

# Republic of Korea

March 2022

## December 1992

Acceded to the 1951 Refugee Convention and 1967 Protocol

## February 2001

Recognized its first refugee

## July 2013

Enforced the Refugee Act of Korea

## December 2015

Launched a pilot resettlement program for refugees

## POPULATION OF CONCERN

### Refugees & Humanitarian Status Holders

As of 31 January 2022, a total of 3,590 persons have been recognized as refugees or granted humanitarian status by the government of the Republic of Korea.

The majority of the persons holding humanitarian status are from Syria and Yemen.

Source: Ministry of Justice (MoJ), *Monthly Statistics*, published on 22 February 2022, available on MOJ website

## FUNDING

### 2021 Fundraising results

Government: **USD 27,023,846**  
Private: **USD 49 million**

## UNHCR PRESENCE

### Staff:

- 29 National Staff
- 2 International Staff
- 26 affiliated staff (incl. fundraisers, interns)

### Offices:

- 1 Office in Seoul



## Working with Partners

- The role of UNHCR in the Republic of Korea is to engage with the government, judiciary, legislature, the National Human Rights Commission, NGOs, civil society and persons of concern to improve the domestic protection system and the treatment of asylum-seekers, refugees and other persons of concern. It also includes ensuring the respect for their rights and the principle of *non-refoulement*.

## Main Activities

### Support to Korea's national asylum system

- The Republic of Korea acceded to the 1951 Refugee Convention and its 1967 Protocol in 1992 and began registering asylum-seekers in 1994, with the first recognition of refugee status in 2001. The Refugee Act, its Presidential Decree and Enforcement Regulation came into force on 1 July 2013. It is the first stand-alone comprehensive refugee law in the Republic of Korea and represents a significant enhancement of refugee protection. UNHCR monitors the implementation and reform of the Act in line with the 1951 Convention and provides technical assistance.
- The numbers of new applications slowly increased over the years with a total of 15,452 persons applying for asylum in 2019. However, with the pandemic and the limitations imposed to travel and visa policies, the number of new applications decreased significantly for the last two consecutive years, with 6,684 new applications in 2020 and 2,143 for the year 2021 [Ministry of Justice ("MoJ") statistics published on 21 December 2021].
- UNHCR advises and supports the MoJ and its Korea Immigration Service and Immigration Offices, which handle asylum applications in the Republic of Korea, with a view to ensure that decisions are made in accordance with international standards.
- UNHCR establishes and maintains partnerships with a range of NGOs to improve support and services to asylum-seekers and refugees in areas such as legal aid, accommodation, employment, education and health services as well as peaceful coexistence and refugee empowerment.
- UNHCR provides technical assistance to the Government of the Republic of Korea on resettlement. The Office also advises government, non-government and private partners on solutions in the context of responsibility sharing and in the spirit of the Global Compact on Refugees.

- UNHCR is advocating with the Government of the Republic of Korea to establish statelessness determination procedures and to ratify the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness, while at the same time to prevent statelessness by ensuring birth registration of children born to asylum-seekers, refugees, and stateless persons.

### **Advocacy and fundraising activities**

- UNHCR raises awareness and understanding on forced displacement issues with the general public. UNHCR attempts to make these issues more personal to Koreans by linking their own history of internal displacement during the Korean War to the plight of refugees. UNHCR also makes continuous effort to raise the public awareness about refugees and other persons of concern who have sought asylum in Korea and are in need of protection and support of the Korean government and its people.
- In 2021, the Government of Korea's financial contribution to UNHCR reached USD 27,023,846. The unearmarked core contribution was 12.9 per cent, amounting to USD 3,506,611 and the remaining includes MoFA's regular support to UNHCR, earmarked geographically for major humanitarian emergencies, and the Junior Professional Officer programme as well as the support for Humanitarian Assistance to Internally Displaced People (IDPs) and the returnees in Afghanistan amounting to USD 21,416,908. UNHCR has also been in close cooperation with KOICA from 2013 through multiyear projects as well as KOICA Multilateral Cooperation Officer (KMCO) programme. RoK entered UNHCR's "20 million club" of donors since 2016 and has been continuously increasing its contribution to UNHCR ever since.
- UNHCR's efforts to mobilize moral and financial support from the private sector continued in 2021, raising nearly USD 49 million as of end-2021. UNHCR Korea launched its first private sector fund-raising activities in mid-2009 and Korea became one of the Top 10 private funding sources for the Agency since 2013. And over half a million individual donors including regular and one-off supported UNHCR's global operations in 2021 alone. In the context of the Global Compact on Refugees, UNHCR also strives to engage with the private sector, particularly corporate and foundations, for both financial and shared-value partnerships in support of global and domestic operational needs.
- UNHCR Korea appointed renowned South Korean actor Jung Woo-sung as its first celebrity supporter in May 2014, who was officially named as the agency's National Goodwill Ambassador in 2015. Jung has supported the works of UNHCR and helped raise the public-awareness of the plight of refugees around the world through numerous field visits and participation in advocacy campaigns and events. He went on field missions with UNHCR to Nepal in November 2014, South Sudan in May 2015, Lebanon in March 2016, the Kurdistan Region of Iraq in June 2017, Bangladesh in December 2017, South Korea's Jeju Island in June 2018, Djibouti and Malaysia in

November 2018 and Bangladesh in 2019. He is committed to supporting the works of UNHCR through a long-term relationship and is a valuable asset to UNHCR Korea.

#### **CONTACTS**

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