification of the ILO fundamental conventions.

5. Contribution to Human Rights Council

A. Full Support for and Active Participation in the Human Rights Mechanisms

(a) The Republic of Korea was a member of Human Rights Council when it was established in 2006 and most recently elected for the term of 2016-2018. During its tenure, the Republic of Korea has been actively engaged in discussions on major human rights issues, ranging from the protection and promotion of vulnerable groups to country-specific human rights issues.

(b) In 2016, the Permanent Representative of the Republic of Korea to the United Nations Office at Geneva, Choi Kyong-lim, was elected as President of

the Human Rights Council, making significant contributions to discussions of the HRC on making the Council more effective and efficient.

(c) In order to support the participation of Least Developed Countries and Small Island Developing States in the Human Rights Council, the Republic of Korea has steadily made contributions to the LDCs/SIDS Trust Fund.

(d) The Republic of Korea extended a standing invitation to all thematic special procedures in 2008 and invited 8 special procedures between January 2016 and February 2019. The Republic of Korea has held candid and constructive dialogues with special procedures during their visits including Special Rapporteur on peaceful assembly and association and Working Group on business and human rights in 2016, Special Rapporteur on adequate housing in 2018. We further supported the Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances to hold the 111th session in Seoul in 2017. Furthermore, the Republic of Korea has made financial contribution to the Coordination Committee of special procedures to support collaborated activities of 56 special procedures. We will continue to cooperate with the special procedures of the Human Rights Council by rendering its full support for their visits.

(e) The Republic of Korea will play an active role in human rights advocacy around the world by constructively participating in a wide range of discussions to promote all aspects of human rights and remain constructively engaged in the activities of the Human Rights Council and supporting the fulfilment of its mandate and functions.

B. Constructive Engagement in Universal Periodic Review

(a) The Republic of Korea places great importance on the Universal Periodic Review mechanism and has fully engaged itself in the entire UPR process in good faith. The Republic of Korea has undergone the third Universal Periodic Review in 2017 in an open and constructive manner, and actively participated in the UPR Working Group session.

(b) We conducted a review of the recommendations made during an interactive dialogue within the National Human Rights Policy Council. The recommendations accepted in the review process are incorporated into the third *National Action Plan for the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights (2018-2022)*.

(c) Moreover, for substantial improvement in the human rights situation of least developed countries, the Republic of Korea has contributed to the UPR Voluntary Fund for Financial and Technical Assistance and the Voluntary Fund for Participation in the UPR Mechanism.

(d) The Republic of Korea will remain firmly supportive of the UPR and the collective efforts of the international community in the promotion and protection of human rights worldwide through constructive engagement in it and through dialogue with the States under review.

C. Cooperation with Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR)

(a) The Republic of Korea strongly supports the work of the OHCHR and has committed continuous contributions to OHCHR including the field-based structure in Seoul. We have been working closely with the organization on

various issues including New Technology and Human Rights. The Republic of Korea's contributions to OHCHR have increased more than sixfold over the last 10 years. In cooperation with OHCHR, we will continue to advocate gender equality, child protection, democracy, good governance, the rule of law and fundamental human rights and freedom.
