



THE REPUBLIC OF KOREA

PERMANENT MISSION TO THE UNITED NATIONS

335 East 45th Street, New York, N.Y. 10017
Tel (212) 439-4000, Fax (212) 986-1083

Statement by H.E. Ambassador SHIN Dong-ik

Deputy Permanent Representative of the Republic of Korea

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Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Over the years, the world has celebrated many significant achievements in realizing gender equality and the empowerment of women. Most importantly, there have been significant landmarks in the process of international standard setting in women's human rights, including the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the inclusion of gender equality as one of the Millennium Development Goals. In addition, there is an ever growing awareness and recognition of the rights of women as an inalienable, integral, and, indivisible part of universal human rights as well as a prerequisite for sustainable development.

Yet, despite all these accomplishments, we still have a long way to go. Women continue to account for the vast majority of the world's poor. Throughout the world, women still find themselves being disproportionately affected by violence and discrimination. Inequality can also be seen in the persistent gender wage gap and limited access to education and the labor market. In the face of these obstacles, the Republic of Korea firmly believes that full commitment and concerted efforts on the part of the international community is of the utmost importance in order to bring about concrete improvements in women's rights on the ground.

Mr. Chairman,

No discussion of gender equality would be complete without reference to the task of eliminating violence against women. Indeed, gender-based violence is one of the most pervasive violations of human rights of our times. Worldwide, many women and girls suffer from multiple forms of violence in their lifetime, be it domestic violence, sexual violence, human trafficking, forced marriage, genital mutilation, or other forms of abuse. What is even worse is that victims of violence bear the cost of the harm and stigma while perpetrators have been protected by a widespread culture of impunity, which allows such deplorable violence to persist.

Against this backdrop, my delegation is of the view that a more comprehensive and holistic response must be ensured in order to effectively address violence against women. As the Secretary-General's report on violence against women (A/67/220) rightly pointed out, an effective response to violence refers not only to prosecution of perpetrators, but also to prevention measures including awareness-raising, protection, effective remedies and reparation for victims. In light of this, my delegation also appreciates the adoption by the Human Rights Council of a series of resolutions on the elimination of violence against women, which focus on prevention of violence, protection for women subjected to violence, and remedies for victims.

Mr. Chairman,

Another form of violence that warrants serious attention in this context is sexual abuse in conflict. Wartime sexual violence is one of the most egregious forms of human rights violations, and is an affront to human dignity and integrity. In times of war, women and girls are more likely to be the targets of sexual violence, but lamentably, their irreversible pain and suffering has often gone unreported or unacknowledged.

As the international community recognizes the gravity of such violence and incurable pain that is deeply scorched in its victims, wartime sexual violence including rape, sexual slavery, and other atrocities, are now codified as war crimes and crimes against humanity in the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court. Furthermore, the International Criminal Tribunals are sending out powerful messages that wartime sexual violence constitutes a serious crime and cannot go unpunished.

However, despite such meaningful advances in legal reforms to protect women's rights, it is undeniable that these egregious forms of human rights violations continue to be the causes of deep concerns to the international community. Particularly, I would like to call attention to the case of the so-called 'comfort women,' victims who were forced into military sexual slavery during the Second World War. In spite of repeated calls of the international community, including the Special Rapporteurs of the UN Commission on Human Rights, this case still remains unresolved and the immeasurable pain and suffering of the victims have yet to be addressed, even to this very day.

With this shared concern, the Government of the Republic of Korea would like to urge the UN system and all Member States to make further efforts to end such crimes, not only taking all measures to protect women and girls in times of armed conflict, but also providing effective remedies and reparations for victims and also ending impunity.

Mr. Chairman,

I believe the true strength of a nation can be demonstrated when it has the courage to face up to the darkest chapters in its history and accept responsibility in an unequivocal manner. In this regard, it is crucial that each state promote human rights education on the issue of wartime sexual violence and ensure accurate accounts of historical events in the educational curricular in order to prevent the recurrence of such violations.

Thank you.