

**UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women
Pre-Sessional Working Group of the 69th Session
Informal Public Briefing with NGOs**

**Oral statement made by Ms. Youngsook Cho
Korea Women's Associations United (KWAU)**

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Good morning, Madame Chair and distinguished members of the CEDAW Committee,

I thank you for this opportunity to speak before you. My name is Youngsook Cho, representing the Korea Women's Associations United (KWAU), an umbrella organization of women's groups in the Republic of Korea. To our regret, we could not prepare a written submission in time. As you may know, a series of political upheavals overwhelmed our country in the recent months, and the newly elected President Moon Jae-In took office last May. In response to such changing context, we KWAU are realigning our advocacy strategy and exploring ways for meaningful contribution to the CEDAW's consideration of the 8th periodic report, which was submitted by the former impeached government but will be taken up next February by the current new government. Now, let me present six critical areas of concern in hopes that the Committee members will highlight them in the List of Issues.

First, we call on the government to significantly improve its policy coordination mechanism to ensure gender mainstreaming across all central and local governments. Gender equality policies cannot be trusted in the hands of one single government ministry. Currently, the Ministry of Gender Equality and Family (MOGEF) accounts for only 0.18% of the government annual budget. MOGEF's mandate and functioning needs to be further expanded and strengthened, and more importantly, an overarching presidential body must be established to enforce in a more integrated and coordinated manner the government's gender mainstreaming strategy and tools such as gender-impact assessments and gender-responsive budgeting. We also suggest the CEDAW Committee to ask the government regarding the status of its partnership with and support for women's organizations, particularly the most marginalized and vulnerable groups of women and girls, in the formulation and implementation of gender equality policies.

Second, women's representation in political and public sectors remains extremely low. The government should be able to explain to the CEDAW Committee why women are not adequately represented in the national and local elections, despite the existing legal provisions of electoral gender quotas as stipulated in the Public Official Election Act, the Political Fund Act, and the Political Parties Act. The government needs to provide information on what measures have been taken in cases of infringement on such legal provisions. Moreover, gender parity in the government and other public sectors continues to remain as a mere aspiration. The policy goal and targets of gender-balanced quotas must be translated into concrete action plans with a clear time frame in order to make actual progress in the cabinet, public officials at managerial levels, public education institutions, and public media entities, among others.

Third, the situation faced by female irregular workers warrants special attention of the CEDAW Committee. Among OECD countries, South Korea has continued to be top-ranked in terms of gender wage gap (63.3% of men's wages in 2015). One of the reasons for such a dire record lies in the fact that around 40% of women workers are concentrated in low-wage irregular jobs. The CEDAW Committee also needs to be provided with information on the measures taken by the government to prevent sexual harassment in small enterprises where most of female part-time workers are employed. It must be also noted that female irregular workers are often excluded from social security benefits, such as employment insurance, maternity and childcare leave. Further, the value of unpaid care and reproductive work should be fully recognized, and the government needs to play an active role in redistributing the burden of domestic and care work in the Korean society among individuals, family, market and the government.

Fourth, comprehensive policy measures for sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) must be developed and implemented urgently. It is deeply troubling that since the CEDAW Committee's previous concluding observations in 2011, the government has yet to take the necessary measures to remove punitive provisions of the Criminal Code imposed on women who undergo an abortion. Quality medical service on SRHR must be delivered as part of the national health insurance coverage, to be in line with the Programme of Action of the ICPD Beyond 2014. Also, the government should be able to explain to the CEDAW Committee the objectives and content of the 'National Standard on Sexual Education' which was introduced by the Ministry of Education in 2015, including on how the National Standard addresses issues of sex/gender stereotypes, gender and sexual diversity, among others.

Fifth, the government must take legislative and other measures to respond to those emerging and far-increasing cases of gender-based violence in the digital era. Specific legal and policy measures are crucial in preventing digital sexual violence, such as the release of intimate videos with no consent and sexual images/videos of women taken by hidden cameras, and online stalking. Effective measures must be taken to prevent numerous forms of misogynistic languages, attitudes and behaviors, which have become prevalent in cyberspace and media recently. With respect to the CEDAW Committee's previous concluding observations on the structural causes of violence against women, the government should provide updated information on the steps taken to collect relevant data in a systematic manner and to establish an effective policy feedback procedure. Further, the government must present to the CEDAW Committee concrete plans with a clear time frame to adopt a comprehensive Anti-Discrimination Act, which will serve as a legal basis to address hate crimes against social minorities, including women.

Last but not least, the government must accelerate its measures to address gender stereotypes, to transform patriarchal structures, and to improve accountability for gender-discriminatory language, attitude, behaviors and social norms. State-run awareness programs regarding sexual harassment, sexual violence, domestic violence, and sexual exploitation and prostitution should be further enhanced to cover their structural root causes. Information on the means and processes of monitoring and evaluation over such programs needs to be presented to the CEDAW Committee with a view to ensuring the quality of curricula, methodologies and trainers from a gender equality perspective.

Thank you very much for your attention. A fuller version of this oral statement, which contains detailed information and a list of suggested questions, is available. We do look forward to further

conversation with you this week.