

**Opening Remarks
by Seong Deok YUN, Ambassador,
Permanent Representative of the Republic of Korea
The 54th Session of the Human Rights Council
Interactive Dialogue with the Special Rapporteur on Truth, Justice, Reparation
and Guarantees of Non-Recurrence
Statement as Country Concerned**

(Wednesday, 13 September 2023, 15:00-18:00)

Thank you. Mr. President,

At the outset, the Republic of Korea would like to express its sincere condolences to the Kingdom of Morocco for the loss of life and devastation caused by the earthquake on the 8th of September. Our condolences also extend to Libya for the great suffering caused by the flood on the 11th of September. We express our solidarity and sympathy to the families who have lost their loved ones, and sincerely wish that who are injured or who have lost their homes and property will recover swiftly from the repercussions of these tragic events.

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to the Special Rapporteur, Mr. Fabián Salvioli, for the constructive discussions during his visit to the Republic of Korea in June last year. In particular, I appreciate his recognition of our efforts to make progress in adopting a legal framework to address the serious human rights violations committed in the past and establishing truth seeking and memorialization process. The visit proved to be a meaningful opportunity for the Republic of Korea to strengthen its cooperation with the human rights mechanisms, including the UN Special Procedures.

The Korean government would like to take note of his observations and

recommendations regarding the grave human rights violations that took place in the Republic of Korea in the 20th Century, including during the Second World War, the Korean War, and the democratization process. As the past human rights violations are inextricably linked to the current human rights situation in the country, there is a need for the older and younger generations to work together to resolve them.

In this regard, the Korean government is making great efforts to promote truth, justice, reparation, memorialization, and guarantees of non-recurrence of the past human rights violations including through improving its legal framework. Taking this opportunity, I would like to introduce some of the measures taken by the Republic of Korea recently.

First, the Republic of Korea is adopting legal and institutional frameworks that would effectively address its past human rights violations. For example, in January 2023, the Korean government acceded to the *International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance (CED)* and became a party to the Convention. Accordingly, we will align relevant domestic laws to the Convention so that a faithful implementation is ensured.

Second, the Republic of Korea is continuously taking measures to identify cases of past human rights violations and seek truth on these instances. The second Truth and Reconciliation Commission, which was established in December 2020, is conducting fact-finding investigations on various cases related to past state violence. As of December 9, 2022, the legal time limit for the submission of applications, the Commission has received more than 20 thousand cases, which is double the number of the cases collected by the first Truth and Reconciliation Commission. The May 18 Democratization Movement Truth Commission is currently conducting

investigations. The scope of the investigation includes mass killing and enforced disappearance, among others.

Third, Korea is engaging with other UN Member States for issues it cannot resolve alone. With regard to the issue of “comfort women,” under the position that the government of the Republic of Korea recognizes the 2015 Agreement between Korea and Japan as the official agreement between the two countries, it is working to “restore honor and dignity of the victims and heal their psychological wounds.”

Fourth, concerning the issue of intercountry adoptions, an amendment to the *Special Adoption Act* and the newly enacted *Intercountry Adoption Act* were promulgated on July 18 this year. They will enter into force after a two-year preparation period. Through these Acts, the Republic of Korea will reform the adoption system to strengthen state responsibility to serve the best interest of the children. It plans to ratify the *Hague Convention on Protection of Children and Cooperation in Respect of Intercountry Adoption* once these Acts are implemented.

Last but not least, the Korean government will continue to urge the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea to resolve the abduction issue, as the North Korean abduction issue pertains to the State’s fundamental responsibility to protect its citizens. As the Special Rapporteur mentioned in his report, this May, the Supreme Prosecutors’ Office initiated an application process for *ex officio* retrials of 100 “abducted and returned fishermen.” These fishermen were kidnapped while working in the East Sea in the 1960’s and upon return were convicted of violating the Fisheries Act, among others. As of August 2023, 30 people have been acquitted through the *ex officio* retrial.

In conclusion, I would like to reiterate the Korean government’s

commitment to the promotion of human rights, including truth, justice, reparation, and guarantees of non-recurrence, based on its strong emphasis on adhering to universal values and norms. In this process, we will continue to work closely together with the human rights mechanisms, including the UN Special Procedures.

I assure you, Mr. Special Rapporteur Salvioli, of my government's continuous support for your endeavor to achieve your mandate.

Thank you.

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