

New

THE REPUBLIC OF
KOREA

PERMANENT MISSION
1 Avenue de l'Ariana, 1202 Genève

International Organization for Migration
92nd Council

Delegation of Republic of Korea

Thank you, Madam Chairperson,

Let me begin by congratulating you on the assumption of the Chair of the IOM Council.

Republic of Korea is one of the few countries in the world which has accomplished economic development and then democratization, one after the other, all within the last 30 years. With the change of the structure of its economy toward the high-end production, like semi-conductors and automobiles, Korea has needed a large influx of foreign labor for certain industries since the end of the 1980s.

The Republic of Korea, an exporter of labor to former West Germany and the Middle East until the 1970s, has become an importer of labor since the end of 1980s. The Korean government introduced at the end of the 1990s an industrial trainee system, and as a result more and more foreign labor has migrated into Korea.

In addition, many young men living in the agricultural regions have found it increasingly difficult to marry Korean women. As a result, they have turned their eyes toward foreign brides. One in three young Korean men living in country marries a foreign woman, and the ratio continues to increase sharply. Today, Korean men married foreign women now account for over 13 percent of total married men in Korea.

Madam Chairperson,

The increase of foreign immigration has posed a challenge to Korea, which has the additional concern of refugees from North Korea. Korea has long been a mono-ethnic and a mono-cultural society. Understanding the importance and value of doing so, the Korean government is making every effort to overcome the challenges associated with such integration so that their integration is smooth and beneficial for all concerned.

There are two sides to the Korean Government's strategy to dealing with immigration issues. The first is to help foreign immigrants integrate themselves into Korean society, and the second is to help bring about changes in Korean society so that it can become more open and actively embrace the multi-cultural transformations taking place.

Taking the lead on such efforts, the Ministry of Gender Equality has been working in cooperation with regional governments to efficiently integrate foreign brides into Korean society by teaching them the Korean language and customs. Korean media is also playing an important role in the process of integrating foreign brides into Korean society.

Regional communities have established community education centers for foreign brides and their children, in order to teach them the Korean language, how to cook Korean food and various Korean customs. Such measures also help the children of foreign mothers better integrate into Korean society. The integration of 2nd generation of foreign migrants into Korean society is the one of the greatest challenges associated with migration itself. Therefore, the Korean government is in particular focusing its efforts on this longer-term objective.

Madam Chairperson,

The government and civil society, including businesses of the Republic of Korea, have accumulated a great deal of experience over the last twenty years, and we stand ready to share our experiences regarding international migration with concerned international organizations and countries. Korea supports IOM strategy in preparation for future. Korea is committed to play an active role within international efforts to address the challenges of migration around the world.

Thank you.