

Keynote Speech
Ministerial Segment of High-level Intergovernmental Meeting
1 November 2012

H.E. Mr. Rim Chemin
Minister of Health and Welfare of the Republic of Korea

Mr. Shun-ichi Murata, Deputy Executive Secretary of UNESCAP,
Distinguished delegates,
Ladies and gentlemen!

All men and women are born equal. And all women and men deserve equal happiness. No matter how we look and no matter how our condition is! We live in a world of diversity. We live in a world where difference should be respected, not discriminated.

There are about 650 million persons with disabilities in the Asia Pacific region. More than half of them live underprivileged. They are still vulnerable to social exclusion, which often leads to poverty and indignity. The current situation points to the pressing need to invoke our renewed sense of urgency. Today we are here to shape a better future for them.

As a matter of fact, ESCAP members, associate members and civil society organizations have worked together with unprecedented fervor. The past two Asian and Pacific Decades of Persons with Disabilities were truly instrumental in making a substantial difference.

We can even say with pride that our regional efforts paved the way to milestone adoption of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) in 2006. But there still remain numerous challenges. And we should go many more miles.

To refresh our commitment and call for actions to address the unmet challenges, this meeting will launch the New Asian and Pacific Decade. And we will adopt the Incheon Strategy to Make the Right Real for Persons with Disabilities in Asia and the Pacific.

Building upon the achievements of our regional initiative and the Convention, the Incheon Strategy, to my mind, emphasizes three focal issues.

First, we should strengthen international cooperation. One needs from others policy experience, best practice, and peer encouragement. Our members need to help each other to build and upgrade a disability-inclusive society.

In the process of drawing up the Convention, Korea successfully strived to insert provisions on Women with Disabilities, Accessibility, Living Independently and Being Included in the

Community, and Personal Mobility. As the initiator, of course, Korea will continue contributing to regional actions. We will increase financial assistance as well.

Second, more technological innovations should be incorporated in our welfare policies. Needless to say, technology can lift physical obstacles from education to health care and to employment, which surely facilitates social integration.

The Korean government, for its part, augmented IT education for persons with disabilities to enable them to work at home on-line. Development of IT-equipped disability-friendly paraphernalia is strongly incentivized. We will go further.

Third, stronger public-private partnership should be created. Governments alone do not suffice. Government cannot dictate and monopolize policies. We need to share expertise, experience, and even the burden. PPP is, in a sense, a key to the fruitful implementation of the Incheon Strategy for ten years down the road.

Korea will be fundraising with contributions from governments, private companies, individuals and interest groups. The Fund will be utilized to provide assistance for countries in need.

Distinguished delegates,
Ladies and gentlemen!

When predators get hurt, they are doomed to die because they can't hunt. Nobody helps. If we humans are to be doomed to suffer alone because we get disabled, we are no better than predators. We are not simply homo sapiens, but homo amans (loving man), and homo socius (sharing man).

We become fuller when we respect others. We get more dignified when we share our happiness. And let me reiterate, disability is nothing but a part of diversity. Such a perception, I firmly believe, will be an essential mindset toward the success of our activities.

Before closing, I would like to recognize Executive Secretary of UNESCAP Dr. Noeleen Heyzer though she cannot make it to this meeting. Without her unrelenting hard work and passion, we might have not been able to come this far.

Finally, I assure you that the Korean government will work closely with the UNESCAP and stay committed to successful implementation of the Incheon Strategy.

Thank you very much.

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