

Statement by the Head of Delegation of the Republic of Korea

[UNEA-2]

More urgently than anytime in the past, the international community is looking for integrated, inclusive and innovative policies and measures to implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Following the adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals at the UN General Assembly last september, we have just taken the first step towards the achievement of the Goals this year. I am pleased that the Second Session of the United Nations Environment Assembly provides such a timely opportunity for the member states to discuss how to take a whole-of-government approach towards the environmental dimension of the Sustainable Development Goals. UNEA should play the guiding role in the SDGs implementation by framing the issues on which UNEP needs to concentrate and giving a strong message to the world that we, the member states, are ready to act to deliver on the environmental dimension of the 2030 Agenda.

[SDGs and Climate Change]

The world is in a critical juncture where we can put an end to unsustainable development paradigm. Old ways of development, which is against sustainable development, often overlooked such important values as nature conservation and social equity while focusing only on quantitative and short-term growth represented by GDP and national income.

It is time to break down the sectoral silos and institutional barriers which hinder the integration, and mainstream the overarching value of sustainable development across all sectors and areas of government policies.

The Ministry of Environment of Korea is working on protecting the environment with appropriately designed regulations and systems while creating new market and jobs to contribute to national economic growth. I would like to share some of the policy efforts of Korea with the Ministers and heads of delegations here.

[Korea's national endeavor towards sustainable development and the progress]

Since the 1992 Rio Declaration, Korea has been working on mainstreaming sustainable development in making and planning national policies. In 2000, the Presidential Commission on Sustainable Development was established as a headquarter to coordinate sustainable development related policies among ministries. In 2007, the Act on the Promotion of Sustainable Development was enacted. And every 5 years, Basic Plan for Sustainable Development has been developed and implemented.

Last year, for the first time as an Asian country, Korea started an Emissions Trading Scheme at national level. We have the expectation that the newly created carbon market will trigger technology innovation for greenhouse gas reduction.

In the field of resource circulation, Korea is promoting the Eco Energy Town project. The key idea is creating an eco village where unwelcomed waste treatment facilities like landfill sites

and incinerators are utilized to produce clean energy for the local people. With the approach, economic benefits such as income increase and job creation wastes can be produced together with environmental benefits.

The first Eco Energy Town was built in Hongcheon. We constructed a plant that produces biogas by treating livestock excreta. We also made eco-trails and parks using cultural and ecological resources of the region. We think that the first eco town is a great success as it is increasing both community population and resident income.

We believe the Eco Energy Town can become a new rural development model as the second New Village Movement. The Movement led Korea's national development in 1970s with diligence, self-help and cooperation as the guiding principles.

Carbon Free Island is another ambitious sustainable local development model that Korea is now working on. We are doing the project in Jeju, which is a popular tourist destination well known with its natural beauty. Multiple government agencies and the local government together are trying to transform the island into an energy independent, climate change resilient and ecologically sound carbon zero island.

By 2022, more than 50% of electricity will be supplied from clean energy sources such as wind and solar power. And, more than 25% of the cars on the roads in Jeju will be electric vehicles by 2020.

[Environmental Justice]

In pursuing a sustainable development path, we should make sure that no one is left behind.

This year, Korea enacted a new law to provide relief and compensation to victims of environmental damage. We expect this law will help protect the vulnerable and contribute to bringing environmental justice to our society.

[Implications]

Ministers of Environment are responsible to bring environmental welfare to all people, especially the vulnerable, by pursuing the fine balance of the environment with the other two pillars of sustainable development. And to do so, we need to closely communicate with various stakeholders.

Korea looks forward to fully supporting the leading role of the UNEA in delivering on the environmental dimension of the 2030 Agenda. Thank you.