

(Check Against Delivery)

Statement by
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of the Republic of Korea
at the Third Session of the Conference of the Parties
to the United Nations Framework Convention on
Climate Change

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Mr. President,
Excellencies,
and Distinguished Delegates,

It gives me great pleasure to begin by congratulating Minister Ohki on his election as the President of this important Conference. I have no doubt that under his able and insightful leadership, this Conference will produce many valuable results. I would also like to commend the government and people of Japan for taking the lead in global environmental preservation by hosting this Conference.

In the two years since the first session of the conference, we have been engaged in truly difficult negotiations on many complicated issues. Despite the collective view among nations that the prevention of climate change is a common task for all humankind, reconciling the differences between nations regarding the specific scope, logistics, and time-frame of the preventive measures has by no means been easy.

Protecting our precious Earth is a responsibility that we, as members of the global community, must all actively fulfill. At the same time, we must not lose sight of every nation's inalienable right to pursue social and economic development.

Industrialized nations have already exercised their power to develop in spite of limited resources of the Earth and I believe they should not inhibit the rightful efforts of other nations to improve their standards of living.

Most of today's developing nations are undertaking development based on the model set by advanced nations, and these efforts will continue in the future. Therefore, advanced nations that have successfully exercised their resources and abilities for development must take the lead in setting an example of protecting and preserving the environment which the rest of the world can follow.

The Republic of Korea lost virtually everything during the Korean War. Losses in social infrastructure, industrial facilities, and damages to the environment were devastating, not to mention the millions of lives that were lost. Despite such adverse conditions, the Korean people worked strenuously for over 40 years to achieve some economic growth, and such growth should continue in the future.

I would like to draw your attention to the fact that Korea's present energy-intensive industrial structure is the result of its industrialization process of the 1970's, which was centered on the petrochemical industry. It should also be pointed out that it will take time before Korea's energy consumption can be stabilized to the levels of most of Annex I parties to the Convention.

As you are all aware, Korea relies heavily on imports for most of its energy. The Korean government has been steadily pushing policies aimed at energy conservation and management of energy demand since the oil crises of the 1970's. Such policies can be seen as both direct and indirect extensions of the Korean government's efforts for climate change prevention.

I have no doubt that this Conference will serve as a catalyst for strengthening Korea's energy-related policies as set forth in the recently formulated national energy plan.

By linking our industrial policy with energy policy on a mid-to long-term basis, the Korean government is striving to create an industrial structure that is both environmentally friendly and less energy-consuming.

Korea intends to be as active participant in the worldwide environmental protection effort within the context of its social and economic capabilities.

The 21st Century is being called the "Century of the Environment."

I am convinced that the preservation of the Earth for all future generations will only be possible when the concept of environmentally sound and sustainable development takes root in the global community, and when every nation participates in the concerted effort to protect the environment.

To that end, all participants of this Conference should strive to serve all humankind by observing the common responsibilities for preserving the Earth, but they should also recognize the special circumstances and rights of individual nations to pursue sustainable development.

I would like to once again express my hope that this Conference will lay a solid foundation on which the global community can build a common future in the coming millennium.

Thank you.