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Elections to **fill** vacancies in subsidiary organs and other elections:
election of 47 members of the Human Rights Council

Note verbale dated 4 April 2006 from the Permanent Mission of the Republic of Korea to the United Nations addressed to the Secretariat

The Permanent Mission of the Republic of Korea to the United Nations presents its compliments to the Secretariat of the United Nations, and has the honour to inform the latter that the Government of the Republic of Korea has decided to present its candidature for the United Nations Human Rights Council at the elections to be held on 9 May 2006.

The Republic of Korea attaches the utmost importance to the advancement of human rights as a fundamental universal value. Along with consistent efforts towards enhancing human rights standards at the domestic level, the Republic of Korea is firmly committed to contributing to the promotion and protection of human rights around the world.

As an active member of the United Nations Commission on Human Rights since 1993, the Republic of Korea welcomes the launch of the Human **Rights** Council and hopes to continue to play a constructive role in the advancement of human rights and fundamental freedoms as well as in the establishment and development of the Council in accordance with the high expectations that the Member States of the United Nations place upon its noble mission.



Annex to the note verbale dated 4 April 2006 from the Permanent Mission of the Republic of Korea to the United Nations addressed to the Secretariat

Republic of Korea: voluntary pledges and commitments on human rights

I. Background

The Government of the Republic of Korea (ROK) places great importance on human rights as a universally shared value steadfastly advocated by the United Nations for six decades. The promotion and protection of human rights is a priority in the ROK's national as well as foreign policy goals.

Having been inspired by the UN's commitment to human rights and fundamental freedoms throughout its own process of democratization and economic development, the Republic of Korea attests to the imperative of human rights in the betterment of societies. The Government is making every effort to achieve continued improvements in the human rights situation within the Republic of Korea. It also endeavors to spread democracy and human rights worldwide.

The ROK is a signatory to the following six major human rights treaties, and to most of their Optional Protocols, regularly submitting reports on their implementation :

- **International** Covenant on Economic, **Social** and Cultural Rights (1990)
- **International** Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1990)
- * First **Optional** Protocol to **ICCPR** (1990)
- Convention on the Elimination of All **Forms** of Discrimination against Women (1985)
- **International** Convention on the Elimination of All **Forms** of Racial Discrimination (1979)
- Convention Against **Torture** and **Other** Cruel, **Inhuman** or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (1979)
- Convention on the **Rights** of **the** Child (1991)
- * **Optional Protocol** on the **involvement** of Children in **armed conflict** (1994)
- * **Optional Protocol** on **the Rights** of the Child on the sale of **children**, **child** prostitution and child pornography (1994)

Since its entry into the UN in 1991, the **Republic** of Korea has been actively involved in the work of the key human rights organizations of the United Nations. It has been a **member** of the Commission on **Human Rights** since 1993. It has also contributed to a wide range of discussions and programs for the promotion

of all aspects of human rights, including the recent discussion for the creation of the **Human Rights Council (HRC)**.

Furthermore, in the conviction that **human rights is best served** by democracy and democratic governance, it has played a leading role in **the formation of the Community of Democracies (CD)**. It has subsequently played a key role in the work of the **CD** as a member of **the Convening Group (CG)**.

In **the Republic of Korea**, the **National Human Rights Commission (NHRC)** was established in November 2001 with the **mandate** to investigate and **remedy human rights violations**, to provide **education** and **raise public awareness** in the field of **human rights**, to conduct **research**, and to recommend legislative, institutional, or policy initiatives relating to human rights. The Commission has become a vital **force** for the promotion and protection of **human rights** in the Republic of Korea. In particular, in January 2006 it put forward its own proposal for a "**National Human Rights Plan of Action (NAP)**" for the period 2007-2011 to **serve** as a guideline for a comprehensive national plan for the advancement of **human rights**.

The Government of **the ROK** **recently** adopted legal **amendments** to **ensure** the advancement of human rights in a wide **array** of fields. **These include gender equality (the abolishment of the male-dominated family registry system)**, labor rights (revisions of the labor law allowing teachers and public servants to **engage** in union-related **political** activities), judicial parity for the rights of victims as well as **suspects** in criminal cases, and **non-discriminatory measures** for foreign **nationals**.

II. Pledges and Commitments

In line with its dedication to **the noble aim of the promotion and protection of human rights**, the Republic of Korea **commits itself**:

To further advance human rights at the national level :

- I. By **taking** the following steps with **respect to the withdrawal** of reservations made to and **the ratification of the UN human rights instruments** in accordance with the **recent** advancement of human rights in the **ROK including** legal amendments **and** institutional developments in a **wide** array of fields :
 - promptly acceding to the Optional Protocol to the CEDAW Convention ;
 - **examining** the withdrawal of its **reservations made** to the International Covenant on Civil and Political **Rights** (14-5), the **UN**

Convention **against** Torture (21 and 22) as well as to the CEDAW Convention (16-1-g) in the near **future** ;

- considering the accession of the Optional Protocol to the UN Convention against Torture in the near future.
2. By considering **the** ratification of **the** following 4 out of the 8 ILO **Fundamental** Conventions by **2008** :
 - Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organize Convention (No.87)
 - Right to **Organize** and **Collective** Bargaining Convention (No.98)
 - Forced Labour Convention (No.29)
 - Abolition of Forced Labour Convention (No.105)
 3. By setting, in accordance with the **recommendation** of the UN, the 'National Action Plan on Human Rights(NAP)' for **2007-2011***, which is expected to be completed at **the end** of the year 2006. **The NAP, a blueprint** for human rights policy, will set out guidelines for **the advancement** of human rights in a comprehensive and **forward-looking** manner.
 - * **The major aim of the NAP 2007-2011 is to propose institutional provisions to protect the socially vulnerable and minorities, and to draw up laws and institutions to build a strong basis for political, economic, social and cultural rights.**
 4. By enhancing cooperation and partnership with civil society in **ensuring** the protection of **human** rights and good governance in **the process** of the formulation, implementation and evaluation of public policy.
 5. By strengthening human rights education to **enhance** public awareness and thereby incorporate **human** rights into the mainstream in all sectors of society.

To further contribute to the advancement of human rights at the international level :

1. By supporting member states in their **implementation** of **human** rights obligations with technical cooperation as well as encouraging states to **become parties** to the core **human** rights **treaties**.
2. By offering **cooperation** at **the** bilateral level as well as through **the** UN system for the strengthening of democracy, good governance, the rule of law and respect for **human** rights and **fundamental freedoms**.

3. By **contributing** to ongoing work aimed at **improving** the **international human rights framework**, such as **reform** of the treaty body system and the work of the OHCHR.
4. By cooperating **fully with** the treaty monitoring bodies, including through the timely submission of periodic reports, and **acting** promptly and **in good faith** on their concluding observations and **recommendations**.
5. By participating actively in ongoing discussions for **the establishment** of **new** international human rights **instruments** such as the work of the Ad *Hoc Committee on a Comprehensive and Integral International Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Rights and Dignity of Persons with Disabilities*.
6. By promoting **intra-and** cross- **regional democratic** progress and cooperation such as by providing technical expertise and offering **full** cooperation to countries **requesting** assistance in building democratic institutions within **the** framework of the Community of Democracies (CD).
7. By participating actively in the discussions for the creation of **regional and** sub-regional **machinery** for the **promotion and** protection of human rights in the Asia-Pacific region where such **mechanisms** are **absent**.
8. By contributing to the process of identifying **and** clarifying **standards** with regard to **new** human rights issues such as **those** in **bioethics** and information technology.

<p>To contribute to the work of the Human Rights Council :</p>

1. By actively **taking** part, in the spirit of dialogue and **cooperation**, in the launching of **the** new Council and the ensuing discussions on its working methods with a **view** to making it open, transparent, productive and functional, so that it may **meet** the **needs** and expectations of **member states**.
2. By doing its **share** to **enable** the Council to respond promptly and effectively to **human rights** abuses.
3. By demonstrating a strong commitment to the realization of **civil**, political, economic, **social** and **cultural rights** with the same emphasis on each and on **an** equal footing.