

Section One: Overview

This report provides a comprehensive review of the progress made by the Republic of Korea in the implementation of the 12 critical areas of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, after submitting its twenty-fifth-anniversary report. In time for the 30-year anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, this report has been prepared with the participation of 20 government ministries involved in implementation, including the Ministry of Gender Equality and Family (MOGEF), Ministry of Justice (MOJ), Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA), Ministry of Employment and Labor (MOEL), and Ministry of Health and Welfare (MOHW), and was further modified and refined through inputs gathered from civil society organizations and relevant experts.

Through the preparation of this report, the Government of the Republic of Korea (ROK) took stock of implementation of its gender equality policies and reviewed its strategic directions for enhancing women's empowerment and achieving gender equality in line with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Priority policy tasks and major achievements of the ROK Government can be broadly categorized into the following five areas.

Firstly, the ROK Government operated a whole-of-government consultative body of Gender Equality Policy Officers to firmly establish a foundation and strengthen the framework for promoting gender equality, enabling each ministry to respond with accountability, and formulated and implemented the third Master Plan for Gender Equality Policy (2023-2027).

Secondly, the ROK Government defined mid-to-long-term goals and developed implementation measures by establishing the "Plan to Improve Gender Representation in the Public Sector (2023-2027)," bringing significant improvements in the proportion of women in various sectors within the public sector.

Thirdly, the ROK Government oversaw and laid the groundwork for implementing policies to prevent violence against women by formulating the First Master Plan of Policies to Prevent Violence Against Women (2020-2024), establishing and operating the Committee on Prevention of Violence against Women, conducting a Fact-Finding Survey on Violence against Women (2021), and publishing statistics on violence against women (2022), among other things. Under the Yoon Suk Yeol administration, the Government also adopted "Strengthening Support for Victims of Five Leading Types of Violence" as a national policy task and has been reinforcing the guarantee of and support for victims' legal and institutional rights.

Fourthly, the ROK Government has established a support system for women's work and

childcare throughout their life cycles to ensure their equal rights and opportunities for work, continuously expanding various programs such as reduction of working hours, leave of absence for subfertility treatment, maternity leave, childcare leave, and parental leave. In addition, the ROK Government has made efforts to increase the employment of women in quality jobs through tailored employment support and vocational training programs, especially focusing on women experiencing career interruption, among others.

Fifthly, the ROK Government has expanded eligibility for childcare subsidies and child home care allowances for infants and young children while continuously increasing the number of national and public childcare centers to deliver quality care. Additionally, it is promoting the “Neulbom School” program – an initiative aimed at delivering integrated quality education programs and care services before and after regular classes for primary school students, as a national policy task to alleviate the educational burden on their parents. Efforts are also being made to address gaps in care by providing child home care services and managing the qualifications of childcare providers, among other things. Furthermore, the Government is operating a “Family-Friendly Certification System” and is continuously encouraging more companies, especially small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) and middle-market companies, to become certified as family-friendly to promote a culture of work-family balance in the workplace.

Meanwhile, the international community is making significant efforts to spread and implement the guiding spirit of the Beijing Platform for Action and the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals. The Republic of Korea is also leading the international agenda for gender equality by identifying tasks and formulating policies to implement its immediate objectives.

Examples of good practices that can be highlighted include the establishment of institutional frameworks for promoting gender equality and proactive actions to address new and emerging forms of technology-facilitated violence.

To ensure women can participate equally in economic, social, cultural, and political decision-making processes, the Government of the Republic of Korea has established institutional foundations for advancing gender equality by supporting the operation of the Gender Impact Assessment system, which evaluates the impact of major government policies on both women and men during the formulation and implementation stages to promote gender equality in policies, and the Gender Responsive Budgeting and Settlement system, which analyzes the impact of budget on women and men to enhance gender equality in budget formulation and execution.

In response to a sharp increase in digital sex crimes and their distinctly different patterns from traditional sexual violence, the Government of the Republic of Korea laid legal and institutional frameworks by legislating the Act on Punishment of Crime of Stalking and the Act on Prevention of Stalking and Protection of Victims, among others. Additionally, the Government established the “Advocacy Center for Online Sexual Abuse Victims” to provide comprehensive one-stop services ranging from in-depth counseling, deletion support, assistance in investigations to referrals for legal and medical aid, etc.

Section Two: Priorities, achievements, challenges and setbacks

1. Over the past five years, what have been the most important achievements, challenges and setbacks in progress towards gender equality and the empowerment of women?

■ Achievements

a) Strengthening the foundation for promoting gender equality

In the wake of the #MeToo movement, there was a call to strengthen the system for promoting gender equality, enabling ministries to respond with accountability. As a result, Gender Equality Policy Officers were newly designated (May 7, 2019) in eight ministries that address a broad range of policy areas with significant repercussions, such as education, culture and art, and workplaces, including the Ministry of Education (MOE), Ministry of Justice (MOJ), Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism (MOCST), Ministry of Health and Welfare (MOHW), and Ministry of Employment and Labor (MOEL). To enable dedicated gender equality departments to fulfill their functions effectively, a consultative body consisting of Gender Equality Policy Officers from the eight ministries was created and is operated every quarter.

Moreover, a new Third Master Plan for Gender Equality Policy (2023-2027) was jointly formulated in 2023 by relevant organizations. Under the vision of “Warm Companionship toward a Society of Gender Equality and Happiness for All,” three goals were put forward: “Creating an environment of working and caring together,” “Promoting the right to safety and health”, and “Broadening the foundation for gender equality.” The third master plan, in particular, integrated public feedback collected through the Second Fact-Finding Survey on Gender Equality conducted in 2021 and a public contest for gender equality policy ideas, identifying tasks aimed at delivering the benefits of gender equality policies more broadly to all citizens.

b) Enhancing women's representation and decision-making power

In July 2023, a roadmap (comprehensive plan) to improve gender representation in the public sector for the next five years (2023-2027) was jointly developed by government ministries. This roadmap builds upon the "Plan to Improve Women’s Representation in the Public Sector," which has been implemented since 2013 to achieve gender balance in public sector

decision-making. The plan was renamed "Plan to Improve Gender Representation in the Public Sector" to reflect a gender equality perspective. Under this plan, goals and sector-specific action plans were established for ministries responsible for 12 areas, encompassing targets for public officials, public institutions, national universities professors, the four major institutes of science and technology – Korea Advanced Institute of Science and Technology (KAIST), Gwangju Institute of Science and Technology (GIST), Daegu Gyeongbuk Institute of Science and Technology (DGIST), and Ulsan National University of Science and Technology (UNIST) – and the military and police. To secure gender balance in science and technology, where women are relatively underrepresented compared to the overall proportion of female faculty members, the plan now incorporates targets for the proportion of female faculty members at these four major institutes of science and technology.

Accordingly, the proportion of women in the public sector has been improving dramatically. In the case of female-appointed members on government committees, the 40% statutory target has been consistently achieved since 2017. To expand political participation of women, legal amendments were made to provide differentiated subsidies to political parties for nominating female candidates based on their respective female candidate fielding ratios, and as a result, the number of female members of the 22nd National Assembly that opened in 2024 reached a record high of 60, representing 20% of total members.

c) Eradicating violence against women and promoting women's health

Under the Framework Act on Prevention of Violence against Women (enacted on December 25, 2019), the Government of the Republic of Korea established comprehensive and systematic policies aimed at preventing violence against women and supporting victims. This included the formulation of Korea's first mid-to long-term statutory plan, the First Master Plan of Policies to Prevent Violence Against Women (February 2020). Additionally, various measures were implemented to promote effective policies for preventing violence against women, such as legislating the concept of "secondary victimization" within the legal framework, offering relevant education on the topic, conducting a Fact-Finding Survey on Violence against Women (2021), and publishing statistics on violence against women in 2022. Moreover, the ROK Government pursued legal amendments to enhance victim protection by adding the crime of intrusion upon habitation to domestic violence offenses, imposing criminal penalties for violations of temporary measures such as restraining orders, and establishing legal grounds for prosecuting online grooming targeted at children and youth as well as conducting undercover

investigations (2021). These actions have laid the legal and institutional groundwork to comprehensively implement policies aimed at preventing violence against women.

In particular, under the zero-tolerance principle, the ROK Government actively responded to the rise of emerging forms of technology-facilitated sexual violence, such as stalking and digital sex crimes, and introduced and implemented preemptive and comprehensive support for victims of these new technology-assisted sex crimes. A legal and institutional foundation was established to address harms stemming from various forms of violence, including digital sexual violence, stalking, and dating violence, through the enactment of the Act on Punishment of Crime of Stalking (2021) (henceforth, ‘Stalking Punishment Act’) and the Act on Prevention of Stalking and Protection of Victims (2023) (henceforth, ‘Stalking Prevention Act’). Furthermore, the Government set up and operates the Advocacy Center for Online Sexual Abuse Victims, collaborating closely not only with domestic institutions, but also with relevant overseas organizations to ensure substantial remedies for the rights of the victims.

d) Ensuring equal rights and opportunities to work

To enhance the employability of women with interrupted careers, among others, the ROK Government expanded vocational education and training courses from 184 in 2009 to 715 in 2023. In addition, the Act on Promotion of Economic Activities of Career-interrupted Women, etc. was fully amended (2021) to become the Act on the Promotion of Economic Activities and Prevention of Career Interruption of Women, broadening the scope of policies to include “promoting economic activities of all women.” This included scaling up career interruption prevention services, which offer grievance handling and labor counseling for employed women, as well as education and consulting for companies to improve their workplace culture. By 2023, there were 80 Saeil Centers (women’s reemployment centers) providing these services, up from 15 centers in 2017.

To generate employment for women, under the Equal Employment Opportunity and Work-Family Balance Assistance Act (henceforth, “Equal Employment Opportunity Act”), the ROK Government is enhancing proactive employment improvement measures (affirmative action, or “AA”) and imposes obligations on underperforming business sites to submit reports on the current status of the wage gap between male and female workers and improvement plans. The ROK Government has established a lifecycle support system for women’s work and childcare, continuously expanding various programs, such as reduction of working hours, infertility treatment leave, maternity leave, childcare leave, and parental leave.

■ Challenges and setbacks

Notwithstanding the increase in women's employment rate and a slight decline in the gender pay gap over the past five years, Korea still has the largest gender pay gap among OECD countries, which underscores the need for ongoing efforts to narrow the gender pay gap.

The significant gender wage gap in Korea is attributed to differences in tenure caused by career interruptions among women, decreased job quality for women following career breaks, a high proportion of women in non-regular employment, and different gender distribution in occupations. To address the causes of the gender wage gap, the ROK Government has devised measures to prevent career interruptions of women due to childbirth and childcare and is consistently expanding work-childcare support systems. Additionally, the Government provides tailored employment support services to women with discontinued careers through the Saeil Center, enabling them to engage in quality vocational activities. Moreover, the ROK Government is providing support to nurture women entrepreneurs, foster women in science and technology, and conduct vocational training in digital sectors, among others, to promote women's advancement into Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) fields, where women are relatively underrepresented. Furthermore, the ROK government plans to step up its efforts to mitigate the gender wage disparity by requiring businesses under affirmative action to report on the current wage status between male and female employees, thereby encouraging voluntary improvements in closing the gender wage gap.

2. Over the past five years, what have been the top five priorities for accelerating progress for women and girls in your country through laws, policies and/or programmes?

■ Eliminating violence against women and girls

a) Reinforcing the foundational framework for the prevention of violence against women

The ROK government enacted the Framework Act on Prevention of Violence Against Women (enforced from December 25, 2019) and established (February 2020) the First Master Plan of Policies to Prevent Violence Against Women (2020-2024) as the first mid- to long-term statutory plan overseeing the policies of central administrative agencies and local governments for preventing violence against women. Additionally, the foundation for implementing policies to prevent violence against women was made more robust, including by forming and operating the Committee on Prevention of Violence Against Women, conducting a Fact-Finding Survey on Violence against Women (2021), and publishing statistics on violence against women in 2022.

For the purpose of “Strengthening Support for Victims of Five Leading Types of Violence,” a national policy task of the Yoon Suk Yeol administration, integrated support groups based on the Women’s Emergency Hotline 1366 have been in operation since 2023. These groups collaborate with related regional organizations to deliver integrated case management services for complex and challenging cases of victimization, including victims experiencing multiple forms of harm and mental illnesses.

b) Sexual harassment and sexual violence

In 2019, a partial amendment to the Framework Act on Gender Equality was enforced to strengthen measures for preventing sexual harassment and protecting victims within organizations in the public sector. This amendment made it mandatory, for example, to establish measures to prevent recurrence if cases of sexual harassment occur in the public sector and submit them to the Ministry of Gender Equality and Family and relevant responsible ministries. Moreover, in 2020, the Sexual Violence Prevention and Victims Protection Act (henceforth, ‘Sexual Violence Prevention Act’) was amended, thus laying the basis for protecting the learning rights of students who have experienced sexual violence and strengthening the obligation to prohibit unfavorable measures against victims of sexual

violence.

In 2021, the Framework Act on Gender Equality and the Sexual Violence Prevention Act were amended to enhance protection for victims of sexual harassment and sexual violence in the public sector and devise swift measures to prevent recurrence. If a case of sexual harassment or sexual violence occurs in a government agency or similar entity, the relevant facts must be notified to the Minister of Gender Equality and Family. In cases of serious incidents, the Minister may conduct on-site inspections of the government agency, request corrections, and if necessary, diagnose the organizational culture of the government agency and make recommendations for improvement. Moreover, measures that could put individuals reporting the occurrence of sexual violence at a disadvantage are prohibited, and a penalty provision for non-compliance with these obligations was established.

After a decision declared a provision within the Act on Special Cases Concerning the Punishment of Sexual Crimes unconstitutional, particularly related to special cases concerning the admissibility of evidence regarding video-recorded statements by child and youth victims, efforts have been made to minimize the secondary victimization of child and youth victims of sexual violence resulting from their court appearances. To that end, since 2022, the MOGEF has partnered with the National Court Administration to implement a project for witness examinations by video-link at Sunflower Centers (integrated support centers for victims of sexual violence).

In 2023, the Sexual Violence Prevention Act was amended to prevent the concealment of power-based sexual crimes. The deadline for heads of government agencies to submit measures to prevent the recurrence of sexual violence cases was shortened, and sanctions were introduced for non-compliance with obligations such as notifying such cases. These changes have led to a more robust response system for sexual violence cases in the public sector.

In 2020, a comprehensive plan for preventing secondary victimization was formulated to establish the concept of secondary victimization throughout police activities and further bolster victim protection. In 2021, a standard identification model for victims of sex trafficking was developed. In 2022, a counseling chatbot for victims of sexual crimes was developed to provide non-face-to-face counseling support and system guidance to victims of sexual crimes.

In December 2018, the Ministry of Education (MOE) jointly announced the Measures to Eradicate Sexual Harassment and Sexual Violence in the Education Sector with other relevant ministries and has since implemented various initiatives. The MOE has conducted fact-finding surveys on sexual harassment and sexual violence in the education sector, deployed dedicated

personnel to reporting centers, provided protection to victims, offered education to perpetrators to prevent recidivism, and delivered preventive education to members of the school community. In the primary and secondary education sectors, the MOE has reinforced the foundation for addressing incidents of sexual harassment and sexual violence in primary and secondary schools by assisting each provincial and municipal office of education in establishing a dedicated organization and system for handling sexual harassment and sexual violence cases, and in securing dedicated personnel. In the higher education sector, since 2019, the MOE has designated the Support Center to Eradicate Sexual Harassment and Sexual Violence in Universities to provide capacity-building training for those in charge of preventing and responding to sexual harassment and sexual violence on campuses, to raise awareness of violence among university members and support the creation of a safe campus environment. Moreover, in 2022, the Higher Education Act was amended to mandate universities to establish and operate organizations dedicated to preventing and responding to sexual harassment and sexual violence, strengthening the responsibility of universities to safeguard the human rights of their members.

Meanwhile, in May 2019, to systematically and continuously address the issues of gender discrimination and sexual violence in the workplace, the Ministry of Employment and Labor (MOEL) established a Gender Equality Policy Officer as a dedicated organization within the Ministry, thus creating a response mechanism to promote gender equality in the employment and labor sectors.

The ROK Government is exerting efforts to enhance equal opportunities and eliminate discrimination in employment based on the Equal Employment Opportunity and Work-Family Balance Assistance Act (henceforth, 'Equal Employment Opportunity Act') enacted in 1987, and is consistently addressing gender equality issues, focusing on gender discrimination and sexual harassment in the workplace through labor inspections. This Act clearly delineates the responsibilities and obligations of employees and employers concerning the prohibition of discrimination based on gender.

Moreover, the Ministry of National Defense (MND) has implemented the "Support System for Victims before Referral to Investigation Authorities" since 2021 to prevent sexual violence incidents in the military and additional victimization, aiming to help victims identify and receive the support necessary, such as psychological counseling, medical care, personnel measures, and legal advice before having to report the crime to investigative agencies. In addition, in May 2022, the MND adopted the Guideline for Preventing Secondary

Victimization caused by Sexual Harassment and Sexual Violence, thereby realigning pertinent regulations on how “secondary victimization” should be defined while providing guidelines for its treatment. To more effectively protect and assist victims of sexual violence in the military, the MND has increased the number of Sexual Grievance Counselors, who serve as field counseling personnel, from 50 per Corps-level echelons in 2021 to 150 per Division-level echelons by 2023. Additionally, the Ministry has been improving their independent working conditions and expanding education to improve job competency. In February 2022, the MND and each military established and began operating dedicated departments for preventing and responding to sexual violence within the military. Starting from October 2023, specialized counselors in the Defense Help Call (☎1303) were newly assigned to ensure that victims of sexual harassment and sexual violence could receive 24/7 counseling, 365 days a year, anywhere, even after work or during holidays.

c) Domestic violence

In November 2018, in a preemptive response to the escalating domestic violence crimes, relevant ministries jointly formulated the Countermeasures for Domestic Violence Prevention focusing on four key areas (▲ensuring victim safety and human rights protection, ▲strengthening punishment and preventing recidivism for offenders, ▲providing support for victims, and ▲promoting prevention and raising awareness). Subsequently, legislative amendments, institutional improvements and other efforts have been pursued in each area, with periodic reviews conducted to finetune ongoing initiatives.

In 2020, the Act on the Prevention of Domestic Violence and Protection, etc. of Victims was amended to enhance victim support programs and broaden eligibility, adding therein the "provision of counseling and treatment programs necessary for the physical and mental recovery of children who have witnessed or have suffered domestic violence," while enhancing housing assistance for victims to promote self-reliance by allowing foreign victims of domestic violence, whose spouses are not Korean citizens, as well as foreign victims whose spouses are Korean nationals, to be admitted to shelters designed for foreigners.

On the other hand, victim support services were reinforced through various measures. These included increasing the number of full-time counselors at domestic violence counseling centers (from 871 in 2019 to 981 counselors in June 2023), providing ongoing institutional support through counseling centers and shelters (191 facilities as of June 2023), and employment

support for individuals admitted to shelters (218 recipients as of June 2023).

Moreover, a Response Model for Each Stage of Domestic Violence Crime was developed to strengthen step-by-step responses, from initial measures to investigation, and follow-up management in the event of domestic violence. Additionally, domestic violence counseling institutions and local governments established a multi-agency collaboration system centering on the “Anti-abuse Police Officer (APO)” to bolster protective support for victims. Furthermore, a Domestic Violence Recurrence Risk Assessment Scale was developed, and APO work management system became more advanced.

d) Digital sex crimes

In 2017, the ROK Government formulated inter-ministerial comprehensive measures to prevent digital sex crimes through collaboration among multiple ministries. In 2020, it further instituted and implemented measures to eradicate digital sex crimes, among other efforts, as part of ongoing initiatives to address the increasingly diverse and organized nature of digital sex crimes, which are facilitated by advancements in information and communication technology.

Accordingly, protection for children and youth has been strengthened through measures such as the strengthening of penalties for digital sex crimes and online grooming against children and youth and the introduction of undercover investigations by police.

In addition, the ROK Government is actively working to thwart the demand for digital sex crimes and render victim support more substantive. This includes introducing new penalty provisions for possessing, purchasing, storing, and viewing illegal videos or photos, providing preemptive government support for deleting child or youth sexual exploitation materials, and extending the authority to request deletion support related to digital sex crimes to agents, beyond the individuals concerned themselves.

Moreover, to support victims who have suffered from non-consensual sharing of their intimate videos and photos, among other things, the Advocacy Center for Online Sexual Abuse Victims and regional specialized counseling centers for digital sex crimes (14 centers nationwide) were established in 2018 and 2021, respectively, along with other specialized victim support organizations. These centers offer a comprehensive range of services to victims, including in-depth counseling, assistance with deleting illegal videos and photos, support during investigations, and referrals to legal and medical aid.

Furthermore, when the Telegram sexual exploitation incident occurred in 2020, the Special

Investigation Headquarters for Digital Sex Crimes was established and operated, and since 2021, the Government has responded rigorously to digital sex crimes targeting children and youth through special provisions for undercover investigations.

e) Stalking and dating violence

Since the Act on Punishment of Crime of Stalking was enacted in 2021 (and enforced in 2021), services such as counseling, legal assistance, treatment and recovery programs, temporary protection, and room and board support have been provided to victims of stalking through existing support organizations for victims of domestic violence and sexual violence, including the Women's Emergency Hotline 1366, counseling centers for victims of domestic violence and sexual violence, shelters for victims of domestic violence and sexual violence, and Sunflower Centers.

The Act on Prevention of Stalking and Protection of Victims was enacted in 2023 (and enforced from July 18, 2023), establishing a legal basis for the protection and support of stalking victims. Consequently, customized support initiatives for stalking victims, including housing assistance and treatment and recovery programs, have been carried out. Emergency housing and rental housing support have been provided to ensure the safety of victims, along with treatment and recovery programs to aid in their physical and mental recovery and facilitate their return to normal life. Furthermore, central government agencies, local governments, and public institutions, such as public enterprises, were encouraged to develop internal prevention guidelines aimed at preventing stalking and protecting victims within their organizations. To facilitate this process, standardized guidelines on stalking prevention were distributed.

The Korean National Police Agency (KNPA) formed a follow-up measure taskforce for the enactment of the law and prepared for its enforcement by establishing a stalking policy system. In 2022, the stalking response system was reorganized to expand infrastructure, including manpower and budget, and police officers' on-site responsiveness was strengthened through specialized training for police officers in charge of stalking and the distribution of case law books.

f) Violence against children and youth

To eradicate violence against children and youth (including girls and boys), partial amendments to the Act on the Protection of Children and Youth against Sex Offenses were made, laying a legal basis for protecting and supporting children and youth who have fallen victim to

commercial sex acts by defining them as “victimized children or youth”. Moreover, the legal terminology used therein was changed from "child or youth pornography" to "child or youth sexual exploitation materials," accompanied by strengthened statutory penalties. These legislative actions underscored the Government’s commitment to harshly punish the production and distribution of child or youth sexual exploitation materials within the bounds of the law.

In 2021, a new legal basis was established to punish online grooming aimed at responding to sex offenses against children and youth committed online. Provisions were also introduced for special cases concerning concealed identity investigations and undercover investigations related to digital sex crimes.

Furthermore, measures have been implemented to raise alertness about sex crimes against children and youth and prevent recidivism, including the Disclosure of Personal Information and Notification of Sex Offenders, which involve disclosing sex offenders’ personal information on the Internet and notifying local residents, and the Employment Restriction System for Sex Offenders, which limits the employment of sex offenders at child or youth-related institutions. Continuous efforts are being made to expand the range of institutions subject to notification of personal information and employment restrictions to enhance the efficacy of these systems.

g) Human trafficking

In 2015, the ROK government ratified the United Nations Trafficking in Persons Protocol (The Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime). Subsequently, it enacted the Act on Prevention of Human Trafficking and Protection of Victims (henceforth, “Human Trafficking Prevention Act”) in 2021, aligning definitions of human trafficking and concepts of crimes, etc. with international standards, thereby establishing and operating a system for the protection and support of victims.

Accordingly, the ROK government has formulated a Comprehensive Plan for Prevention of Human Trafficking, etc. (2023-2027) and established and operated a Council for Policy Coordination on Prevention of Human Trafficking, etc. chaired by the Deputy Prime Minister of Social Affairs to coordinate and deliberate on related policies. The Government also set up the Central Agency for Protection of Rights and Interests of Victims and installed a helpline for human trafficking victims (1600-8248) to extend support and connect victims to appropriate support facilities based on the type of harm suffered.

Moreover, efforts are underway to prevent human trafficking and other crimes and to protect and support victims. These efforts encompass several measures: developing, publicly notifying, and utilizing identification indicators to improve early detection of victims, with a particular focus on women and girls; creating and distributing educational materials for online and group training aimed at individuals subject to compulsory education; and implementing systematic education.

h) Education on preventing violence

Discussions and initiatives emphasizing the importance of preventive intervention as an effective tool for preventing violence have continued consistently. As a result, the implementation rate of education by targeted institutions, including central government agencies, local governments, and schools at each level, reached 99.9% as of 2022. The overall participation rate among employees, which includes heads of institutions and high-ranking officials, has stabilized at 93.3%.

Customized education is conducted separately for heads of institutions and high-ranking officials who influence the organizational culture of their institution. Starting in 2022, initiatives to enhance the substance of prevention education have been carried out continuously, such as expanding the scope of institutions liable to provide such separate mandatory training for high-ranking officials and publicizing the names of heads of institutions who have not completed sexual harassment prevention education. At the same time, “Violence Prevention Education Outreach” is offered to vulnerable populations who have limited educational opportunities and access, such as workers making household visits and employees in small businesses.

On the other hand, to eradicate gender-based violence, the Equal Employment Opportunity Act stipulates that businesses with one or more employees shall annually provide prevention education on sexual harassment in the workplace. Starting from 2018, administrative fines for failing to conduct prevention education have been raised from KRW 3 million (USD 2,250) to KRW 5 million (USD 3,750), thereby reinforcing the effectiveness of the mandate. It also became mandatory to post materials related to prevention education on sexual harassment in the workplace at all times. Additionally, the Ministry of Employment and Labor (MOEL) operates expert committees in each local office to make decisions on sexual harassment incidents in the workplace and provides instructors free of charge to micro and small businesses that have difficulties in providing the education. The scope of such assistance has been

2019	7.9	20.8	17.8	21.1	25.1	9.1	17.3	10.9	6.8	12.6	12.7
2023	11.7	28.4	30.9	23.6	30.4	14.0	21.0	12.6	10.0	15.4	17.5

* The category of school principals and vice principals, which achieved the target female ratio of 46.4% in 2022, has been excluded from the third plan (2023-2027).

** The four major institutes of science and technology have been included in the plan starting from 2023.

b) Improving gender representation in politics

The Public Official Election Act mandates or recommends provisions for political parties to nominate female candidates in National Assembly and local council elections. To encourage an increase in the proportion of female candidates in local constituency elections, the amended Political Funds Act of 2024 stipulates that subsidies for fielding female candidates shall be distributed and paid to political parties, differentiated according to their respective ratios of female candidate nominations compared to the total candidates for nationwide local constituencies. Furthermore, the Act mandates that at least 10% of ordinary subsidies paid to political parties be used for the election expenses of female candidates running for public office, as well as for expenses related to discovering and educating female politicians, and other initiatives aimed at advancing the development of women in politics. This institutional support is intended to foster the growth of female politicians.

<Subsidy Distribution & Payment Standards for Nominating Female Candidates under the Political Funds Act (§26) >

Before amendment on January 2, 2024		After amendment on January 2, 2024	
Ratio of fielding female candidates to the total candidates for nationwide local constituencies	Total amount of subsidies subject to distribution	Ratio of fielding female candidates to the total candidates for nationwide local constituencies	Total amount of subsidies subject to distribution
At least 30/100	50% of subsidies	At least 20/100 but less than 30/100	40% of subsidies
At least 20/100 but less than 30/100	30% of subsidies	At least 20/100 but less than 30/100	30% of subsidies
At least 10/100 but less than 20/100	20% of subsidies	At least 20/100 but less than 30/100	20% of subsidies
		At least 20/100 but less than 30/100	10% of subsidies

■ Right to work and rights at work

a) Establishing a foundation for gender equality in the workplace

Under the Equal Employment Opportunity Act, it is prohibited as “discrimination in employment” for an employer to discriminate against an employee in employment or working conditions or takes any other disadvantageous measures without any justifiable reason, on grounds of pregnancy or childbirth. In case an employee receives discriminatory treatment from their employer on grounds of pregnancy or childbirth in employment, wages, education, assignment, and promotion, age limit, retirement, or dismissal, violation of their rights can be remedied through “corrective measures against e.g. gender-based discrimination in employment” by the labor relations commission, effective since May 2022. Other discriminatory treatment includes inappropriate personnel actions without valid reasons, such as suspension from office, change of jobs, salary reductions, or other disciplinary measures, taken on grounds of pregnancy or childbirth.

In particular, to improve employment conditions for women and foster a workplace culture that promotes work-family balance, the “Smart Labor Inspections” have been carried out since 2017. This system integrates and analyzes data from the National Health Insurance Service regarding employees who are pregnant or have recently given birth with employment insurance data. Additionally, awareness campaigns and “On-site Prevention and Monitoring Days” for conducting on-site guidance and inspections are regularly operated, focusing on sectors where a large number of vulnerable groups (daycare centers, small and medium-sized hospitals) are employed. Taking into account potential challenges that employees may encounter when filing reports, since 2023, Maternity Protection Reporting Centers have been established in local offices across the country, and an Online Anonymous Report Center has been operational on the government website, etc. to facilitate reporting.

In addition, the ROK Government has reinforced measures to address the gender wage gap. Since 2006, it has been implementing proactive employment improvement measures (affirmative action, or ‘AA’) aimed at promoting the fulfillment of women employment standards in businesses with at least 500 employees (including businesses with at least 300 employees among large corporate groups), entire public institutions, local government-invested public corporations, and local public agencies. The Enforcement Rule of the Equal

Employment Opportunity Act was amended in 2017 to require businesses lagging behind in AA to submit the current status of the gender wage gap and measures for their improvement in a continuous effort to extend the measure. The effectiveness of the system has been also secured through the disclosure of the list of businesses underperforming for three years in a row. Moreover, despite wages being sensitive personal information, efforts toward amending the Equal Employment Opportunity Act are being made as part of proactive measures to address the gender wage gap, requiring all businesses that are subject to AA to submit the current status of wages between male and female employees. Furthermore, it became mandatory for employers to submit analyses of the wage status and causes of gender disparities among their male and female employees, thus encouraging voluntary improvement in the gender wage gap.

b) Empowering women throughout the life cycle

In recent years, continuous improvements have been made in women's economic participation rate and employment rate, yet childbirth and child-rearing still serve as a hindrance to women's economic activities. Thus, the Ministry of Employment and Labor (MOEL) has been stepping up support to prevent women's career interruption, including by promoting maternity leave, alongside efforts to create an enabling environment for utilizing these systems in a practical manner.

The MOEL has devised a system to support women's work and childcare, tailored to different stages of the life cycle to prevent their career interruption, and continued to expand various programs as follows to render practical help for women: reduction of working hours and infertility treatment leave for the pregnancy period; maternity leave and miscarriage or stillbirth leave for the childbirth period; and childcare leave, reduction of working hours for a period of childcare, and 6+6 parental leave for the childcare period.

In particular, parental leave allowance was increased in 2022 to promote the use of parental leave, and the "3+3 parental leave*" was introduced to promote both parents' participation in child-rearing by increasing fathers' involvement, leading to an actual increase of 18.6% in the number of recipients of parental leave allowance. Moreover, the number of men receiving parental leave allowances also increased to 29,041 in 2021, 37,885 in 2022, and 35,336 in 2023.

*3+3 parental leave system: under this scheme, when both parents take parental leave either simultaneously or consecutively within 12 months after childbirth, each parent receives increased parental leave allowances equivalent to 100% of their ordinary wages for the first three months (up to KRW 2 million (approximately USD 1,500) for the first month, KRW 2.5 million (approximately USD 1,850) for the second month, and KRW 3 million (approximately USD 2,250) for the third month.)

Since 2019, the duration of paternity leave has been extended*, and support has been scaled up for businesses eligible for priority support that implement reduction of working hours during the childcare period.

*Extension of the duration of paternity leave: from five days (three days of paid leave plus two days of unpaid leave) to ten days of paid leave, of which five days are subsidized by the government in the case of SMEs (equivalent to 100% of ordinary wages, up to KRW 401,910 (approximately USD 295) in 2023.

**If an employer that has never previously used reduction of working hours for childcare allows the reduction of working hours for the childcare period for the first time, an additional payment of KRW 100,000 (approximately USD 74) per month is provided until the third instance of such an arrangement is made.

Going forward, the ROK Government plans to increase support to extend relevant policies not only to public and large corporations, but also to SMEs and micro businesses.

In addition, acknowledging the growing importance of harnessing the female workforce to address the social and economic losses stemming from women's career interruptions, and challenges posed by a declining productive workforce due to low birth rates and an aging population, the ROK Government has expanded customized employment support programs, such as tailored counseling, vocational training, and job placement services through the 159 Saeil Centers (women's reemployment centers). In 2021, with a view to fundamentally resolving the issue of women's career interruptions, the ROK Government enacted comprehensive amendments to relevant laws* and broadened policy scope to encompass employed women, enabling the provision of employment retention services adapted to career interruption crises throughout various life stages. As a result of these endeavors, women's employment indicators have been steadily improving in recent years.

*Female economic participation rate (aged 15-64): 59.4% (2018) to 63.1% (2023)

*Number of women with career interruptions (aged 15-54): 1.85 million women (2018) to 350,000 women (2023)

c) Promoting economic participation of women living in remote and rural areas

The Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs (MAFRA) has been making national efforts to improve the status of women farmers by formulating five-year master plans and annual implementation plans under the Support for Female Farmers and Fishers Act (enacted in 2001) with the goal of fostering healthy rural families and accelerating agricultural development by actively supporting the protection of rights and interests of female farmers, the advancement of their status, the enhancement of the quality of life and the promotion of specialized human resources. In particular, a department dedicated to supporting female farmers was established in 2019, and the Support for Female Farmers and Fishers Act was

amended in 2021. The amendment is intended to incorporate the promotion of gender equality and the improvement of agricultural working conditions in the purpose, responsibilities, and master plan in the Act and lay the legal basis for designating Women Farmers' Day and Women Fishers' Day.

Additionally, the Fifth Master Plan for Female Farmers Fostering Policies (2021-2025) was formulated, setting out the vision of "a Happy Place to Live, Work, and Rest for Women Farmers achieved through Gender Equality" with four main strategies and 16 key implementation tasks, with various policies being implemented as a result.

In 2019, the Enforcement Rule of the Act on Fostering and Supporting Agricultural and Fisheries Business Entities was amended to allow women to be registered as co-owners in fishing businesses. With this amendment, the ROK Government has paved the way to encourage women to play a leading role in the business and increase the share of female business owners in fisheries.

■ Unpaid care and domestic work / work-family conciliation

a) Strengthening support for childcare

The ROK Government has taken the following measures to expand childcare services and enhance their quality. Parental allowance was introduced to compensate for income losses during childbirth and child-rearing, and to provide intensive care support tailored to the developmental characteristics of the child (2023). Targeting children under the age of two, the allowance amount in 2023 was KRW 700,000 per month for infants under one year old, and KRW 350,000 per month for children aged one to two years. Starting in 2024, it has been increased to KRW 1 million and KRW 500,000, respectively.

To reduce the burden of child-rearing, the ROK Government provides childcare allowances to families with children (0-5 years old) utilizing childcare centers, regardless of their income level. As of 2023, the budget allocated to support child-rearing cost was KRW 6 trillion and 131.2 billion, benefiting 987,000 children. In addition, home care allowance was introduced in July 2009 with a view to reducing the burden of child-rearing and improving equity between children utilizing childcare centers and those receiving home care. Childcare allowance has been provided for preschool children under 84 months receiving home care, regardless of

income level starting from March 2013, and its eligibility has been extended to include preschool children under 86 months. The 2023 budget for home care allowance is KRW 175.9 billion, and 114,000 children received the allowance as of late December.

Moreover, to meet urgent and temporary care needs among children receiving home care, the ROK Government operates Support Centers for Childcare and childcare centers designated as part-time childcare service providers. These centers offer part-time care services and subsidize the cost of care. The number of such service providers continues to rise, with 1,000 classes in operation as of 2023.

To strengthen the Government's responsibility for childcare, the ROK Government has continued to increase the number of national or public childcare centers, achieving 40.0% of public care use rate as of 2023. To relieve the workload of daycare center teachers, 61,000 assistant and extended childcare teachers were assigned in 2023, and a new position of non-classroom teacher (such as assistant and substitute teachers) was created to perform various roles. Since 2019, Korea has implemented a compulsory daycare center assessment system aimed at ensuring an effective service quality management system, encouraging voluntary commitment to quality improvement by daycare centers, and providing parents with information on the quality of daycare centers.

To ease the educational burden on parents, the ROK Government is pushing ahead with the promotion of extended school hours as a national agenda. In 2023, it piloted the "Neulbom School," or the extended hour program, which integrates high-quality education and childcare services both before and after regular classes for primary school students by utilizing various educational resources inside and outside the school at 459 primary schools across eight provincial offices of education. Additionally, the Ministry of Education (MOE) has introduced and operated customized programs for first-grade students to eliminate the care gap for parents caused by early class dismissal at the beginning of primary school while expanding educational opportunities for students by providing various programs such as sports, arts, and digital education. Moreover, the MOE has operated flexible childcare services according to the needs of students and parents, including morning, afternoon and evening childcare services, as well as gap-hour childcare services. As a result, the number of people on the waiting list for primary school childcare classes, which was about 15,000 as of March 2023, was reduced by 91% to 1,363 as of September 2023.

b) Strengthening home childcare support

The traditional role of families in childcare has diminished amid a rise in dual-earner families and a shift towards a nuclear family structure. As childcare service needs became more diversified driven by various factors, such as children's age and lifestyles, there were limitations in fulfilling the demand for childcare through institutional childcare alone. In response, the ROK Government introduced the "Idolbom Childcare Services," which provides families with home-based childcare.

In 2019, the Idolbom support was expanded to families earning up to 150% of median income, an increase from the previous 120% level, while government funding was increased by more than 5%. Additionally, the number of subsidized hours was raised from 600 hours per year to 720 hours, reducing the financial burden on families, while providing childcare service providers with a new form of statutory allowance under the Labor Standards Act. The number of families using the service has steadily increased over the past five years, except for a temporary drop in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

* (Number of households using the Idolbom service) 70,485 households in 2019 → 9,663 in 2020 → 71,789 in 2021 → 78,212 in 2022 → 86,100 in 2023

The spread of COVID-19 in 2020 led to the temporary closure of schools and childcare facilities, prompting the Government to scale up support for urgent demand for childcare and alleviate the childcare burden of households. Special childcare support was initiated for healthcare and quarantine personnel for a specified period to allow them to focus on their work. In addition, features like "Dolbom-pay" and "Dolbom-talktalk" were introduced on mobile apps to increase service referral rates.

Meanwhile, following cases of child abuse by childcare service providers in 2019, the ROK government announced the Measures for Improvement of Safe Idolbom Childcare Services to fundamentally prevent child abuse. Measures include augmenting verification procedures for childcare providers during recruitment, enhancing the training system, strengthening qualification management, and improving working conditions for childcare service providers and staff of the institutions.

In 2020, the Child Care Support Act was amended to enhance service quality and strengthen disciplinary measures against childcare providers who commit child abuse. The amendments included introducing aptitude and personality tests for childcare providers, extending the qualification suspension period of childcare providers (1 year → 3 years), and conducting satisfaction surveys targeting service users, among other measures.

In 2022, efforts were made towards more effective policy formulation and service delivery

through the designation and operation of a Central Childcare Support Center responsible for policy research and management of educational institutions related to Idolbom childcare services as well as Metropolitan Childcare Support Centers that coordinate the supply and demand of childcare providers and service providing agencies at a regional level. In 2023, the “Upgrading Idolbom Childcare Services” initiative was introduced, which includes private childcare services as well. This measure aims to alleviate childcare burdens and foster a safe and high-quality childcare environment with the goal of providing trustworthy childcare services that everyone can rely on.

c) Strengthening support for work-life balance

The ROK Government introduced a Family-Friendly Certification System for companies in 2008 to address low birth rates and an aging population and expand female employment opportunities. This system grants certification by the Minister of Gender Equality and Family to private businesses and public institutions with exemplary family-friendly practices, including support for childbirth and child-rearing, such as childcare leave and flexible working hours. Assessment criteria for certification include the utilization rate of childcare leave, infrastructure for supporting pregnant employees, availability of workplace childcare facilities, implementation of flexible working hours, work-from-home options, and smart work systems. Through this initiative, the Government aims to enhance organizational culture within businesses and promote an enabling atmosphere where people can utilize family-friendly policies without hesitation, thus contributing to boosting job satisfaction among employees and improving productivity within enterprises.

* Number of certified companies: 3,833 (2019) → 4,918 (2021) → 5,415 (2022) → 5,911 (2023)

As of 2023, small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), which typically face more challenging conditions, accounted for 69.5% of all family-friendly certified companies, highlighting a growing interest and willingness among businesses to adopt family-friendly management practices. To further foster the adoption of a family-friendly workplace culture, the ROK Government has expanded support through various incentives. These include granting additional points in the selection process for central and local government contracts, offering preferential interest rates for loans to SMEs and middle-market companies, and providing preferential treatment during immigration procedures, among others. The Government has also undertaken several initiatives, such as: hosting information sessions on the certification scheme; providing consulting and workplace training support; operating a family-friendly network;

bolstering inter-ministerial cooperation to promote family-friendly practices among more SMEs; expanding consultative engagement with local institutions related to family-friendly practices; operating an online self-check system; enhancing surveillance management of certified companies and institutions; and promoting achievements and best practices in family-friendly management.

Furthermore, between 2020 and 2022, a Korean Dads Photo Contest was organized, accompanied by a photo exhibition featuring fathers in Korea and Sweden involved in parenting. The aim was to promote fathers' right to childcare and cultivate a culture of shared parenting within households. In 2023, the Ministry of Gender Equality and Family (MOGEF) jointly hosted an Equal-Parenting Photo Contest with the embassies of seven countries* to explore and celebrate diverse parenting cultures worldwide. The winning entries were showcased on the MOGEF's gallery website and displayed at a dedicated photo exhibition.

* Participating embassies: Embassies of Sweden, the European Union, France, Denmark, Norway, Spain, and the Philippines

The Ministry of Employment and Labor (MOEL) provides policy support for women to help them maintain a work-family balance through flexible work systems, including work from home, remote work, selective working hours, and flexible commuting hours. The MOEL has provided professional consultation on the introduction and utilization of work-from-home systems for businesses that have not yet adopted them. The Ministry has also subsidized the costs of setting up infrastructure for flexible work for businesses that lack sufficient finances to cover the costs. Additionally, the MOEL has provided subsidies to businesses that utilize flexible work arrangements to alleviate their initial labor management costs and has introduced the system (implemented from 2020) enabling workers to request reduced working hours from their employers for reasons such as family care, personal education, health, and retirement preparation, along with subsidies to encourage its adoption.

■ **Changing discriminatory social norms and gender stereotypes**

The Ministry of Education (MOE) continues to provide policy support for creating a gender-equitable educational environment in schools. This support aims to help students grow into healthy members of society who practice caring, sharing, and cooperation. Through gender equality education, the Ministry fosters empathy among students by promoting mutual respect and discouraging stereotypical or discriminatory attitudes toward others.

Through the amendment of the Framework Act on Education (2021) and its Enforcement

Decree (2022), the MOE has laid the legal foundation for all schools to systematically implement gender equality education, including gender awareness education, sex education, and sexual violence prevention education, to promote gender equality awareness. To foster gender equality in primary and secondary education and challenge discriminatory social norms and gender stereotypes, the MOE has expanded the content related to gender equality, such as discrimination, stereotypes, prejudice, sexual violence, domestic violence, and gender expression, in subjects such as Disciplined Life, Happy Life, social studies, home economics, and physical education in the 2022 Revised National Curriculum for primary education. Similarly, these topics are included in subjects like morality, Korean language, social studies, history, technology, home economics, physical education, health, and science in the curriculum for middle and high schools.

The MOE has also developed gender equality education content and learning guidelines for teachers tailored to the needs and context of each school level. Additionally, it has provided professional training to enhance the expertise of teachers who plan and lead gender equality education activities. Moreover, the ROK Government has designated “Focus Schools for Gender Equality” among national schools to identify best practices in gender equality education and supported outreach gender equality education in schools located in small and remote cities across the country.

In addition, efforts have been made to create a gender-equal culture on university campuses by identifying and promoting exemplary practices in preventive education, case handling, and gender equality programs at each university. Furthermore, initiatives have been consistently carried out to foster a gender-equal media environment through continued analysis of media content for gender equality, particularly focusing on mass media, which has far-reaching influence.

Meanwhile, discriminatory and derogative expressions circulated on the Internet and social media are deliberated upon by the Korea Communications Standards Commission (KCSC), an independent private body, in accordance with the Regulations on Deliberation of Information and Communications, to root out expressions inciting prejudice and discrimination against socially vulnerable groups, including women, people with disabilities, and the elderly.

3. Over the past five years, what specific actions have you taken to prevent discrimination and promote the rights of marginalized groups of women and girls?

■ Women and girls living in remote and rural areas

a) Support for women living in rural areas

The Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs (MAFRA) has established infrastructure to enhance the occupational status and rights of women farmers, improve their quality of life, and build their capacity through a Master Plan for Fostering Women Farmers, formulated every five years in accordance with the Support for Female Farmers and Fishers Act, enacted in 2001. The Fifth Master Plan for Female Farmers Fostering Policies (2021-2025), currently underway, was established under the vision of “a Happy Place to Live, Work, and Rest for Women Farmers achieved through Gender Equality.” It includes various policy tasks aimed at strengthening women farmers' professional capabilities and creating a gender-equal rural environment.

With the introduction of the “Women Farmers’ Recognition of Co-ownership Status” system in 2016, the MAFRA has been advancing the rights of women farmers by recognizing their status as agricultural workers in addition to being business owners. It is promoting policies such as increasing the proportion of women in the Agri-food Policy Committee and the National Agricultural Cooperative Federation, both as members and executive officers, so that women in rural areas can actively participate in the policy-making process.

In 2021, amendments to the Support for Female Farmers and Fishers Act incorporated additional provisions aimed at promoting gender equality, improving farming conditions for women farmers, and establishing legal grounds for designating Women Farmers’ Day into the Act’s purpose, responsibilities and master plan, etc. In particular, a department dedicated to women farmers was established in 2019, and has since been implementing various policies, such as rural childcare improvement projects, the development and dissemination of women-friendly agricultural machinery, and the provision of substitute workers for farm work to ease the labor burden on women farmers.

Additionally, the MAFRA is promoting a project to improve the farming conditions of women farmers to strengthen their capabilities. In conjunction, it has provided career exploration education on agriculture and rural areas to motivate young women to pursue careers in

agriculture and settle in rural areas by enhancing their understanding and changing their perceptions of agriculture and rural areas. Moreover, the MAFRA is promoting targeted farming education and training programs to support the stable settlement of multicultural families in rural areas. These initiatives are designed to support married immigrant women in rural areas to settle more stably in rural communities and to nurture them as successor farmers. Meanwhile, to raise awareness of gender equality and propagate a culture of gender equality in rural areas, the Ministry has been laying the foundation for an education system on gender equality since 2020 and strengthening gender equality education, including the fostering of professional lecturers specializing in gender equality in rural areas.

b) Support for women living in fishing communities

The Ministry of Oceans and Fisheries (MOF) has made efforts to improve the status of female fishers by formulating the Master Plan for Fostering Female Fishers every five years under the Support for Female Farmers and Fishers Act, enacted in 2001. The ongoing Fifth Master Plan for Fostering Female Fishers (2022-2026) has been established with the vision of "Leading Female Fishers in Creating Sustainable Fisheries and Fishing Communities." The plan aims to tackle the decline of fishing communities by nurturing new female fishers and to raise the female fishers' quality of life and status, with various policy tasks implemented.

In particular, the ROK Government has endeavoured to enhance the rights of female fishers by introducing a system that allows female fishers to be registered as co-owners when operating fishing businesses with their spouses. Enforced since 2019, this system not only aims to recognize the status of female fishers but also enables them to access various rights and benefits provided to business owners. Moreover, the Government has been working strenuously to increase the participation rate of female fishers in the fisheries and fishing village policy review committee to 40%, as well as the proportion of women on the board of directors of the National Federation of Fisheries Cooperatives, so that more women in fishing villages can participate in the policy-making process.

In addition, to raise the quality of life for women living in fishing villages, the ROK Government has improved working environments, and strengthened welfare services for them, including maternity and childcare support. Moving forward, the Government will establish a customized training system to enhance the capacity of female fishers. In the meantime, the ROK Government plans to further improve the administrative support system by establishing

a dedicated organization for improving the effectiveness of female fisher-related policies, conducting fact-finding surveys, and collecting statistics to develop evidence-based policies.

■ **Women and girls with disabilities**

The ROK Government has taken several actions to promote the health of women with disabilities, reduce financial burdens, and foster a childbirth-friendly culture for women with disabilities. For instance, it provides financial support of KRW 1.2 million per fetus to women with disabilities who give birth or experience miscarriage or stillbirth after four months of pregnancy. To address other various needs and concerns, the Government has also provided a wide range of services for women with disabilities, including medical and welfare services, information sharing, counseling and case management, capacity building and training programs, self-help meetings, and introduction to community resources.

■ **Migrant women and girls**

a) Migrant women

Under the Framework Act on Treatment of Foreigners Residing in the Republic of Korea, the ROK Government mandates education, publicity activities, and other necessary measures to prevent discrimination against and safeguard the human rights of foreigners residing in the Republic of Korea and their children. Under this Act, the Ministry of Justice (MOJ) has outlined the Third Master Plan for Immigration Policy (2018-2022) and the Fourth Master Plan for Immigration Policy (2023-2027) as comprehensive five-year national plans that define promoting human rights as a key policy goal for the Ministry. These plans include policies to ensure stable residency and education rights for children from immigrant backgrounds and prevent blind spots in immigrant human rights policies such as violence and human trafficking. Additionally, the MOJ has established and operates, in its headquarters and all immigration offices, the Councils for Promotion of Foreigners' Human Rights and Enhancement of Interests and Rights, focusing on assisting migrant women in settlement, remedy procedure, rights and interest promotion and discrimination prevention.

b) International Marriage

The Ministry of Justice (MOJ) has been operating an Information Program to International

Marriage since 2010 to minimize adverse side effects resulting from the lack of proper awareness and understanding of international marriages, such as sexual violence and domestic violence, and to support the formation of healthy families through international marriages. This program includes sessions on introducing the local systems and cultures of the country regarding international marriage, explaining the process for marital immigration visa issuance, sharing real-life experiences of internationally-married couples, fostering mutual respect and resolving conflicts among couples, and providing human rights education aimed at preventing domestic violence. Consisting of educational sessions on human rights protection of migrant women and domestic violence prevention, the Information Program to International Marriage aims to prevent marriage breakup or social maladjustment among migrant women resulting from cultural conflicts and help foster a healthy culture of international marriage by preventing discrimination against marriage immigrants and safeguarding their interests and rights.

To prevent damage from domestic violence and sexual violence in international marriages, the MOJ amended the Enforcement Rule of the Immigration Act in 2020 to mandate background checks for criminal records of Korean spouses during the screening process for issuing the marital immigration (F-6) visa, which is the pre-entry phase for marriage immigrants. The purpose is to restrict Korean individuals with a history of domestic or sex crimes from inviting foreign spouses for international marriage or cohabitation.

The MOJ supports the work-life balance of marriage immigrants by allowing their parents to be invited and stay long-term in the Republic of Korea under humanitarian grounds. These grounds include situations such as the marriage immigrant's pregnancy, the presence of a child requiring care, or the presence of a family member with a severe disability within the international marriage household. In 2022, the requirements for the stay of marriage immigrants' overseas family members were relaxed by increasing the age limit for children requiring care from seven, the age of elementary school entrance, to 10. Additionally, male siblings of marriage immigrants can now be invited for the purpose of childcare support.

c) Support for victims of violence

Married immigrant women often face an increased risk of violence, including domestic violence, due to economic hardships and uncertain residency status. They may also find it difficult to respond effectively when victimized. The ROK Government is dedicated to supporting migrant women who are victims of violence and their accompanying families to

promote their self-reliance and protect their human rights through medical and legal aid, treatment and recovery programs, vocational training, and housing support. Since the establishment of two shelters for foreign victims of domestic violence in 2004, the ROK Government has continuously expanded the number of facilities and currently operates a total of 33 facilities (28 shelters, four group homes, and one rehabilitation support center). In addition, since 2019, nine counseling centers specifically tailored to migrant women, offering services in their native languages, have been operational. These centers focus on addressing the complex challenges related to the lives and residency, etc. of migrant women victimized by violence, including domestic violence, aiming to facilitate their stable settlement.

In addition, to preemptively prevent migrant women from being exposed to violence, such as domestic violence, due to their lack of Korean language skills, efforts are being made to provide information and promote violence prevention. Above all, information for migrant women regarding measures to deal with violence, emergency support, protection facilities, etc. in case of victimization, was produced in their native languages (13 languages) and distributed to immigration offices, embassies, the Women's Emergency Hotline 1366, the Danuri Call Center, police stations, domestic violence counseling centers, protection facilities for migrant women victims of violence, and others. In addition, videos promoting the prevention and support policies for migrant women victims of violence are being broadcast on TV and YouTube, which are close-to-life media, to improve public perception and raise awareness of the policies.

Furthermore, to provide effective psychological therapy and counseling for North Korean defector women who have suffered from violence during their defection and settlement process, ten sexual and domestic violence counseling centers, etc. have been designated as counseling and psychological healing centers for North Korean defector women. Additionally, at the Mind Health Center in Hanawon, various programs are offered to female trainees in line with the settlement stage of North Korean defector women, including psychiatric treatment, individual and group counseling, and psychological and emotional stability education. After they move into their residences, professional counselors are assigned to 25 regional adaptation centers nationwide for North Korean defectors, offering diverse types of specialized counseling services and case management to support North Korean defector women.

4. Over the past five years, how has the confluence of different crises affected the implementation of the BPfA in your country, and what measures have you taken to prevent their negative impact on progress for women and girls?

■ COVID-19 and other pandemics

a) Promoting recovery from women's employment crisis in response to COVID-19

The Ministry of Gender Equality and Family (MOGEF) has been gathering opinions from the ground, including labor and management communities. Since the fourth quarter of 2020, it has strived to respond to socio-economic changes by periodically holding expert meetings to analyze the status of women's employment trends and identify policy tasks, among other measures. To address the challenges posed by COVID-19, the COVID-19 Women's Employment Crisis Recovery Plan was collaboratively developed and announced by relevant ministries in 2021 to overcome the crisis in women's employment. The plan aims to restore and maintain women's jobs during the COVID-19 crisis and leap into promising future jobs by closing the gender gap in the labor market, and includes five strategies: 1) expanding women's jobs in the public and private sectors, 2) strengthening employment and entrepreneurship support for those returning to the labor market, 3) supporting caregiving and employment retention, 4) addressing the gender gap in the labor market, and 5) enhancing women's employment service system and strengthening governance.

As part of the measures, more than 60,000 women's jobs have been created with supplementary budgetary resources. Along with the Government's continuous efforts, the female employment rate, which had decreased due to COVID-19, has been steadily rising since 2020.

* Employment rate of women aged 15-64: 57.8% (2019) → 56.7% (2020) → 60.0% (2022) → 61.4% (2023)

b) Supporting victims of domestic violence since Covid-19

In response to domestic violence incidents exacerbated by the economic downturn, lockdowns, and other related impacts resulting from the spread of COVID-19, the ROK Government has enhanced tailored policy support for domestic violence victims, including legal, medical, self-reliance, and housing assistance, to aid their recovery and return to normalcy. To provide legal remedies to victims, the ROK Government has enhanced the free legal aid program to better

address the needs of victims, increasing the amount of legal aid (KRW 5 million in 2023 to KRW 6 million in 2024) and support for attorney fees per victim (KRW 1.2 million in 2022 to KRW 1.5 million in 2023). Moreover, amendments to the Act on the Prevention of Domestic Violence and Protection, etc. of Victims have expanded the criteria for admission for shelters from infants and young children to include all children, establishing the basis for counseling and therapy programs aimed at promoting their physical and mental recovery. Furthermore, the Government has expanded support funds for self-reliance upon discharge from shelters to include accompanying children (KRW 5 million per victim in 2023 to KRW 5 million per victim and KRW 2.5 million per child in 2024). The Government also provides vocational training through vocational training institutions and other means to provide substantial support for victims' self-reliance.

To mitigate family conflicts stemming from the prolonged COVID-19 pandemic and to promote equitable distribution of caregiving and household chores between genders, the ROK Government developed and distributed the Family Stress Prescription Guidelines for Overcoming COVID-19 and provided support for family-related counseling through nationwide Healthy Family Support Centers, the Danuri Call Center, and Family Counseling Hotlines, etc.

■ Care crisis

a) Supporting emergency childcare services in response to COVID-19, etc.

The MOGEF is addressing the blind spots in institutional childcare by offering the Idolbom Childcare Service, which entails a childcare provider visiting the homes of families with childcare gaps, such as dual-income households, to offer one-on-one care for children under 12. To alleviate the burden of childcare burden for families below a certain income threshold, the ROK Government directly subsidizes a portion of the service fees. Idolbom Childcare Service represents a public service not commonly found in major countries or developed nations. This service involves direct government support for childcare services under the responsibility of the State.

In 2020, the spread of COVID-19 led to temporary closures of schools and childcare facilities, etc., prompting the government to scale up support to meet urgent childcare demands and reduce the childcare burden on households. As a special measure in response to COVID-19, around 30,000 households in total benefited from expanded support. Additionally, special

temporary support for Idolbom Childcare Service was provided to healthcare and quarantine personnel working in the field, allowing them to focus on their duties without worrying about childcare.

In 2023, an emergency and short-term childcare service was piloted with the goal of promptly addressing sudden gaps in care caused by urgent overtime work, business trips, and similar situations, by easing the requirements for service application and utilization. The service is scheduled for full rollout in 2024.

5. Over the next five years, what are the priorities for accelerating progress for women and girls in your country through laws, policies and/or programmes?

■ Eliminating violence against women and girls

a) Strengthening the foundational framework for the prevention of violence against women

To prevent violence against women, the ROK Government plans to formulate the second Master Plan of Policies to Prevent Violence Against Women (2025-2029) based on the achievements of the first Master Plan (2025-2029). Additionally, in response to improvement requests from Statistics Korea and others regarding the results of the first Fact-Finding Survey on Violence against Women (2021), a comprehensive survey integrating fact-finding surveys on violence against women, sexual violence, domestic violence, and stalking will be conducted in 2027. The legal basis for this integrated fact-finding survey was established under the Framework Act on Prevention of Violence Against Women (passed by the State Council in March 2024). These improvement measures are expected to accurately identify the diverse patterns of violence against women and facilitate the implementation of prevention policies better suited for prevention and victim support.

As part of the Yoon Suk Yeol administration's national policy task of “Strengthening Support for Victims of Five Leading Types of Violence,” the currently operational integrated support groups for the Women’s Emergency Hotline 1366 will be expanded in the future. Presently established at five locations in 2024, these groups will be extended to all 17 metropolitan local governments nationwide to address gaps in supporting victims of new and emerging crimes as well as victims experiencing intersecting forms of victimization, etc.

b) Ensuring legal and institutional rights for victims and strengthening response

The Ministry of Justice (MOJ) aims to continue providing public defenders to sex crime victims to ensure and enhance their rights in the criminal justice system with which they are unfamiliar. Continuous monitoring, supervision, and training programs for public defenders representing victims are planned to bolster their expertise and moral integrity, enabling them to offer professional accommodating legal aid tailored to victims of various crimes. The MOJ will also expand the testimony assistant system to include a broader spectrum of crime victims,

including children, youth, and persons with disabilities affected by sex crime damage, facilitating clear communication of their precise intentions to investigative and judicial authorities. Moreover, the Ministry plans to continue fostering testimony assistants to deliver high-quality service and providing refresher training to enhance their professional capabilities. In February 2024, the MOJ proposed to the National Assembly a total of eight legislative amendments, including to the Criminal Procedure Act. These amendments include broadening the coverage of victims eligible for public defenders to include those affected by specific violent crimes like murder, robbery, and gang crime; newly inserting a process requesting revocation of court decisions that prohibit the inspection and copying of trial records; and strengthening the rights of sexual violence and child abuse victims to inspection and copying of case records. The Ministry remains dedicated to providing legislative support for the passage of these proposed amendments.

Furthermore, the Supreme Prosecutors' Office (SPO) will revise the case handling guidelines to reorganize punishments for sexual violence, to close legal loopholes in punishments related to violence against women, including sexual and domestic violence, to ensure swift responses to violence against women and to strengthen the prevention of the recurrence of such crimes.

Moreover, the SPO will explore and adopt measures to strengthen its organizational response capacity, including establishing a system to combat sexual harassment and sexual violence across various sectors of society, including culture and art, education, military, and private and public sectors, as well as enhancing case handling capabilities. The SPO will more vigorously promote the system of providing public defenders and testimony assistants to victims. Furthermore, the SPO will make efforts to enhance the professional investigative capabilities by conducting workshops to prosecutors and investigators dedicated exclusively to overseeing crimes involving women and children, targeted training, and training investigation authorities to prevent secondary victimization in crimes of violence against women.

c) Sexual harassment and sexual violence

Following the enforcement of the amended Act on Prevention of Sexual Violence and Protection of Victims (hereinafter, 'Sexual Violence Prevention Act') in 2024, plans are under way to strengthen the response system for sexual violence within the public sector. This includes shortening the deadline for heads of public institutions to submit measures on preventing the recurrence of sexual violence from three months to one month and enforcing

sanctions such as corrective orders and administrative fines for non-compliance with obligations. In addition, a case management system will be implemented in 2024 to enable more systematic management of sexual harassment and sexual violence in the public domain. The ROK Government provides victims of sexual violence with counseling, medical and legal aid, assistance in investigations, protection, self-reliance support, and other assistance by operating counseling centers for sexual violence victims, shelters, and “Sunflower Centers” (integrated support centers for victims of sexual violence), aiming to facilitate their swift return to society. It also plans to improve the infrastructure of support facilities to establish a tight-knit support system. Specifically, a new Sunflower Center offering 24/7 services year-round will be introduced to improve accessibility for victims.

In primary and secondary schools, the Ministry of Education (MOE) plans to continue providing training to strengthen the impartial case-handling capabilities of personnel involved in investigating sexual crimes while revising and distributing the Sexual Harassment and Sexual Violence Response Work Guidelines. Additionally, the MOE will continue creating and distributing prevention and response content, expanding public awareness campaigns, and operating on-site support groups to prevent digital sexual crimes, such as unconsented recording in schools.

In higher education, the MOE will support "growth training (supervision)" for senior employees to enhance mutual capabilities through sharing and discussing experiences and know-how and organize case-handling mock drills for new employees to strengthen their response capabilities through proactively practicing the entire case-handling process. The Ministry also plans to actively support the cultivation of gender equality awareness among university employees through various campaign activities.

On the other hand, when incidents of sexual harassment or sexual violence occur in workplaces, initial responses by managers are crucial to prevent secondary victimization. To address this, mandatory education is conducted separately for individuals in managerial positions (department heads or higher) apart from general employees, and the education for managers is being reinforced by including methods to prevent secondary victimization and handle incidents. In addition, ongoing projects to improve awareness and prevent sexual harassment and violence in the workplace will continue. For micro and small-sized businesses having difficulties in implementing education on prevention of sexual harassment, the MOEL plans to provide various content customized for on-site situations such as booklets, posters, educational videos,

and guide videos on implementation of education, and Standard Plans for Education (presentations) to enable these business to implement workplace sexual harassment prevention education customized to the businesses in line with their specific characteristics.

In 2024, the Ministry of National Defense (MND) plans to complete the establishment of a mobile application for counseling and reporting for victims of sexual harassment and sexual violence, as well as the "Prevention of Sexual Violence Information System" to support the integrated management of the Internet website and cases. This initiative is expected to enhance the accessibility of counseling and reporting for victims and improve the efficiency of case management. Moreover, the MND will continue to promote field-oriented prevention activities to eradicate sexual violence, including monitoring the implementation status of field units and diagnosing organizational cultures to prevent sexual harassment. It will also continue providing tailored and effective gender awareness and sexual violence prevention education across all classes. Moving forward, the MND will continuously enhance awareness and improve the organizational culture of its members by strengthening measures for sexual violence prevention and victim protection, enhancing the effectiveness of gender awareness training, and creating a military organizational culture that is free from sexual violence and guarantees gender equality.

d) Domestic violence

To effectively respond to new and emerging forms of crimes such as stalking, dating violence, and cases involving multiple harms, individual counseling centers for domestic or sexual violence will be gradually converted into integrated counseling centers (26 centers as of 2024). Accordingly, legislative amendments are being pursued to ease the qualification criteria for caseworkers in domestic violence victim support facilities.

Moreover, the ROK Government plans to establish dedicated protection facilities (shelters) to support victims of violence, particularly women and men with disabilities who are often overlooked in victim assistance. This initiative aims to build a robust support system for vulnerable populations.

e) Digital sex crimes

The ROK Government intends to reinforce support for victims of digital sex crimes by ensuring

the prompt deletion of victims' videos or photos and blocking access to such content and providing psychological support to aid in their recovery. Additionally, support will be intensified for victims of new and increasingly diversified types of digital sex crimes facilitated by information and communications technology.

Various promotional activities will be undertaken to enhance public awareness that illegal filming and dissemination of such content constitute a "serious crime," while emphasizing the importance of prevention. The Government plans to continue promoting preventive education for youth and other groups.

Whole-of-government cooperation will be strengthened to combat digital sex crimes, including by blocking the distribution of illegal videos or images, developing detection programs, and conducting undercover investigations. Additionally, an online service system will be established to support children and youth who are at high risk of exposure to digital sex crimes, recognizing that online platforms can be more accessible for them to seek help, considering their characteristics as children and youth.

Moreover, related ministries plan to continue efforts to ensure the right to be forgotten for victims of digital sex crimes by sharing information with and providing guidance on government policies to information and communications service providers, aiming to prevent the distribution of digital sex crime materials. To effectively deal with illegal foreign adult websites and other related issues, the ROK Government plans to enhance international coordination mechanisms, including establishing a regular channel of cooperation with the National Center for the Prevention of Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC in the U.S.) and conducting cross-border cooperative investigations.

f) Stalking and dating violence

The emergency housing support program, which provides urgent protection and counseling for victims of stalking and dating violence, will be expanded to 17 cities and provinces nationwide in 2024 to render more robust, customized support for stalking victims. Housing facilities will be equipped with security devices such as home security cameras, and the number of care workers will be increased to offer 24/7 services to better ensure the safety of the victims. Housing for stalking victims will also be open to victims' families to safeguard the rights and interests of victimized women and children.

In addition, the ROK Government will continue promotional campaigns to raise awareness

about stalking, dating violence, and other forms of violence, and inform the public about available support systems. In 2023, the Government released a promotional video on YouTube and other online channels focused on preventing stalking violence in everyday places such as buses or subways and intends to proceed with promotional projects across various media outlets in 2024.

g) Violence against children and youth

A key focus in the efforts to eliminate violence against children and youth (including girls and boys) is the establishment and operation of a system to eradicate sex trafficking. The ROK Government is collaborating with relevant ministries to enhance the monitoring of online media platforms against brokering and arranging the trafficking of children or adolescents for sexual purposes. The Government also plans to further strengthen and enhance the system for public disclosure of sex offenders and the management of employment restrictions to effectively deter recidivism.

h) Human trafficking

The Minister of Gender Equality and Family plans to conduct a fact-finding survey every five years on human trafficking, etc. including cases at home and abroad involving victims such as women and girls, and to use the foundational data gathered from these surveys for effective policymaking.

In addition, to promote the utilization of indicators for identifying victims of human trafficking for early detection of victims of trafficking, etc., particularly women and girls, and to provide necessary protection and support, the ROK Government will continue to recommend the use of these indicators to the heads of relevant agencies where prosecutors, judicial police officers, immigration control officials, and public officials involved in foreigner-related affairs, among others, are employed.

i) Education on preventing violence

Amid a continuous rise in sexual offenses occurring in universities, there is a growing demand to enhance prevention education. Currently, universities are encouraged to voluntarily bolster their education programs for preventing sexual violence by publicly disclosing their track records through university information disclosure and data linkage systems. Looking ahead, the ROK Government plans to continue distributing cyber education content on violence

prevention to university students and support prevention education outreach programs. This initiative aims to prevent violence against women on campus and promote a gender-equal culture across universities.

In addition, the Ministry of Employment and Labor (MOEL) will impose obligations to prevent sexual harassment at work under the Equal Employment Opportunity and Work-family Balance Assistance Act, while also continuously providing education and engaging in promotional efforts to ensure a healthy and safe workplace free from sexual harassment and gender-based discrimination. In particular, the smaller the size of a business is, the lower the education rate is on the prevention of sexual harassment at work, and conversely, the higher the incidence rate of sexual harassment is. Therefore, the Ministry will continue to make efforts by providing micro and small-sized businesses that have difficulties in implementing education programs on their own with support, such as sending lecturers for education and carrying out inspections, focusing on sexual harassment at work during instructions and inspections of businesses that employ a significant number of women.

j) Gender-sensitive health policy

In April 2019, the Constitutional Court of Korea decided that the crimes of abortion under the Criminal Act do not conform to the Constitution because they “comprehensively and uniformly compel the maintenance of pregnancy and infringe on the right to self-determination of pregnant woman by subjecting violators to criminal punishment.” Following the ruling, the Ministry of Justice proposed to the National Assembly the amendment to the Criminal Act in November 2020, outlining both punitive measures and permissible circumstances surrounding the crimes of abortion, after inter-ministerial discussions and consultations with relevant stakeholders. The Ministry remains committed to advocating for the passage of the proposed amendment.

■ Political participation and representation

a) Enhancing gender representation in the public sector

The ROK Government formulated the Third Plan to Improve Gender Representation in the Public Sector (2023-2027) in July 2023, a five-year roadmap (comprehensive plan) aimed at enhancing gender representation in the public sector, and has been implementing it. Notably,

the plan includes, for the first time, faculty members of four major science and technology institutes - Korea Advanced Institute of Science and Technology (KAIST), Gwangju Institute of Science and Technology (GIST), Daegu Gyeongbuk Institute of Science and Technology (DGIST), and Ulsan National University of Science and Technology (UNIST)- as targets, with the goal of achieving 14.1% representation by 2027.

< Plan to Improve Gender Representation (% of women) in the Public Sector (2023-2027)>

(Unit: %)

Target	Public officials		Public institutions			Teaching staff		Milita ry	Police		
	Central government		Director - level (Grade 5 or above)	Execu tive officer	Mana ger	Manage r at local public enterprises	National university professor		4 major S&T institutes (faculty)	Poli ce officer	Coast guard
	Senior official	HQ director-level (Grade 4 or above)									
2023	11.5	27.2	28.7	23.6	29.3	12.3	19.8	12.9	10.9	15.4	17.5
2027	13.5	30.0	32.2	26.2	34.5	15.5	22.9	14.1	15.3	17.0	17.9

b) Promoting women's representation in the private sector

Starting in 2024, the ROK Government plans to engage regional industrial complex-based businesses in agreements to promote gender-balanced practices within their organizations. This initiative aims to increase women’s employment in high-quality jobs within promising future industries, prevent career interruptions, and foster continuous career development. In the same context, the Government will promote educational programs on Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) and Diversity, Equality, and Inclusion (DEI), and other related topics for HR professionals to cultivate a gender-balanced organizational culture and enhance diversity across businesses. Furthermore, an active database of talented female human resources will be established and utilized to facilitate women’s advancement to decision-making positions within the private sector.

c) Improving gender representation in politics

To enhance the representation of women in elected positions and other political roles, the ROK Government intends to make relevant institutional improvements. In addition, it will offer educational opportunities through women's political participation training programs aimed at female voters, including members of women's organizations, and aspiring female politicians. These initiatives aim to increase awareness of women's vital role in elections and politics, cultivate a sense of sovereignty, and bolster women's leadership capabilities, thereby advancing female representation in politics.

■ Right to work and rights in the workplace

a) Establishing basis for gender equality in the workplace

The Ministry of Employment and Labor (MOEL) plans to improve equality in employment by continuously implementing proactive employment improvement measures (affirmative action, or "AA"). To address gender wage disparities, the MOEL will encourage businesses subject to AA to make efforts to internally address gender wage gap issues by analyzing the status and causes of gender wage gaps. In addition, to protect workers from gender-based discrimination in employment, the MOEL will reinforce inspections of businesses, increasing the number of businesses subject to inspections in the area of employment equality. Since it is crucial for both labor and management to work together in creating a workplace culture that establishes a foundation for equal job opportunities regardless of gender, the Ministry will enhance its guidance on work and childcare support systems and strengthen field-driven promotional efforts so that more workers and employers can effectively utilize these systems.

b) A system for supporting women throughout their life cycle

To support work-childcare balance, the MOEL will promote and expand maternity leave, reduction of working hours during the childcare period, and flexible work arrangements, to name a few. To increase men's participation in childcare, the Ministry has expanded the "3+3 parental leave system" into the "6+6 parental leave system" starting in 2024, with the goal of promoting shared childcare responsibilities between parents.

*6+6 parental leave system: under this scheme, when both parents take parental leave either simultaneously or consecutively within 12 months after childbirth, each parent receives increased parental leave allowances equivalent to 100% of their ordinary wages for the first three months (up to KRW 2 million (approximately USD 1,500) for the first month, KRW 2.5 million (approximately USD 1,850) for the second month, KRW 3 million

(approximately USD 2,250) for the third month, KRW 3.5 million (approximately USD 2,625) for the fourth month, and KRW 4 million (approximately USD 3,000) for the fifth month, and KRW 4.5 million for the sixth month.

Moreover, the MOEL will enhance its support to facilitate smooth return-to-work transitions for workers after parental leave. The MOEL will extend maternity protection notification services beyond current pregnant workers to include those anticipated to return to work, providing relevant information on work-family balance support systems. It will also explore and share best practices from businesses that support workers' return to work, ensuring that returnees from parental leave can easily adapt to their jobs. The Ministry expanded the Workforce Bank (3 to 5 providers), an initiative supporting the recruitment of substitute workers, and created dedicated recruitment centers in private recruitment support organizations with excellent performance to enable small and medium-sized businesses to utilize the childcare support system without workforce gaps. The MOEL also plans to introduce a subsidy of up to KRW 200,000 per month for employers who provide compensation to workers sharing work due to their co-worker's reduced working hours during the childcare period. In addition, it is promoting the utilization of its support systems by providing consultations on the work and childcare support system. Furthermore, the Ministry will continue to support women seeking to re-enter the workforce after experiencing a career break so that they can participate in the economy. It will also seek to bridge the gap between men and women in the workplace by offering counseling on job retention and career development assistance to ensure uninterrupted career continuity and promoting awareness-raising campaigns and a culture of work-life balance in the workplace.

■ Unpaid care and domestic work / work-family conciliation

a) Strengthening support for childcare

To strengthen support for infant cares, the ROK Government introduced parental allowances for children under 2 years old in 2023, and its amount was increased in 2024. In 2024, the allowance was KRW 1 million for children under one year old, and KRW 0.5 million for children aged over one year and under two years. Additionally, as part of efforts to expand infant care infrastructure for working parents, an incentive system for childcare facilities to open and operate infant classes was newly established starting from 2024. To strengthen social responsibility for childcare, the ROK Government continues to work on securing an additional

500 national or public childcare centers per year, aiming for a 50% utilization rate for public childcare. It will also increase the number of workplace daycare centers. Additionally, the Government aims to expand providers of part-time childcare services that offer urgent and temporary care for children cared for at home. Furthermore, to improve childcare infrastructure in depopulating regions, the introduction of childcare infrastructure improvement programs for vulnerable regions is under consideration, while special work allowances continue to be provided for daycare teachers in rural communities.

The Ministry of Education (MOE) plans to introduce the "Neulbom School" initiative to all primary schools nationwide, which will provide a comprehensive educational program for student growth and development by linking various educational resources of the school and community in addition to regular classes. It is a single system that integrates and improves existing after-school programs in primary schools and care programs and will be expanded to operate in the morning before regular classes or after regular classes until the desired time (up to 8 p.m.). All primary school students who wish to use this service can do so, with priority given to first graders in 2024, followed by first and second graders in 2025, and all primary school students in 2026. In particular, in 2024, all first graders will receive two hours of childcare programs tailored to their growth and development (such as school adjustment support and play-based arts and physical education programs) free of charge. From 2025, this free two-hour customized program will be rolled out to all second graders. Additionally, measures will be taken to ease the administrative burden on teachers. Firstly, the role of the Neulbom School support centers under the provincial offices of education will be strengthened to minimize the workload on schools. Secondly, support offices will be established within schools to facilitate the implementation of Neulbom School programs, and a dedicated operating system will be established, with dedicated personnel assigned to assist in administering Neulbom School programs in schools.

b) Bolstering childcare support

The ROK Government will continue expanding childcare services to alleviate the burden of childcare gaps in families and fostering a high-quality nurturing environment for children. To lessen the childcare burden for households with two or more children, government support will be scaled up according to the number of children in need of services, with the number of beneficiary households planned to increase by over 36% from 2023 levels to 110,000 households in 2024.

Moreover, to promote a high-quality childcare environment, the ROK Government will expand the supply of public childcare services while improving the quality of private childcare at the same time. This will involve restructuring the training system for childcare service providers and introducing a national qualification system, aiming to establish a robust social and institutional foundation for reliable childcare services that everyone can trust and depend on.

c) Strengthening support for work-life balance

To foster a family-friendly culture in the workplace that supports a harmonious balance between work and family life, the ROK Government plans to enhance incentives for organizations certified as family-friendly companies or institutions, aiming to expand their participation in family-friendly certification programs. In addition, through elevating the role of Supreme Family-friendly Companies (SFFC)*, the Government seeks to establish a framework for the widespread adoption of an autonomous family-friendly culture within businesses, ensuring sustained efforts and changes driven by the companies themselves. The Government will continue to encourage companies to adopt family-friendly practices that surpass legal or regulatory requirements, including a voluntary targeting scheme that promotes mandatory parental leave for men for a certain period, and compensation for wage differences during parental leave, among other policies.

*Supreme Family-Friendly Company (SFFC): A company that has maintained certified status on a sustained basis may be designated as a “Supreme” family-friendly company, whose role is to pass on family-friendly management practices to other companies like its subsidiaries, and business partners etc. while working to adopt advanced family-friendly practices on its initiative.

The ROK Government will continue to provide support for achieving work-family balance through the use of flexible work systems. In particular, it provides increased subsidies for the use of flexible work arrangements by workers with childcare responsibilities to promote working while caring for children concurrently. Furthermore, it has increased its support for reducing working hours, introducing support for reduction of “practical working hours” across all businesses, in addition to reduction of “contractual working hours” as requested by individual workers.

■ Changing discriminatory social norms and gender stereotypes

Given the far-reaching impact of representations by mass media, which mirror various aspects of society, the ROK Government continues to carry out analysis of diverse mass media content

across different formats, genres, and topics from the viewpoint of gender equality. It has also engaged in activities such as media-based education or awareness campaigns on gender equality etc. to enhance media awareness, while also addressing the issue of gender discrimination to foster a gender-equal media environment.

In a media environment where online users consume various content, etc. to which they are automatically exposed based on algorithmic recommendations, regardless of their intentions, continuous efforts are necessary to analyze and improve mass media content for gender equality. As part of ongoing efforts to enhance public acceptance of gender-equal media culture, the Government will continue to collaborate with new media channels, to explore and identify audience-friendly media content on gender equality that can be used in various awareness-raising activities incorporating diverse means, media, and approaches such as transmitting video content on platforms like YouTube.

Based on the legal frameworks for gender equality education in schools, it is mandatory to provide gender equality education, which is a sub-topic within safety and health education and one of the cross-curricular learning topics of the 2022 Revised National Curriculum, in line with the characteristics and contexts of each school, including curriculum and creative experiential activities. To establish a gender-equitable school culture, the ROK Government will distribute Guidelines for Gender Equality Education in Schools, which include information on designing, organizing, and implementing gender equality education in schools. Additionally, it will develop and provide gender equality education content and materials to support classroom activities for teachers and conduct various training programs to raise teachers' awareness of gender equality.

The Ministry of Education (MOE) will operate a textbook monitoring group consisted of classroom teachers and experts in gender equality and human rights to identify and address any gender-discriminatory elements in textbooks through revision and supplementation. Additionally, the Ministry will designate "Focus Schools for Gender Equality Education" to model identified best practices, aiming to further spread a culture of gender equality across the country, involving the participation of school members (students, guardians, teachers) and local communities.

Section Three: Progress across the 12 critical areas of concern

Inclusive development, shared prosperity and decent work

6. Over the past five years, what actions has your country taken to advance gender equality in the world of work (including informal and non-standard employment as well as entrepreneurship)?

■ Strengthened / enforced laws and workplace policies and practices that prohibit discrimination in the recruitment, retention and promotion of women in the public and private sectors, and equal pay legislation

Pursuant to the Equal Employment Opportunity Act, it is prohibited as “discrimination in employment” for an employer to discriminate against an employee in employment or working conditions or takes any other disadvantageous measures without any justifiable reason, on grounds of pregnancy or childbirth. In particular, to promote gender equality, proactive employment improvement measures (AA) have been implemented since 2006, and the scope of businesses subject to the measures has continued to expand. In the meantime, to review matters important for the effective implementation of proactive employment improvement measures, the Ministry of Employment and Labor (MOEL) operates a proactive employment improvement expert committee affiliated with the Office of the Minister for Employment and Labor under the Employment Policy Deliberative Council. The expert committee deliberates on matters concerning the employment criteria for female workers and the review of implementation plans for proactive employment improvement measures. Moreover, the Government has been reinforcing collaboration among relevant ministries to devise more effective measures.

■ Taken measures to prevent sexual harassment, including in the workplace

With the enforcement of the rectification system by the labor relations commission regarding gender-based discrimination in employment and sexual harassment at work in 2022, the labor relations commission has ensured effective remedies for violation of rights. This includes enabling the suspension of discriminatory treatment, etc. improvements in working conditions such as wages (including orders to improve institutions such as employment regulations and

collective agreements), orders for adequate compensation, and orders for compensation (punitive damages) not exceeding three times the amount of damages in cases where explicit intent for discriminatory treatment, etc. by the employer is recognized or if discriminatory treatment, etc. is repeated.

7. In the past five years, what actions has your country taken to recognize, reduce and/or redistribute unpaid care and domestic work, promote work-life and family balance and strengthen the rights of paid care workers?

■ Expanded childcare services or made existing services more affordable

a) Expanding childcare service and enhancing its quality

Parental allowance was introduced to compensate for income losses during childbirth and child-rearing, and to provide intensive care support tailored to the developmental characteristics of the child starting from 2023. In order to reduce the burden of child-rearing, the ROK Government provides childcare allowances to families with children (0-5 years old) utilizing childcare centers, regardless of their income level (2013). Home care allowance was introduced with a view to reducing the child-rearing burden and improving equity between children using childcare centers and those receiving home care (2013). Moreover, to meet urgent and temporary care needs among children receiving home care, the ROK Government operates Support Centers for Childcare and childcare centers designated as part-time childcare service providers. These centers offer part-time care services and subsidize the cost of care. The number of such service providers continues to rise, with 1,000 classes in operation as of 2023. To strengthen the Government's responsibility for childcare, the ROK Government has continued to increase the number of national or public childcare centers, achieving 40.0% of public care use rate as of 2023.

Meanwhile, to relieve the workload of daycare center teachers, 61,000 assistant and extended childcare teachers were assigned in 2023, and a new position of non-classroom teacher (such as assistant and substitute teachers) was created to perform various roles. Since 2019, Korea has implemented a compulsory daycare center assessment system aimed at ensuring an effective service quality management system, encouraging voluntary commitment to quality improvement by childcare centers, and providing parents with information on the quality of childcare centers.

b) Enhancing local community infrastructure for after-school childcare

The ROK Government operates community child centers and the Together Care program to address gaps in after-school childcare. Community child centers provide a comprehensive

range of welfare services aimed at promoting the sound development of local children who need after-school care, including protection, education, wholesome play, recreation, and linkages between guardians and local community resources. According to 2023 data, there are 4,230 community child centers operating nationwide, providing care for approximately 110,000 children. The eligibility scope has been expanded to include children with working parents (2012). As a result, these community child centers have become accessible not only to priority children from low-income, multicultural, single-parent, and multi-child families, but also to children whose both parents work and need after-school care support. To eliminate stigma associated with community child centers, the criteria for "general children" have been redefined (household characteristics and age → only age), resulting in an increased usage rate (before: 20% → after: up to 70% (2022)). Furthermore, the Government has undertaken various improvement measures such as extending compulsory operating hours (before: 14:00-19:00 p.m. → after: 13:00-20:00 p.m. (2024)) to prevent gaps in care that may occur before working parents can pick up their children.

While community child centers offer after-school programs focusing on children from low-income families, the Together Care program provides regular and temporary village care services targeting all primary school students. In 2017, the Ministry of Health and Welfare and Ministry of the Interior and Safety jointly undertook a pilot project to establish community-specific care systems (10 city/county/district governments were selected, and remodeling support was provided); in 2019, the amended Child Welfare Act provides a legal basis allowing local governments to build and operate these institutions; and in 2021, the amended Housing Construction Standards obliges housing complexes with more than 500 households to establish Together Care program implementing institutions. By 2023, 1,048 institutions were established, with plans to increase to 1,306 by 2024.

In addition, the ROK Government started the Youth After-School Academy program in 2005, where it provides meals, counseling, academic guidance, and creative hands-on activities for students from the fourth grade in primary school up to the third year of middle school in need of after-school care or wish to take part in experience-based activities. The Academy has helped mitigate the imbalance in learning and hands-on experience opportunities faced by vulnerable youth while helping mitigate the financial burden on their families from private education and childcare expenses. The Government has continued to scale up the After-School Academy program, focusing on regions with inadequate care infrastructure as well as agricultural, rural, or fishing communities, with the goal of addressing the blind spots in after-school care and the

imbalanced access to hands-on activities for vulnerable youth. As a result, the number of centers offering the program has increased from 46 in 2005 to 350 nationwide as of the end of 2023. Since 2018, a program designed to cultivate creative human talent with convergence capabilities was introduced and expanded nationwide to help youth self-diagnose and develop core competencies needed in the Fourth Industrial Revolution era. In 2023, the ROK Government operated various hands-on digital programs, including coding and robotics, to nurture essential skills for adapting to societal changes such as digital transformation, thereby raising program quality through program diversification.

c) Support for childcare service at home

Idolbom childcare services have been available since 2007 to address the supply constraints in institutional childcare while supporting home-based childcare provided by Idolbom service providers visiting the homes of children under 12 years old from dual-income families, among others. For families below a certain income level, the ROK Government directly subsidizes part of the service fees, continuously expanding the coverage of eligible families, subsidy rates, and subsidized hours. In 2019, the eligibility criteria for support expanded from households earning below 120% of the median income to 150%, while the subsidy rate also increased from up to 80% of service fees to 85%. In 2021, an additional 5% support was provided to vulnerable groups such as single-parent households, with coverage extended to adolescent parents from 2022 onwards. Moreover, the subsidized hours for hourly childcare services have been continuously expanded, significantly increasing from 720 hours per year in 2019 to 960 hours by 2023.

■ Expanded support for older persons, persons with disabilities and others needing intense forms of care

a) Supporting families raising children with disabilities and respite support for families of children with developmental disabilities

In the spirit of expanding assistance for elderly and vulnerable populations in need of intensive care, the ROK Government provides childcare support for families with children with disabilities. The Government operates family and childcare support programs for children with

disabilities under the age of 18 and their families, with the aim of reducing childcare burdens and supporting normal social activities for guardians. Eligible families can use up to 1,080 hours of childcare services per child annually. Other support programs include self-help meetings, family rehabilitation, counseling and treatment, parenting education, and respite exhibitions.

To alleviate the caregiving burden and provide emotional support for families of children with developmental disabilities, the Government operates relaxation support programs such as healing camps for these families, travel cost assistance (both for package and independent travel), and temporary caregiving services for children with developmental disabilities. In 2023, the number of eligible families was increased from 11,000 to 14,000.

b) Childcare subsidies and housing support for single-parent families

According to results from the 2021 Survey on Single-Parent Families, the income level of single-parent families is about half that of general households, and their assets are at around 26.4%. The majority of single-parent families (77.7%) are employed, with 27.9 % working more than ten hours a day. Single-parent families are likely to face compounding challenges as only 21.3% hold any legal claim against their ex-spouses for childcare support, raising the need for policy intervention to provide stable support for single-parent families raising children.

With the goal of creating a stable child-rearing environment for single-parent families, the income eligibility criteria for issuance of single-parent family certificates and childcare subsidy support was gradually raised to 63% of median income (52% as of January 2022→ 58% as of October 2022→ 60% as of January 2023 →63% as of January 2024), while the eligibility age for children was also increased from under 18 years old to under 22 years old if attending high school. Reflecting the recent spike in inflation, among other factors, the unit funding amount for childcare subsidies was raised from KRW 200,000 per month to 210,000 won per month as of 2024.

In addition, in cases where father or mother is 24 years old or under, he or she can receive additional support through the adolescent single-parent childcare and self-reliance support program, which provides a monthly childcare subsidy of KRW 350,000. An adolescent single parent can receive up to KRW 1.54 million per year in study allowances if preparing for the general equivalency diploma (GED) exam and can receive a self-reliance allowance if engaged in academic or employment activities.

In addition, to support stable housing and self-reliance, low-income single-parent families

(below 100% of median income) who are non-homeowners raising minors under the age of 18, are eligible to move into welfare facilities for single parents (121 facilities as of 2023), where they are provided room and board as well as access to self-reliance programs, counseling, medical care, childcare services, etc. Starting in 2014, communal family-type buy-to-rent public housing was made available for low-income single-parent families who are non-homeowners raising minors (222 housing in 2021 → 245 housing in 2022 → 266 housing in 2023 → 306 housing in 2024) with the goal of supporting more stable and independent living conditions.

Once issued a single-parent family certificate, recipients can benefit from various low-income assistance programs including discounts on their utility bills, priority enrollment at childcare centers, prioritized move-in for buy-to-rent apartment housing, priority status for subscription in the first round of selection for public rental housing (including buy-to-rent and rent-to-rent types), and various voucher benefits and the others.

■ **Introduced or strengthened maternity/paternity/parental leave or other types of family leave**

a) Support systems for work and childcare throughout the life cycle

The Ministry of Employment and Labor (MOEL) has devised a system to support women's work and childcare, tailored to different stages of the life cycle to prevent their career interruption: reduction of working hours and infertility treatment leave for the pregnancy period; maternity leave and miscarriage or stillbirth leave for the childbirth period; and childcare leave, reduction of working hours, and 6+6 parental leave for the childcare period.

The maternity leave system, introduced under the Labor Standards Act in 1953, mandates employers to provide pregnant employees with 90 days of leave before and after childbirth, with a guarantee of 45 days post-childbirth (120 days of leave for employees pregnant with multiple babies with 60 days post-childbirth). In 2006, provisions related to leave for miscarriage and stillbirth, previously recognized through administrative interpretation, were legislated, and in 2014, the system of reduction of working hours for the pregnancy period was introduced. Thus, as of 2023, monthly ordinary wages are provided from the date the leave begins as maternity benefits (up to KRW 2.1 million (USD 1,575) and minimum wages at minimum in 2023). Since 2021, the system has been improved to ensure that fixed-term employees or temporary agency workers whose contract terminate during maternity leaves

receive statutory maternity leave benefits, etc. for the remaining period of their leave, regardless of the size of their employer. Recently, the MOEL has been pursuing to expand the reduction of working hours during the pregnancy period, which currently allows a reduction of working hours by two hours a day (paid) within 12 weeks of pregnancy and for the period after 36 weeks of pregnancy, to cover the periods “within 12 weeks and after 32 weeks of pregnancy.” A paternity leave system is designed to promote female workers’ employment security and engagement in economic activities by supporting the work-family balance of male workers. In 2019, the system was expanded to require ten days of paid leave when workers request leave due to their spouse’s childbirth, and for the first phase, the Government provides five days’ pay for workers of businesses eligible for priority support (up to KRW 401,910 (USD 300)). To promote the use of paternity leave going forward, the MOEL plans to increase the number of divided leaves from the current one time to three times, and for pregnancy with multiple babies, it plans to extend the duration of paternity leave from the current ten days to 15 days.

The childcare leave system was introduced in 1988 when the Equal Employment Opportunity and Work-Family Balance Assistance Act was enacted. Its scope was significantly broadened in 2014, allowing workers to use the leave to take care of children aged eight or younger, or those in the second year of elementary school or younger. In 2021, the law was amended to also allow childcare leave for pregnant employees. Employees who use more than 30 days of childcare leave receive 80% of their ordinary wages (up to KRW 1.5 million (USD 1,125)) from the start date of the leave for up to one year. In the meantime, as a special childcare leave benefit system, the MOEL provides increased childcare leave benefits when both parents use the leave. Starting from 2024, the “3+3 parental leave system” was significantly expanded to the “6+6 parental leave system,” and to encourage shared parenting, the Ministry plans to improve the system by extending childcare leave from one year to one and a half years when both parents use the childcare leave for three months or longer.

In the meantime, the reduction of working hours during the childcare period, introduced in 2008, aims to prevent career interruptions of female employees and support work-family balance by allowing reduced working hours for the childcare period. When employees with children aged eight or younger, or in the second year of elementary school or younger, apply, employers must grant them reduced working hours (from 15 to 35 hours per week) for one year (up to two years when combined with unused childcare leave). Also, employees who use the reduced working hour system for the childcare period for 30 days or longer receive reduced working hour benefits for the childcare period. Above all, the ROK Government plans to

expand the reduced working hour system for the childcare period so that working parents can take care of their children until they finish elementary school. The age limit for applicable children has been raised from 8 years to 12 years, and the maximum period of reduced working hours has been extended from 24 months to 36 months. Furthermore, the Government plans to increase support by providing 100% of ordinary wages for 10 hours per week, up from the previous five hours per week.

b) Employment security subsidies for the childbirth and childcare period

Employment security subsidies for the childbirth and childcare period include subsidies for childcare leave, subsidies for reduced working hours for the childcare period and subsidies for substitute workers are being provided. The subsidies for childcare leave were introduced in 2022, provided to businesses eligible for priority support that allow childcare leaves of thirty days or longer. When these businesses allow childcare leave to take care of children aged 12 months or younger for three months or longer in a row, KRW 2 million (USD 1,500) are provided per month for the first three months as special subsidies. Through subsidies for reduced working hours for the childcare period, KRW 300,000 per month is provided to businesses eligible for priority support that allow reduced working hours for the childcare period for thirty days or longer. Furthermore, the system has been improved such that starting from 2021, when the business allows reduced working hours for the childcare period for the first time, KRW 100,000 (USD 75) per month is provided additionally until they allow reduced working hours for the childcare period for the third time. Through subsidies for substitute workers, KRW 800,000 (USD 600) per month is provided to cover labor costs for businesses eligible for priority support that grant their employees maternity leaves, miscarriage and stillbirth leaves and reduced working hours for the childcare period for thirty days or longer or who hire substitute workers. Specifically, starting from 2019, the subsidies for substitute workers are provided for the transition period of substitute employees before the start of the leave, extending from the previous two weeks to two months, during which the monthly subsidy amount has been increased to KRW 1.2 million (USD 900). As a result of ongoing improvements in the employment security subsidy system for the childbirth and childcare period, the number of employees who apply for leave, etc. has continued to grow year by year. In 2023, the number of applicants for subsidies rose by 11.8%, and the subsidy amount increased to 13.9% compared to the previous year.

c) Support for the establishment and operation of workplace childcare centers

The Ministry of Employment and Labor (MOEL) has been implementing various measures to alleviate the burden of childcare for working parents, including supporting the installation and maintenance costs of workplace childcare centers to assist businesses in establishing and operating them, subsidizing the labor costs of childcare teachers, and offering tax benefits. Key measures include: labor cost support, which is provided for the labor costs of childcare teachers, heads of childcare centers and cooks that have been in paid employment for 20 days or longer to reduce the burden of operating costs for employers that establish and operate childcare centers solely or jointly for five or more children to be taken care of by their employees (support for labor costs provided for 574 businesses for childcare teachers of workplace childcare centers, etc. and for operating costs of workplace childcare centers for 136 small and medium-sized businesses in 2022); and installation cost support, which is provided for the expenses spent solely or jointly by the employers for construction, purchase, or lease of workplace childcare centers for the employees or for maintenance of centers in operation, within a certain limit.

In addition, the MOEL has been implementing systems such as the family care leave system, which supports employees to take leave up to 90 days a year when they need to take care of their family members for a longer term, and the short-term family care leave system, whereby employees can take leave for up to ten days a year when they urgently need to take care of their family members, as well as measures to alleviate the burden of childcare for employees by supporting the expenses to establish workplace childcare centers. In 2024, the Ministry also introduced support for the expenses of leasing workplace childcare centers for small and medium-sized enterprises.

8. In the past five years, what actions has your country taken to reduce the gender digital divide?

■ Taken measures to promote gender-responsive STEM education

The ROK Government is committed to promoting STEM education (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) and ensuring that all primary and secondary school students, regardless of gender, are provided with equal educational opportunities in STEM fields. To foster human capital with convergent interdisciplinary thinking and real life-based problem-solving skills, the Ministry of Education (MOE) operates STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Mathematics) pilot schools in 300 primary and secondary schools nationwide to identify learning models, develop and distribute teaching and learning materials, and support remote training for teachers; holds “Interdisciplinary Research and Exploration Contests” to explore and solve interdisciplinary problems centered on science and math through student initiative to revitalize STEAM education activities; and supports the construction and operation of “School Infinite Imagination Room”, a space that meets the characteristics of STEAM education, in 37 national schools (including special schools).

Based on the Fourth Master Plan for Fostering and Supporting Women Scientists and Technicians (2019-2023), the Government has supported the implementation of life stage-specific mentoring programs to enhance the employability and career choices of female students in science, technology, and engineering at universities and graduate schools. Additionally, it has funded engineering research teams for female graduate students, fostering their development into exceptional talents in science and technology talents through self-directed research projects. Furthermore, efforts have been undertaken to increase female students’ participation in science, engineering, and technology disciplines and facilitate their advancement into STEM fields. These efforts include programs designed to support the entry and progression of local female students into these fields.

■ Taken measures to create conditions for gender-responsive digital learning environments

a) Introduction of AI digital textbooks

The Ministry of Education (MOE) is preparing to introduce AI digital textbooks in 2025 to realize "Personalized education for all," which supports learning by considering the individual learning capabilities, pace, and goals of all students. "Personalized education for all" is

expected to contribute to the realization of high-level personalized education, such as designing customized lessons and providing social and emotional support for each student, based on individual learning support and data analysis derived from the characteristics of each student through AI digital textbooks. Furthermore, to ensure that the digital divide between students does not result in a learning gap, the MOE has identified "Ensuring equal learning opportunities" for students as one of the three principles for developing AI digital textbooks, stating that all necessary measures should be taken to ensure that all children have access to AI digital textbooks. The Ministry also requires private companies developing AI digital textbooks to establish and follow a process for managing potential AI risks, aiming to prevent AI from producing content that undermines or distorts social values and to minimize data bias.

b) Digital Education Norms and Guidance for Educational Use of Generative AI

In order to help educators and relevant stakeholders establish and share the values that digital education should aim for, the MOE is establishing the "Education Norms in the Digital Era," which specifies the government's responsibility to ensure access to digital infrastructure and education services for all educators and learners, and to close the digital education gap. The Ministry will also provide national guidelines for the appropriate educational use of generative AI in the digital era, clarifying that generative AI can generate information on gender, race, and cultural discrimination, and providing principles and response measures for its educational application.

■ Fostered female workforce and operated vocational training programs in new industries and emerging technologies

Recognizing the growing importance of harnessing the female workforce amidst industrial and demographic changes, the ROK Government provides vocational training tailored to the demand for occupational skills and development, thus contributing to fostering female workforce in emerging industries and technologies and reducing the gender digital divide. Since 2014, the Ministry of Employment and Labor (MOEL) has been operating the Training Courses for Re-employment of Women in Korea Polytechnics to enhance vocational competency and promote economic participation among women whose careers have been interrupted due to childbirth, childcare, and other factors, as well as among unemployed women. Starting with 500 women in 2014, the MOEL has steadily expanded job training opportunities

for women, reaching 1,200 participants in 2020 and 1,700 in 2024 across 85 courses at 36 campuses. In particular, as the industrial structure has evolved around digital, new and emerging industries, the Ministry has introduced training courses for jobs in promising future areas such as IT testers and coding instructors, increasing their number from 12 in 2022 to 20 in 2023 and then to 24 in 2024, with the aim of reducing the gender gap in job capabilities. These initiatives have contributed to enhancing job capabilities and employment prospects of women with interrupted careers and unemployed women, achieving an average course completion rate of 90.4% and an employment rate of 62.7% over the last five years. In addition, the Ministry has been operating High-Tech Courses at Korea Polytechnics to enhance job capabilities in new and emerging industries and new technology fields for highly educated unemployed youth who graduated from technical colleges or higher-level institutions. Over the past five years, the number of these courses has increased from 39 in 2020 to 90 by 2024, benefiting 2,030 people. Furthermore, the Ministry has actively encouraged women to participate in job training courses, resulting in a significant increase in the proportion of women in the courses from 19.8% in 2017 to 25.6% in 2020 and further to 29.2% in 2023.

In addition, the “K-digital training (training to nurture core working-level skilled resources for the high-tech and digital industries),” which is popular among youth, is being operated by leading enterprises in the new technology field such as KT and Samsung, innovation training institutions in the private sector, and leading universities. It is a job training project customized for the field, focusing on enhancing the practical job skills of trainees by incorporating the actual tasks of enterprises to its courses. The number of women participants in the K-digital training increased annually, with 3,797 women participating in 2021, 8,011 in 2022 and 11,328 in 2023. Quality training is provided for women who desire to seek employment or start businesses in new technology areas, by continually exploring new training courses that reflect the needs of various industries and local regions in collaboration with private associations and organizations, local human resources development committees, and leading enterprises.

Moreover, the MOEL has created and operated the “K-digital basic capabilities training” since 2021 so that various participants in the labor market, such as women with interrupted careers and unemployed women, do not need to experience difficulties in entering and adapting to the labor market due to lack of digital skills. The “K-digital basic capabilities training” is provided 100% remotely, comprising courses on various new technology areas at the elementary and intermediate levels, from basic digital areas such as big data and coding to more recent emerging technologies such as ChatGPT, so that women with interrupted careers and

unemployed women, among others, can freely attend, without the limitations of time and space. The number of women participants and their proportion have continued to increase to 5,850 women (60.8%) in 2021, 36,485 (61.0%) in 2022, and 57,406 (66.7%) in 2023. The MOEL will continue its efforts to enhance the job capabilities of women with interrupted careers due to childbirth and childcare, etc. and unemployed women by additionally providing integrated job courses and courses linked with higher-level courses going forward.

Amid changes across industry and labor markets, such as digital transformation, vocational training programs at the Saeil Center have diversified. Additionally, a new collaborative system for multi-ministerial employment support was introduced and expanded. This system connects participants in specialized workforce development programs offered by various ministries, aligned with their unique characteristics, with professional employment services provided by the Saeil Center.

9. In the past five years, how has the macroeconomic and fiscal policy environment affected the implementation of the BPfA in your country, and what macroeconomic policies has your country implemented in support of a more gender-equal economy?

Poverty eradication, social protection and social services

10. In the last five years, what actions has your country taken to reduce/eradicate poverty among women and girls?

■ Promoted poor women's access to decent work through active labour market policies (e.g. job training, skills, employment subsidies, etc.) and targeted measures

The Ministry of Employment and Labor (MOEL) has been making efforts to address the blind spot in the childcare support system by providing childbirth allowances for maternity protection and the livelihood of those who engage in economic activities but suffer an interruption in earning income after childbirth and are not covered by employment insurance. Specifically, the MOEL supports women who have given birth to a child but are not eligible to receive maternity leave benefits since employment insurance is not applicable to them, even though they engage in income-earning activities, by providing KRW 500,000 (USD 375) a month for three months, which totals KRW 1.5 million (USD 1,125). In addition, the MOEL expanded the scope of eligibility for livelihood support loans for low-income workers and, starting from 2019, reduced the wage threshold for the eligibility for job sharing and employment promotion subsidies (for women and persons with disabilities, among others) from when 110% of the minimum wages or over are paid to when 100% of the minimum wages or over are paid.

The MOEL has been operating the Saeil Center nationwide since April 2008 in collaboration with the Ministry of Gender Equality and Family (MOGEF) to support women who are experiencing career interruptions and not engaging in economic activities due to childcare and housework, etc. Initially piloted in five institutions, the program has since expanded to 159 centers across the country. The Saeil Center aims to support the economic empowerment of women seeking employment after a career interruption, by providing job search counseling, vocational training, internships* support for workplace adaptation, job referrals, and other assistance to help women advance their careers and find suitable employment.

* Priority support is provided for vulnerable groups such as low-income families, people with disabilities, and women-headed households, among others.

In addition, the MOEL has established and operates public workplace childcare centers through the Korea Workers' Compensation and Welfare Service, for workers in micro and small-sized businesses that face difficulties in running their own workplace childcare centers for their workers, in areas with high concentrations of workers. Since 2018, additional efforts have been made to provide effective childcare support for employees of SMEs located in underserved areas lacking workplace childcare. A total of 13 locations were selected, focusing on neighborhoods where many of these workers reside, to establish centralized public workplace childcare centers.

■ Supported women's entrepreneurship, access to markets, and business development activities

The ROK Government has been pushing for various policies to support the establishment of women-led businesses and foster female entrepreneurship since the enactment of the Act on Support for Female-owned Businesses in 1999. To pursue systematic policies for women-owned business with long-term goals, master plans are formulated every five years along with annual action plans. Currently, the First Master Plan for Promoting Women's Business Activities (2020-2024) is being implemented, and the second master plan is scheduled to be announced next year.

a) Support for Women's Entrepreneurship and Venture Activation

To promote women's entrepreneurship and venture activation, the Ministry of SMEs and Startups (MSS) operates Women Enterprise Supporting Centers in 18 regions nationwide. Since 2007, these centers have accommodated a total of 4,717 companies in startup incubation spaces (238 rooms), with various entrepreneurship consulting support programs offered to resident companies. Additionally, the MSS operates the Women's Venture Startup Care Program, which selects promising female prospective entrepreneurs and provides them with step-by-step startup support programs. In 2024, the MSS plans to encourage women who have taken career breaks to start businesses, thereby enhancing women's economic participation. Furthermore, a women-only venture fund aims to revitalize women's startups by raising an additional KRW 120 billion by 2024.

In the meantime, the Saeil Center identifies prospective female entrepreneurs, providing them with information and start-up consulting to help drive new startup demand and offer early-stage support for women. The center conducts entrepreneurial vocational training to develop the

capabilities of prospective entrepreneurs, deploys start-up counselors (40 locations), and produces and distributes start-up guidelines as early-stage assistance for start-ups. Additionally, the center connects and supports start-up funding in collaboration with specialized institutions such as the Small Enterprise and Market Service, the Korean Women Entrepreneurs Association, the Women Enterprise Supporting Center, and the Korea Land and Housing Corporation, and workspace referrals, etc.

In order to strengthen the market accessibility of female-owned businesses, since 2014, the ROK Government has enforced mandatory procurement of products from women-owned businesses by public agencies (under Article 9 of the Act on Support for Female-Owned Businesses, and Article 7 of the Enforcement Decree of the Act, etc.). The procurement performance of products from women-owned enterprises has consistently increased every year, reaching KRW 13.9 trillion, accounting for 8.9% of total public procurement in 2022.

< Proportion of Women's Share in the Mandatory Public Procurement Ratio [Unit: KRW trillion] >

Year	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Total	116.9	123.4	123.4	135.0	145.8	154.0	157.9
Women-led businesses	8.34	9.91	10.58	11.9	12.5	12.8	13.9
Portion (%)	7.1	8.0	8.6	8.8	8.6	8.3	8.9

Moreover, the MSS is assisting women-owned enterprises to expand into global markets by providing support such as home shopping channel entry assistance, production of promotional videos for social media advertising, export education, export consultation, and support for participating in overseas trade shows, in addition to domestic market support.

In order to strengthen the innovation capabilities of female entrepreneurs and build networking at home and abroad, the ROK Government is promoting nationwide management training and business academy courses for women business leaders. In addition, 13,647 cases (2016-2023) of expert consultations were conducted in fields such as management strategy, marketing, and export through the establishment of a support center for women entrepreneurs to address their difficulties. Meanwhile, Women's Enterprise Week celebrations are held in early July every year to promote the pride of female entrepreneurs and provide a networking platform among

women-led enterprises. The Korean President participated in the first Women's Enterprise Week event in 2022 and expressed his determination to actively support women's economic activities, while the First Lady attended the second Women's Enterprise Week in 2023 to actively support women entrepreneurs.

To improve support policies for women-owned businesses, the Women Economic Research Institute has been established within the Women Enterprise Supporting Center, conducting research and analysis on domestic and international laws and regulations related to women-owned enterprises. Moreover, to understand the status and management challenges of women-owned enterprises, the Women-Owned Enterprise Survey is conducted as the only nationally approved statistical survey regarding women-owned enterprise in accordance with Article 7 of the Act on Support for Female-Owned Businesses. In April 2021, through an amendment to the Act on Support for Female-Owned Businesses, the survey cycle was revised from biennial to annual. Since 2022, the survey has been conducted annually to ensure the timeliness and continuity of statistics.

11. In the past five years, what actions has your country taken to improve access to social protection for women and girls?

■ Prioritized women as the beneficiary and introduced or strengthened the cash support for households with children

Child allowance was introduced in September 2018 to alleviate the financial burden of child rearing and promote children's rights and welfare by nurturing a healthy environment for their growth. It is a system of providing KRW 100,000 per month in cash to children of specific ages. When it was first introduced, it was selectively provided, taking into account the financial situation of households with children younger than six (financial level being below 90% of that of the total households with two people or more). However, the criteria based on financial situation were removed in April 2019, and it was extended to all children younger than six (cash for January to March was paid retroactively when the payment was made in April 2019). Subsequently, it began to be disbursed to all children younger than seven from September 2019, and finally, the system was reformed to expand eligibility to all children younger than eight in April 2022 (cash for January to March was paid retroactively when the payment was made in April 2022).

■ Improved access to social protection for other groups of marginalized women (please refer to groups listed under Q3)

In order to improve accessibility to the social security system for women, since 2016, the Ministry of Employment and Labor (MOEL) has been operating notification services for pregnant employees and their employers on maternity protection as per the life cycle and the work and family balance system. By linking the pregnancy and childbirth data of the National Health Insurance Service and the data of the employment insurance, employees are notified of their rights during pregnancy and childbirth periods, and employers are informed of various statutory obligations and government support systems in advance via text message, emails, faxes, etc. In particular, businesses with ten or more female workers of childbearing age and workers pregnant for 32 weeks or longer receive a monthly email notification service. Starting from 2023, the frequency of notifications increased from once a month to twice a month (with the number of pregnant workers being 205,065 in 2021, 360,717 in 2022 and 312,477 in 2023).

■ **The pandemic spurred gender-responsive innovations as well as longer-term transformations of social protection to strengthen women's income security**

The COVID-19 pandemic provided the chance to recognize the need for and significance of family care at the national level as a community, and to identify the specific demands for family care. The Ministry of Employment and Labor (MOEL) carried out emergency support projects to assist with family care during the pandemic. Specifically, it provided expenses for workers who took family care leave due to closure of childcare centers, kindergartens, and schools, as well as infections among family members, etc. during the pandemic. Workers were provided with up to KRW 50,000 (USD 37) per day for a maximum of ten days per person.

12. In the past five years, what actions has your country taken to improve health outcomes for women and girls in your country?

■ Improved women's access to health service by expanding universal health insurance or public health service

In January 2022, the amount of financial support in vouchers for medical expenses related to pregnancy and childbirth was increased from KRW 600,000 to KRW 1 million for women pregnant with one baby, and from KRW 1 million to KRW 1.4 million for women pregnant with multiple babies (twins or more), alleviating the burden of medical expenses for pregnancy and childbirth. Also, the eligibility for voucher support was expanded from pregnant women and babies younger than one to pregnant women and babies younger than two, and the system was reformed to extend the voucher's use period from one year to two years to make sure that all vouchers provided are used without fail. Starting from 2024, the cash support provided for pregnant women with twins and multiples, which was KRW 1.4 million regardless of the number of the babies, was increased to KRW 1 million per baby, mitigating the financial burden of pregnant women with twins and multiples, whose actual spending on medical services for pregnancy and childbirth are higher.

Starting from July 2019, the age limit for infertility procedures was removed, and from October of that year, infertile couples in common-law marriages also became eligible for health insurance coverage. In November 2021, the number of IVF cycles covered by health insurance was increased from 12 to 16. Then, in February 2024, the coverage for IVF cycles covered by health insurance, previously fixed at 9 for fresh embryos and 7 for frozen embryos respectively, were expanded to a total of 20 cycles, combining both fresh and frozen embryos, thereby allowing couples with infertility to choose the method that suits them best in consultation with medical professionals.

■ Expanded specific health services for women and girls

The ROK Government has implemented measures to expand specific health services for women and girls, focusing on reproductive health services, maternal and child health, mental health, HIV service, etc. With the aim of reinforcing health services related to pregnancy and childbirth, firstly, given the increasing number of infertile couples due to people having children later in life, the ROK Government started providing health insurance coverage for the

infertility treatment subsidy program for infertility couples in October 2017, standardizing the process of infertility procedures. In 2019, it began providing additional support of KRW 500,000 to cover the out-of-pocket expenses for infertility procedures for people with low income (households with income below 180% of the benchmark median income). In 2020, the subsidy cap for infertility procedures was changed from a maximum of KRW 500,000 per procedure to differentiated support based on the type of infertility procedure (maximum of KRW 1.1 million for fresh embryos, maximum of KRW 500,000 for frozen embryos, maximum of KRW 300,000 for artificial insemination). With these revised criteria, support was provided for approximately 88,000 procedures of In-Vitro Fertilization (“IVF”, fresh and frozen embryos) and artificial insemination in 2020. Furthermore, since 2021, some local municipalities have started a pilot project allowing online applications for services and issuing notices regarding decisions on support through “Government 24,” Korea’s e-government service, in addition to the existing method of visiting the relevant office to submit the application. This initiative was expanded to all parts of the nation in April 2021. As of 2022, following the two-level separation of financial authorities, the program providing financial support for infertile couples has been shifted to local governments. The local governments are now autonomously administering the program in accordance with the intent of the separation of financial authorities, while adhering to the existing support guidelines. Starting from 2024, in particular, the income criteria (below 180% of the benchmark median income) for the program were removed, and the subsidy is now provided universally regardless of income, for the purpose of effectively alleviating the financial burden of infertile couples who were previously ineligible for the program due to their income level. Also, since 2019 the ROK Government has been regularly evaluating infertility medical institutes and publishing the results to provide information for infertile couples to use when choosing a medical institute for their treatment.

Secondly, as of the end of 2023, the Government is leading the way in enhancing the mental and psychological health of infertility couples and mothers who are suffering infertility, prepartum, and postpartum depression. This effort involves reinforcing the management of their mental health and providing mental health-related information, centered around eight counseling centers (one central and seven regional) for infertility and depression. Specifically, 463 counseling sessions were carried out in 2015, 1,588 in 2016, 1,984 in 2017, and 1,831 in 2018. A total of 20,947 counseling sessions were conducted in 2019 with the establishment and operation of four central and regional (one central and three regional) counseling centers

for infertility and depression, aimed at strengthening the expertise of counseling on infertility and depression. In 2020, a total of 19,934 counseling sessions were performed, and accessibility to mental health service for infertility couples and pregnant women was improved with the addition of one regional center (in Gyeonggi, December 2020). A total of 30,278 counseling sessions were carried out in 2021, followed by 36,862 in 2022. In 2023, a total of 39,003 counseling sessions were conducted, with one central and seven regional centers operating and two additional regional centers established (in Seoul in July and in northern Gyeonggi in September).

Thirdly, through the medical expense subsidy program for pregnant women at high risk, the ROK Government subsidizes the full amount of out-of-pocket expenses for hospitalization due to high-risk pregnancy-related illnesses covered by health insurance, as well as expenses not covered by health insurance. This initiative aims to ensure healthy childbirth and maternal and child health by mitigating financial burdens through the provision of financial support needed for proper treatment and management of high-risk pregnancies. Since July 2015, the program initially targeted three illnesses (premature obstetric labor, delivery-related bleeding, and severe gestosis), but later expanded to include two additional illnesses* in 2018 and 14 more** in 2019, and as of 2024, it is targeting a total of 19 illnesses.

*Premature rupture of amnion, premature separation of placenta

**Placenta previa, threatened abortion, hydramnion, oligohydramnion, antepartum hemorrhage, incompetent cervix, hypertension, multiple pregnancy, diabetes, hyperemesis gravidarum accompanied by metabolic disorder, renal disease, heart failure, intrauterine growth restriction, uterus and adnexa diseases

In 2016, the ROK Government started to provide menstrual hygiene products (sanitary pads) to adolescent girls from economically disadvantaged backgrounds, such as recipients of basic livelihood benefits (livelihood, medical, housing, and education benefits), the second-lowest income bracket, and single-parent families, in order to support their healthy development. In 2022, the eligibility for menstrual product support was expanded from ages 11-18 to 9-24, and the subsidy amount was increased from KRW 10,500 in 2019 to KRW 13,000 as of 2024.

*(2021) Vulnerable group aged 11-18 (124,000 people) → (2022) vulnerable group aged 9-24 (243,000 people)

Furthermore, efforts continue in ensuring the right to health for women and adolescent girls by supporting HPV (cervical cancer) vaccinations for low-income women, including adolescent girls and those in households receiving basic livelihood benefits and belonging to the second-

lowest income bracket.

■ **Promoted male participation in sex and reproductive health including understanding of contraception and responsible sexual behavior**

The ROK Government has made efforts to promote sexual and reproductive health, including women's and men's health, by providing information and education on contraception and professional counseling on the use of medication. The project on promoting sexual and reproductive health is aimed at supporting prepared pregnancy, and healthy pregnancy and childbirth, by providing education on healthy contraception and professional counseling on the use of medication based on sexual self-determination and respect. The project expanded and diversified the beneficiaries by including marginalized groups with limited access to information (out-of-school youth, people with disabilities, among others), who get fewer opportunities for education on sex and contraception, in the target of education, in addition to students and the general public. A total of 361 classes* on sex and contraception education took place in 2023. Particularly, men also participated in the education (7,268 out of the total 9,763 participants responded to the survey, and among them, 2,827 were men (38.9%)). The awareness rate increased after the education (from 29.1% in 2022 to 32.2% in 2023), thereby raising awareness of the importance of contraception and reinforcing the idea that both men and women should take responsibility for contraception.

* 361 classes in 2021 → 350 classes in 2022 → 361 classes in 2023

■ **Taken measures to support women's mental health, including access to specialized services and counselling**

The Ministry of Education (MOE) is providing universal social-emotional education for all students to prevent mental health crises while proactively identifying at-risk students and providing timely support. Firstly, social-emotional education is provided to all students in primary and secondary schools, and in particular, a social-emotional education program applicable to each school level (lower primary, upper primary, middle school, and high school) will be developed in 2024, with the goal of being operational in schools nationwide from 2025. To detect students with mental health crises at an early stage, a nationwide "Student Emotional and Behavioral Characteristics Test" is conducted every year for first graders, fourth graders, seventh graders (i.e. first-year middle school students), and tenth graders (i.e. first-year high

school students). Students identified as experiencing a mental health crisis through the test are provided with psychological support services, such as counseling at the "Wee Center," a student mental health support facility established in each region, or through visits from mental health professionals to schools to provide psychological support.

■ **Strengthened comprehensive sexuality education in schools or through community programmes**

The Ministry of Education (MOE) has reinforced gender equality education in schools to address various gender-based discrimination issues and create a safe and equitable educational environment by fundamentally changing awareness. The amendment and enforcement of the Framework Act on Education (2022), which was previously divided into separate laws, laid the groundwork for the implementation of integrated gender equality education, which includes sex education, gender awareness education, and sexual violence prevention education. The Ministry actively reflected gender equality-related content elements in the 2022 Revised National Curriculum to provide students with age-appropriate sexual health and rights education based on their knowledge of health, diseases, and healthcare. This education aims to foster balanced awareness and healthy citizenship in the social contexts of community, gender sensitivity, cultural diversity, and digital literacy, concerning adolescent sexual development, relationships, body image, and sexual awareness, including the prevention of unwanted early pregnancies, HIV/AIDS, sexually transmitted infections (STIs), sexual abuse, and sexual violence, as defined by the WHO.

■ **Taken action to expand access to health services for marginalized groups of women and girls (see list in Part Two: Priorities, achievements, challenges, and setbacks)**

Women farmers living in rural areas have limited access to medical facilities compared to women residing in urban areas and exhibit a higher prevalence of musculoskeletal and circulatory diseases compared to their male counterparts. In order to improve the quality of life of women farmers by providing them with screening for related diseases and reducing the prevalence rate, the ROK Government amended the Support for Female Farmers and Fishers Act in 2018 to establish legal grounds for special medical checkups for women farmers. In 2020 and 2021, the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Rural Affairs (MAFRA) devised a

plan to promote special health checkups for women farmers based on research result commissioned to an authorized agency, and since 2022, it has been implementing a pilot project to provide about 9,000 women farmers with special medical checkups for agricultural occupational diseases. Currently, biennial checkups are provided for ten items in five areas of agricultural occupational diseases that are prevalent in women farmers aged 51 to 70. In 2022 and 2023, about 9,000 people received screening, and the figure is expected to increase to 30,000 in 2024.

*Agricultural occupational diseases: pesticide poisoning, musculoskeletal and cardiovascular diseases, etc. caused by exposure to harmful substances or by poor working conditions where workers repeatedly handle pesticides, dust, and heavy objects.

13. In the past five years, what actions has your country taken to improve education outcomes and skills for women and girls, including in sectors where they are underrepresented?

■ Strengthened educational curricula to increase gender-responsiveness and eliminate bias, at all levels of education

In order to promote gender awareness and unbiased primary and secondary education, the Ministry of Education (MOE) has incorporated the content of "human rights," "gender equality," and "gender sensitivity" in the 2022 Revised National Curriculum (announced in December 2022) in the social studies, morality, and physical education subjects in primary schools, and in the social studies (history), morality, technology and home economics, physical education, and health subjects, etc. in middle and high schools. The 2022 Revised National Curriculum will be implemented gradually, starting with grades one and two in primary school in 2024, followed by grades three and four in primary school, and grades seven and ten (i.e. grade one in middle school and grade one in high school, respectively) in 2025, and grades five and six in primary school, and grades eight and 11 (i.e. grade two in middle school and grade two in high school, respectively) in 2026, with full implementation across all grades in primary, middle, and high schools by 2027. In addition, in accordance with the 2022 Revised National Curriculum, the MOE developed guidance materials for the application of cross-curricular learning topics, including gender equality, and distributed them to all primary, middle, and high schools nationwide in March 2024. This initiative aims to systematically implement gender equality education throughout educational activities, encompassing related curricula and creative experiential activities.

■ Provided gender equality and human rights training for teachers and other education professionals

The Ministry of Education (MOE) has institutionalized gender equality-related subjects in qualification training and job training to improve teachers' awareness of gender discrimination and foster gender equality awareness. The MOE has reflected gender equality content in the "Standard Curriculum for Qualification Training for Principals, Vice Principals, Master Teachers, and Regular Teachers" (June 15, 2012), and continues to request municipal and provincial teacher training and education centers to establish gender equality education training courses through the "Guidelines for the Priority of Teacher Training".

In addition, the MOE continues to promote training for leading teachers who will spearhead gender equality education in schools and spread gender equality education within their respective regions. The Ministry also plans to support each provincial office of education in developing educational materials and providing gender equality education instructors.

In order to improve the awareness and culture of gender equality through strengthening gender equality education for prospective teachers and enhance related teaching capabilities, the MOE, announced its formal recommendation to teacher training institutions in 2018, advising them to reflect gender equality education on their curricula. The Ministry also amended the Teacher Certification Decree and the Enforcement Regulation of Teacher Certification to institutionalize gender awareness education as a mandatory requirement for obtaining teacher certification to become teachers of kindergartens, primary, secondary, and special schools.

Teacher training institutes have established separate courses aligned with each school's specific context to instruct gender equality-related content and are reflecting gender equality in their programs of major, teaching qualification, and elective courses.

■ Promoted safe, harassment-free and inclusive educational environments for women and girls

Under the Act on the Prevention and Compensation for Accidents at School and the Notification of Standards for School Safety Education, the ROK Government supports hands-on school safety education that prepares students for everyday safety risks and accidents so that all students can be educated in a safe environment.

The Ministry of Education (MOE) requires all students to complete at least 51 hours of safety education every year, and also supports school faculty and staff to complete at least 15 hours of safety training every three years. The Ministry has developed and disseminated seven safety education materials for each grade that reflect the characteristics of student developmental stages from infants to high school students and developed and supported multilingual translations to assist the safety education of vulnerable students such as multicultural students and students with disabilities.

In addition, the MOE implemented a project to expand hands-on safety education centers to strengthen the capacity to cope with real-life safety risks such as everyday safety and traffic safety by utilizing closed schools and idle classrooms, and as of 2024, the Ministry has built and operated 94 hands-on safety education centers nationwide. The ROK Government is also

expanding safety education outreach programs, in which mobile vehicles with safety experts on board visit schools around the country to give hands-on experience to students, especially for those living in rural areas where it is difficult to benefit from such programs due to geographical and environmental limitations.

Recognizing the need to provide a safe educational environment for all students, including girls, the Government has established a framework plan for preventing school accidents every three years, and has developed the "Seven Guidelines for Safety Education in School," visual content for the teaching and learning of safety education, and EBS-collaborated safety education videos ("Safety Channel e"), which are accessible via the School Safety Information Center (www.schoolsafe.kr).

14. What actions has your country taken to ensure that economic recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic closes gender gaps in poverty, employment, social protection, education, and/or health that the pandemic has exacerbated?

For further information, please refer to the response to the questions 4 and 11.

Freedom from violence, stigma and stereotypes

15. Over the past five years, which forms of gender-based violence, and in which specific contexts or settings, has your country prioritized for action?

■ Intimate partner violence, including sexual violence and marital rape

In November 2018, the ROK Government formulated the Measures to Prevent Domestic Violence through cross-ministerial efforts to preemptively address the escalating severity of domestic violence crimes. Since then, efforts have continued to enhance the effectiveness of victim support programs while expanding eligibility criteria.

The Government operates the Women’s Emergency Hotline 1366, counseling centers for victims of domestic violence, shelters, and housing support programs to provide systematic assistance to female victims of domestic violence and their children, including counseling, protection, and medical care, among other forms of support.

Implementation Framework	Type of violence	→	Initial support	→	Customized support for victims	
	Domestic violence		Emergency Hotline 1366		Counseling	Domestic violence counseling center
			Cyber counseling for victims of violence against women		Protection	Protection facilities for domestic violence victims
			1366 emergency shelters		Rehabilitation	Housing support facilities
			Other	Medical and legal aid, referrals to local support agencies		

As of January 2024, there are 18 locations providing Women’s Emergency Hotline 1366 services, 123 domestic violence counseling centers, and 65 protection facilities. In addition, 350 communal housing rental units have been supplied to support the independence of domestic violence victims.

Starting in 2019, a self-reliance subsidy (KRW 5 million per person) has been provided to domestic violence victims upon discharge from protection facilities, enabling them to regain safe daily lives. An additional KRW 2.5 million per accompanying child will be available starting in 2024.

Furthermore, to support the independent lives of domestic violence victims and foster their social integration, a housing support program allowing victims and their families to live together was piloted in 2008. By 2023, 350 housing units had been provided, with the maximum residency period extended from four to six years starting in 2024.

In 2020, to combat domestic violence, the Act on Special Cases Concerning the Punishment of Crimes of Domestic Violence was amended to encompass the crimes of intrusion upon habitation and refusal to leave in the "Criminal Act," and to add provisions on punishments for taking photographs or videos by using camera or other mechanism from the Act on Special Cases Concerning the Punishment of Sexual Crimes. Violations of temporary measures, such as restraining orders, shall now result in imprisonment with labor, fines, or detention. In 2022, the Act on Special Cases Concerning the Punishment of Crimes of Domestic Violence was amended to enhance victim protection and improve the effectiveness of protective disposition for domestic violence offenders. This was achieved by broadening the range of custodial facilities for such offenders under protective disposition to include facilities affiliated with the Ministry of Justice (MOJ) or other facilities designated by the Minister of Justice. In 2022, the Supreme Prosecutors' Office (SPO) ordered the implementation of necessary measures, including notifying the expiration of temporary measures and informing victims to request protection, to address gaps in victim protection upon the expiration of temporary protective measures in domestic violence and child abuse cases, without restricting perpetrators' right to information. In 2022 and 2023, the SPO conducted a thorough crackdown on long-term cold cases of sexual violence by identifying the criminals involved in serious crimes of sexual violence, including special robbery and rape, in collaboration with the police for DNA analysis.

■ Sexual harassment and violence in public places, educational settings and workplaces

a) Response to sexual harassment and sexual violence in the public sector

Under the Framework Act on Gender Equality and Sexual Violence Prevention and Victims Protection Act, a system for addressing sexual harassment and sexual violence cases within the public sector has been established, followed by the promotion of relevant policies. With the

public sector taking the lead, the system ensures focused support for victims who report sexual harassment, and for relevant organizations to handle incidents in a systematic manner, without covering up or minimizing them, allowing them to set up their own systems for taking disciplinary measures, separating victims from offenders, and preventing secondary victimization and recurrence of incidents, thus improving the credibility in measures to prevent sexual harassment in the public sector. A center for reporting sexual harassment and sexual violence in the public sector has been operating since 2018 to enable victims to report incidents without fear of secondary victimization. The center not only provides victims with referrals for counseling, medical care, legal assistance, and other support services, but also conducts diagnostic assessments of organizational cultures to prevent further recurrence of such incidents, among other things.

The ROK Government distributes revised “Standard Guidelines on Preventing Sexual Harassment and Sexual Violence” every year to provide a frame of reference for State agencies, etc. seeking to establish their own guidelines for handling sexual harassment and sexual violence. A “Manual on Handling Sexual Harassment and Sexual Violence in the Public Sector” was also developed and distributed to ensure that all cases are managed professionally with a victim-centered approach.

In the meantime, in accordance with relevant laws since 2021, a case management system has been put in place to receive incoming case notices and submissions for recurrence prevention measures for the systematic handling of cases of sexual harassment and sexual violence in the public sector. Additionally, measures have been implemented to prevent sexual harassment in the public sector, including conducting a diagnosis of the organizational culture and recommending improvements when necessary. Also, in all cases of sexual violence perpetrated by means of deceptive scheme or by force, etc. it is mandatory to report such incidents to investigative authorities to enforce stronger protection for the victims. In 2023, the results of implementation monitoring were publicly disclosed for the first time regarding the establishment of preventive measures against sexual harassment and sexual violence in the public sector.

b) Responding to cases of sexual harassment and sexual violence in the workplace

The Ministry of Employment and Labor (MOEL) supports education on prevention of sexual harassment in the workplace to prevent such incidents and operates an expert committee to make judgements on sexual harassment cases in its respective local offices. Through the

committee, the MOEL supports micro and small-sized businesses that have difficulties in implementing education on prevention of sexual harassment at work by sending lecturers free of charge for education. In addition, since it is a prerequisite that overall public awareness is enhanced among employers and the public to create a safe workplace environment, the MOEL produced educational videos related to proactive employment improvement measures (affirmative action, or 'AA') and posted them on the AA-NET website. It also provides businesses obligated to apply AA with information on proactive employment improvement measures and has established a system to issue public announcements on the results of analyses on the status of male and female employees, implementation plans for AA, and assessment results of implementation reports, etc. The MOEL has continuously expanded its support, providing education for a total of 8,160 employees in 337 businesses in 2021, 11,963 employees in 443 businesses in 2022, and 13,102 employees in 431 businesses in 2023.

■ **Violence against women and girls facilitated by technology (e.g. online sexual harassment, online stalking, non-consensual sharing of intimate images)**

a) Support for victims of digital sex crimes

The ROK Government has undertaken legal and institutional reforms and awareness-raising campaigns to press ahead with multi-faceted policies aimed at rooting out online-based, digital sex crimes and supporting victims. In 2020, Measures to Eradicate Digital Sex Crimes was jointly established by relevant ministries, reinforcing the statutory punishment for crimes involving sexual exploitation materials of children and youth, and abolishing the statute of limitations for crimes involving the production of sexual exploitation materials of children and youth (2021). Moreover, "online grooming" was defined as a new form of digital sex crime, and a legal basis for its punishment was established (2021). Additionally, a provision on special cases concerning undercover police investigations was introduced (2021), paving the way for effective investigations into digital sex crimes targeting children and youth.

In the meantime, the Advocacy Center for Online Sexual Abuse Victims provides essential services, supported by the State free of charge, to victims of digital sex crimes, including counseling, deletion of digital sex crime videos, and referral services for legal, investigative, and medical assistance. Regional Counseling Centers for Digital Sex Crimes were established by metropolitan governments in 2021 to ensure victims receive necessary support within their communities.

Furthermore, to enhance social awareness that digital sex offenses are serious crimes, preventive education targeting different school age groups (elementary, middle, high school, university) and stakeholders (parents, teachers, etc.) is conducted, while an awareness campaign reinforcing the message that “Watching is also a Crime” continues.

b) Response to digital sex crimes

The Ministry of Science and ICT has developed specific face search technology that can identify victims from illegally filmed harmful content in response to digital sex crimes. The “Advocacy Center for Online Sexual Abuse Victims” is currently using this technology on a pilot basis (October 2022) to support the deletion of illegal videos of victims. In addition, to prevent the distribution and spread of illegal footage, content-based video detection and de-identification technology for illegal video information was developed (August 2021). The Public DNA database was provided free of charge to 24 additional telecommunication service providers through the Korea Communications Standards Commission (KCSC)’s “Public DNA DB Technical Support Portal for Digital Sexual Crimes, etc.” It can be used to build a filtering system to prevent the distribution of child and adolescent sexual exploitation material (December 2023).

Meanwhile, to systematically respond to new forms of sexual violence against women and girls, legal and institutional frameworks have been realigned, and a dedicated investigative system has been established. In 2020, amendments were made to the Act on Special Cases Concerning the Punishment of Sexual Crimes to combat sex crimes involving Deepfake technology. Punishments for crimes involving sexual exploitation materials were newly established and strengthened, with aggravated punishments imposed for intimidation or compulsion using sexual filmed content and for habitual offenders. To be more specific, these revisions established grounds for punishments for editing, synthesizing, or processing photograph, video, or audio, etc. (“filmed content”) targeting the body etc. of a person for the purpose of dissemination etc. in a form that may cause sexual desire or shame against the will of the person who is subject to video, for distributing the filmed content or its composite or processed versions or duplicates, or for disseminating the filmed content against the filmed person’s consent, even if it is not contrary to the intention of the person subject to the filmed content, etc. at the time of editing, synthesizing or processing etc. Additionally, aggravated punishments are imposed for these crimes when conducted online for profit.

In June 2020, the Supreme Prosecutors’ Office (SPO) created and disseminated the “Manual to

Aid Suspension in Distributing and Deletion of Illegal Content,” aimed at preventing the distribution of illegal filmed content and the secondary damages resulting from such digital sex crimes. In November 2020, the SPO mandated more active requests for sexual-impulse-reducing drug therapy for sexually-perverse criminals at high risk of recurrence. In February 2021, the SPO set up more assertive responses to digital sex crimes by establishing and adopting reinforced case handling guidelines, integrating legal amendments such as newly-inserted punishment provisions on digital sex crimes and increased statutory penalties. In August of the same year, the SPO inaugurated a contact hotline with the “Advocacy Center for Online Sexual Abuse Victims,” tasked with removing and blocking illegal content, and aimed at bolstering protection and support for victims of digital sex crimes by aiding such tasks. In December 2021, the SPO formed a task force team focused on combatting crimes against women and children, including digital sex crimes. This initiative included revising the investigation manual for sexual and domestic violence crimes and introducing a new manual specifically for child abuse cases. The SPO printed and distributed these manuals to branch prosecutors’ offices to enhance their investigative capabilities through more active utilization.

c) Response to online stalking

In April 2021, the Act on Punishment of Crime of Stalking was enacted to clearly define stalking as a crime. The Act also delineated punishments for perpetrators, special provisions for procedures, and various protection measures for stalking victims. These measures aim to safeguard victims from the early stages of the crime and prevent stalking from escalating into more serious offenses. In July 2023, revisions were made to the Act on Punishment of Crime of Stalking to include stalking via online networks as a crime, closing judicial loopholes for some cases of online stalking, to remove the provision rendering stalking not prosecutable over an objection of the victim, and to adopt electronic device tracking of the stalker's location as provisional protection. These amendments aim to prevent stalking from recurring and escalating into more serious crimes and enhance practical protection measures for victims by supplementing and strengthening relevant institutional mechanisms.

Additionally, the SPO established case handling guidelines for stalking to ensure appropriate punishments for stalking crimes (as of October 2021). Recognizing the higher risk of stalking crimes escalating into more serious offenses, these guidelines were reinforced to increase penalties, especially for crimes targeting socially vulnerable groups including women and children (as of July 2023). These efforts underscore the SPO’s ongoing commitment to firmly

combating stalking crimes. Moreover, 119 prosecutors dedicated to tackling stalking cases were designated in all 60 prosecutors' offices nationwide, collaborating closely with the police from the outset of investigations and swiftly and effectively preventing the recurrence of stalking crimes through provisional measures such as restraining orders. The SPO is making thorough efforts to protect and support victims at multiple levels, including the appointment of public defenders.

16. In the past five years, what actions has your country prioritized to address gender-based violence?

■ Introduced or strengthened violence against women laws, and their enforcement and implementation

a) Introducing legal / institutional basis for eliminating violence against women

The ROK Government reinforced its legal and institutional framework to eradicate violence against women and girls, enhance protection for children and youth, and address violence facilitated by new and emerging technologies.

Revisions made include: 1. heightening statutory punishment for crimes such as special robbery and rape, aggravated rape, indecent acts by compulsion on individuals under 13, and indecent acts in crowded public spaces, as outlined in the Act on Special Cases Concerning the Punishment of Sexual Crimes; 2. increasing penalties for the crimes of indecent acts by compulsion on persons with disabilities, as well as for intruding upon publicly used places with intent to satisfy sexual urges, and for using means of communication for obscene acts; 3. raising statutory punishments for taking photographs or videos by using camera or other mechanism which has functions similar thereto (“filmed content”) as well as for distributing, etc. the filmed content or its duplicate; 4. expressly ensuring punishments for distributing etc. illegally filmed content against the will of the person even if that person took the photograph or video of his or her body himself/herself; 5. imposing punishment of imprisonment with labor not more than three years or of a fine not exceeding KRW 30 million for possessing, purchasing, storing, or viewing illegally filmed sexual content etc.; and 6. imposing imprisonment of a limited term of at least one year for intimidating another person by filmed content or its duplicates which may cause sexual desire or shame and of a limited term of at least three years for interfering with the exercise of a person’s right or having the person to do the work not obligatory for him or her.

Moreover, in 2019, the Act on Special Cases Concerning the Punishment of Sexual Crimes was amended to remove the statute of limitations for individuals who, through fraudulent means or by a threat of force, have sexual intercourse with or commit an indecent act on a minor under the age of 13, thereby enforcing stronger protection for women victimized by sexual crimes (including children and youth). In May 2020, the Criminal Act was amended to raise the age limit for victims of statutory rape against children and youth from 13 to 16. The amendment

imposes punishment only for individuals aged 19 or over if the victim is between the ages of 13 and under 16. New provisions were added to address crimes of statutory rape or indecent acts against children and youth that were prepared or conspired. The objective of these changes is to prevent sex crimes against children and youth while reinforcing their autonomy in sexual decision-making.

Additionally, in 2023, the Act on the Disclosure of Personal Information of Suspects of Specific Serious Crime was enacted with provisions to disclose the personal information of sex offenders targeting children and youth. This enactment expanded the relatively limited range of crimes subject to disclosing personal information, such as sexual violence crimes, to include certain sex offenders targeting children and youth, and broadened the disclosure of personal information from suspects to criminal defendants.

Moreover, in October 2020, revisions were made to the Act on Special Cases Concerning the Punishment of Sexual Crimes to ensure the testimony rights of child victims and victims with disabilities during criminal procedures and to prevent their revictimization during investigative and trial procedures. These revisions established a legal basis for placing testimony assistants and increased punishment for disclosing or divulging victims' identity and private information. In 2023, measures were introduced to allow video recordings of statements from child or youth victims under the age of 19 as admissible evidence. Additionally, there was an enhancement in exclusive investigation with respect to victims of sexual crimes, protective measures during investigation and trial proceedings, expansion of participation by persons in relationships of trust and statement assistants, and preparatory hearing procedures for witness examination, among others, to protect victims under the age of 19 from secondary victimization.

Furthermore, in April 2021, the enactment of the Act on Punishment of Crime of Stalking defined stalking clearly as a crime. The act also delineated punishment on perpetrators, special provisions of the punishment process and various protection measures for stalking victims. In 2023, crime of stalking via information and communications networks was added and provision rendering stalking not prosecutable over an objection of the victim was removed, among other measures, thereby bolstering effective protection of victims.

Meanwhile, when a Telegram sexual exploitation incident occurred in 2020, the Special Investigation Headquarters for Digital Sex Crimes was established and operated. In addition, responses to relationship crimes such as domestic violence, dating violence, and stalking were strengthened. A system is operated continuously to review and manage whether the case handling

process and victim protection measures are appropriate for all reports received the previous day. Moreover, to prevent further harm to the victim after reporting, a victim protection team was established to monitor the victim's safety through call-backs or follow-up calls.

■ **Introduced or strengthened services for survivors of violence (e.g. shelters, help lines, dedicated health services, legal, justice service, counselling, housing, socioeconomic rehabilitation)**

a) Victims of sexual violence

The Ministry of Gender Equality and Family (MOGEF) operates counseling centers, victim protection facilities, and Sunflower Centers to provide victims of sexual violence with counseling, medical and legal services, assistance in investigations, protection, and self-reliance support, facilitating their prompt reintegration into society.

The Sunflower Centers, in particular, function as integrated support centers offering one-stop 24/7 services throughout the year to victims of sexual violence, such as counseling, medical care, legal and investigative assistance, and psychological support. Located inside hospitals, they facilitate timely collection of evidence of sexual violence. The MOGEF collaborates with the National Court Administration to conduct video-linked witness examinations for child or youth victims of sexual violence in coordination with the Sunflower Centers, aiming to minimize secondary victimization from attending court proceedings in person.

In addition, to scale up infrastructure for supporting sexual violence victims and enhance service accessibility, the following facilities were introduced between 2019 and 2023: one general protection facility for sexual violence victims, one protection facility for persons with disabilities, and three communal living facilities for self-reliance support. Moreover, a specialized counseling center for victims of sexual violence in the military was also established to address the blind spot of military sexual violence.

Furthermore, in 2021, victims admitted to protection facilities were provided with the opportunity to take part in hands-on art, music, and dance programs in conjunction with the culture and arts healing program offered by the Ministry of Culture, Sports, and Tourism (MCST) to support victims' emotional stability and recovery.

b) Victims of domestic violence

Mechanisms to protect and support victims of domestic violence include the Women's Emergency Hotline 1366, domestic violence counseling centers, and protection facilities for

victims of domestic violence, which offer counseling, medical care, legal assistance, treatment and recovery programs, self-reliance and housing support, among other services. As of 2023, there are 18 locations for Women's Emergency Hotline 1366 services nationwide, which operate a special unified area code-free number "1366" to provide 24/7 services throughout the year for victims. Initial support such as crisis counseling and emergency protection is provided, along with coordinated, seamless services with other victim support facilities, medical institutions, the police, legal aid organizations and others. The center also operates emergency shelters, offering temporary protection (up to seven days), room and board, and other services for victims of gender-based violence and their accompanying family members.

In addition, subsidies for victims of domestic violence have been continuously expanded to cover medical and living expenses. Furthermore, the free legal aid program aimed at protecting the human rights of victims who lack the ability to defend and protect themselves, such as victims of domestic violence, sexual violence, stalking, dating violence, etc. was enhanced from KRW 5 million per person to KRW 6 million in 2024.

Starting in 2019, victims receive self-reliance subsidies (KRW 5 million per person) upon discharge from a protection facility for victims of domestic violence. As of 2024, an additional KRW 2.5 million is now available for each accompanying child to support stable living conditions and establish a basis for independent living for the victims.

c) Victims of sex trafficking

The ROK Government operates a total of 28 Counseling Centers for Sex Trafficking Victims across 16 cities and provinces nationwide. These centers provide initial response, counseling, emergency rescue, and coordinated services such as medical and legal assistance, as well as referrals to support facilities. Additionally, there are 37 support facilities nationwide catering to the general population, youth, and foreigners, offering welfare services essential for self-reliance and rehabilitation, including room and board, counseling, medical and legal services, vocational training, etc. A group home is also available for women who have exited prostitution to reside temporarily as a half-way house, facilitating their smooth reintegration into society. Furthermore, there are 13 Rehabilitation Support Centers nationwide that provide various forms of vocational training, employment support, and school enrollment guidance to assist victims in finding alternative employment after escaping prostitution. These centers also offer psychological and emotional support, along with adaptation training for economic

empowerment, helping women who have left prostitution to overcome social prejudice, stigma, and fear of exposure, and other related concerns.

Accordingly, services delivered through counseling centers, support facilities, rehabilitation centers for sex trafficking victims, and similar facilities, are tailored to suit the specific characteristics of each victim, focusing on supporting their psychological and emotional stability. This approach aims to facilitate their reintegration as healthy members of society.

Taking a step further, the ROK Government monitors on-going efforts to close down red-light districts in order to eradicate sex trafficking. It has implemented a coordinated system with local governments, involving the police and civic organizations, among others, to shut down areas with significant sex trade activities. Joint on-site inspections are conducted, and community engagement is promoted. As a result, 21 concentration districts have been closed. Urban renewal projects are now underway to transform these areas into cultural complexes, revitalizing the local community and enhancing the welfare of its residents.

■ Introduced or strengthened strategies and interventions to prevent violence against women and girls (e.g. in the education sector, in the media, community mobilization, work with men and boys)

The ROK Government is working to introduce substantive improvements to education for the prevention of violence at public institutions, with all public institutions required to submit the results of their prevention education to the Ministry of Gender Equality and Family (MOGEF) every year for an annual inspection, under the goal of preventing violence against women, including sexual harassment, sexual violence, and domestic violence. Education results submitted by each institution are inspected, and those found to be managing their education programs insufficiently are required to receive special education for their managers, submit prevention education implementation plans, or face publication of the inspection results through media, etc. Institutions that perform poorly or fail to submit their results are subject to “on-site inspections and consulting,” which are carried out in conjunction with competent ministries and others.

Meanwhile, to enforce stricter management of education at public institutions, customized education programs must be provided separately for heads of institutions and high-ranking officials given their significant influence on the organizational culture of the institution. The amendment to the Framework Act on Gender Equality (2021) provides for stronger substantive

improvements to education programs for high-ranking officials, including the publication of the names of the heads of institutions who have not completed sexual harassment prevention education, among other measures. Additionally, with the enactment of the Framework Act on Prevention of Violence Against Women (2019), personnel tasked with handling matters related to violence against women at investigative agencies such as prosecutors, police, and labor inspectors are required to receive education on “Preventing secondary victimization for victims of gender-based violence.”

The Ministry of Employment and Labor (MOEL) has carried out labor inspections to prevent sexual harassment at work, provided lecturers free of charge, operated a campaigning period that emphasized gender equality in employment, selected and awarded businesses showing remarkable performance in that regard, and created and operated consultation centers for gender equality in employment. Through such measures, the MOEL has been making efforts to monitor the status through on-site inspections in order to prevent violence against women in the area of employment. To improve a work culture that is violent towards women (as interpreted in a broad sense), there needs to a societal transition in perception, and a childcare-friendly culture needs to be created to alleviate the burden of childcare on women. Accordingly, the Ministry held the sixth public-private consultation meeting on work and life balance in 2018, and relevant ministries and the business community collectively committed to innovation in work culture to voluntarily create the atmosphere of work and life balance. It also established a collaboration system between central and local offices to promote a childcare-friendly working environment.

17. In the past five years, what strategies has your country used to prevent gender-based violence?

■ Creating safe environments including schools, workplaces, and public spaces

In order to prevent sexual harassment at work, the Ministry of Employment and Labor (MOEL) has been conducting smart and focused labor inspections. To establish a safe working environment for women, the MOEL has continued to expand the implementation of smart labor inspections, using the integrated information of National Health Insurance Service and employment insurance, and has extended the scope of businesses subject to proactive employment improvement measures (Affirmative Action) to all government-owned corporations across local regions and large businesses (with 300 or more employees). The Ministry has also been implementing a rectification system whereby workers who experience unfavorable treatment, such as gender-based discrimination in employment, can file for remedies directly through the labor relations commission. Across the entire process of employment, various types of discrimination based on gender are prohibited, and upon violation, offenders can be subject to fines (up to KRW 30 million, which is approximately USD 22,000) or criminal punishment pursuant to relevant laws. Also, businesses suspected of violating relevant laws are inspected preemptively by labor inspectors from local employment and labor offices to reduce the possibility of sexual harassment at work. Additionally, to enhance awareness of sexual harassment at work, the MOEL has been distributing materials on identification and the necessary measures upon occurrence of sexual harassment at work, among other measures.

Since preventing sexual harassment is crucial due to limited effectiveness in restoring the damages post-incident, the Equal Employment Opportunity and Work-Family Balance Assistance Act has made it mandatory to prevent sexual harassment at work, and the MOEL has continuously provided education and promotional activities to that effect, to ensure workers can enjoy a healthy and safe environment at work. In particular, the smaller the size of a business is, the lower the education rate is on the prevention of sexual harassment at work, and conversely, the higher the incidence rate of sexual harassment is. Thus, the Ministry has been providing support to micro and small-sized businesses that have difficulties in implementing education programs on their own, by sending lecturers for education and carrying out inspections, focusing on sexual harassment at work during instructions and inspections of businesses that employ a significant number of women.

Furthermore, the MOEL has provided consultation services for businesses by creating a pool

of facilitators for Affirmative Action (AA), composed of experts in gender equality, to support the establishment of a safe working environment and organization culture, including gender-equal personnel management systems for businesses subject to AA. It also encouraged businesses' voluntary implementation by providing special education for CEOs and CHOs (of 64 companies), who are policy makers of the businesses, to create an organizational culture based on gender equality in employment that supports work and family balance.

■ Raising public awareness to change attitudes and behaviours

The ROK Government has been promoting substantive improvements in violence prevention education within public institutions, aiming to prevent violence against women, including sexual harassment, sexual violence, and domestic violence. It has mandated that all public institutions submit the results of their prevention education programs to the Ministry of Gender Equality and Family (MOGEF) every year for annual inspection. Previously, institutions that underperformed for two years or more in education were publicly disclosed. However, starting from the 2021 inspections, institutions with a single year of poor performance were also publicized to the media.

Meanwhile, the ROK Government continues to develop and distribute educational content tailored to prevent various new and emerging forms of sex crimes against women and girls, such as digital sex crimes, and to prevent secondary victimization.

■ Promoting gender-egalitarian values in primary and secondary education, including through comprehensive sexuality education

In addition to sex education in schools, the ROK Government has established and operates the Youth Sexual Culture Center, a permanent training facility where children and youth can independently learn using various tools and media, aimed at instilling healthy sexual values in them. The center offers sex education programs for children and youth across different target groups (infants, elementary, middle, and high school students), and also conducts sex education outreach classes at kindergartens, schools, and youth training facilities, and other locations.

18. In the past five years, what actions has your country taken to prevent and respond to technology-facilitated gender-based violence (e.g. online sexual harassment, online stalking, non-consensual sharing of intimate images)?

■ Introduced or strengthened legislation and regulatory provisions

Efforts to amend eleven major laws have been pursued to combat digital sex crimes, completing revisions to ten laws as of 2023, with one bill currently pending in the National Assembly.

The ten amended laws include the Sexual Violence Prevention and Victims Protection Act, the Act on Special Cases Concerning the Punishment of Sexual Crimes, the Telecommunications Business Act, the Act on Promotion of Information and Communications Network Utilization and Information Protection, the Criminal Act, and the Act on the Protection of Children and Youth Against Sex Offenses, among others.

The main revisions are as follows: changing the term “child or youth pornography” to “child or youth sexual exploitation materials”; abolishing the statute of limitations for crimes involving the production of sexual exploitation materials targeting children and youth; establishing penalties for “grooming” of children and youth; raising the age of legal consent for statutory rape of minors from 13 to under 16; introducing penalties for the act of intimidation or compulsion using sexual filmed content; and establishing legal grounds for punishing the possession, purchase, storage, viewing, etc. of illegally filmed content, among others. Additionally, obligations for preventing distribution were strengthened for value-added common carriers (VACC) such as social media (SNS) and Webhard service providers regarding the deletion and blocking of access to illegally filmed content and sexual exploitation materials targeting children and youth, etc.

a) Legal / institutional measures for punishing digital sex crimes

In March 2020, amendments were made to the Act on Special Cases Concerning the Punishment of Sexual Crimes to combat sex crimes involving Deepfake technology. These revisions established grounds for punishments for editing, synthesizing, or processing photograph, video, or audio etc. (“filmed content”) targeting the body etc. of a person for the purpose of dissemination etc. in a form that may cause sexual desire or shame against the will of the person who is subject to video, for distributing the filmed content or its composite or processed versions or duplicates, or for disseminating the filmed content against the filmed

person's consent, even if it is not contrary to the intention of the person subject to the filmed content, etc. at the time of editing, synthesizing or processing etc. Additionally, aggravated punishments are imposed for these crimes when conducted online for profit.

In May 2020, the Act on Special Cases Concerning the Punishment of Sexual Crimes was amended to tackle escalating online sex crime damage. These amendments increase the statutory punishment for sexual violence crimes involving filming using cameras etc. and introduce new provisions to penalize the possession, purchase, storage, and viewing of illegally filmed content, thereby preventing damage from cybersex crimes.

In April 2021, the enactment of the Act on Punishment of Crime of Stalking defined stalking clearly as a crime. The act also delineated punishment on perpetrators, special provisions of the punishment process and various protection measures for stalking victims. These measures aim to safeguard victims from the early stages of the crime and prevent stalking from escalating into more serious offenses.

In July 2023, revisions were made to the Act on Punishment of Crime of Stalking to include stalking via online networks as a crime, closing judicial loopholes for some cases of online stalking, to remove the provision rendering stalking not prosecutable over an objection of the victim, and to adopt electronic device tracking of the stalker's location as provisional protection. These amendments supplemented and strengthened relevant institutional mechanisms for protecting stalking crime victims.

b) Disclosing personal information of digital sex criminals

In October 2023, the Act on Disclosure of Personal Information of Suspects of Specific Serious Crime was enacted with provisions to disclose the personal information of sex offenders targeting children and youth. This enactment expanded the relatively limited range of crimes subject to disclosing personal information, now including certain sex crimes against children and youth, and broadened the range of disclosing personal information from the suspect to the criminal defendant. This ensures the people's right to know about the perpetrators and, at the same time, serves as a preventive measure against these crimes, thereby creating a safe society.

■ Implemented awareness raising initiatives targeting the general public and education settings

to sensitize young people, caregivers and educators to ethical and responsible online behaviour

The ROK Government produces and distributes educational content on the prevention of digital sex crimes tailored to different target groups (elementary, middle, high school, university). In 2022, it established an effective delivery system and platform for enhancing awareness of and vigilance against digital sex crimes targeting children and youth.

Moreover, to address educational blind spots and raise community awareness on violence prevention, the ROK Government conducts “Outreach violence prevention education” for vulnerable groups with limited access to educational opportunities, such as children and youth with disabilities, North Korean defectors, and employees of small businesses. Particularly, the outreach program for children and youth provides information on safety precautions to prevent digital sex crimes and instructions on reporting incidents, with the aim of increasing awareness about the risks associated with illegal filming and the distribution of illegally filmed content.

■ Strengthen the capacity of government actors for the development of policy and legislation, and their enforcement and implementation

To prevent and respond to the online dissemination of illegally filmed content, a dedicated department was established at the Ministry of Gender Equality and Family (MOGEF) in 2021, to foster a strong collaborative system with other relevant ministries, including operating a regular consultative body involving the Korea Communications Commission and the Korean National Police Agency, among others.

Since 2020, various ministries have been collaborating to devise policy measures aimed at eradicating digital sex crimes. Based on a whole-of-government approach, they continuously monitor the implementation progress through diverse consultative channels and explore areas of institutional improvement to address ongoing concerns, ensuring policy development and faithful implementation.

19. In the past five years, what measures has your country taken to resource women's organizations working to prevent and respond to GBV?

A joint collaborative project was carried out in conjunction with women's organizations to strengthen partnerships in gender equality policies and achieve governance. The ROK Government expanded opportunities for private organizations to participate in addressing key policy issues concerning women, such as raising awareness and spreading a culture of gender equality, enhancing women's social participation, preventing violence against women, and strengthening social safety nets. Capacity-building support was provided for women's groups. Efforts were made to extend more tailored support such as on-site inspections and consulting, alongside initiatives to enhance transparency in budget execution through rigorous management and oversight.

20. In the past five years, what actions has your country taken to address the portrayal of women and girls, discrimination and/or gender bias in the media, including social media?

■ Provided training to media professionals to encourage the creation and use of non-stereotypical, balanced and diverse images of women and girls in the media, including social media

Education on gender equality in media was conducted to foster gender-responsive media literacy among youth. In response to the evolving educational environment due to COVID-19, both face-to-face and remote education initiatives were simultaneously implemented. The ROK Government supported 177 schools across offices of education at the city and provincial levels nationwide with remote learning resources, including gender-responsive media critique videos and educational materials. Additionally, to meet the demand for in-person education, face-to-face sessions were also conducted.

Efforts were made to enhance educational effectiveness by promoting consistency in educational content through the development of standardized syllabi and the provision of activity booklets (activity sheets) alongside facilitating participatory classes. A business agreement was concluded with the Korea Press Foundation to establish a cooperative system for gender education aimed at journalists and specialized training in gender reporting journalism was operated. Furthermore, education on gender equality in media was provided to the deliberation monitoring group of the Korea Communications Standards Commission (KCSC).

Meanwhile, seamless collaboration with broadcasting and media organizations facilitated education on gender equality in media for professionals such as journalists and members of the KCSC deliberation monitoring group. Additionally, an online campaign was launched to engage the public in promoting a gender-equal media culture. Efforts were made to enhance the acceptance of gender-equal media culture by diversifying awareness-raising activities, utilizing various methods, media, and accessibility. This included forging partnerships with new media channels to disseminate gender-equal media content that is accessible to the public through YouTube videos.

■ Other (Conducting content analysis on gender equality in mass media)

To identify and address gender discrimination in mass media with significant societal impact and to promote a gender-equal media environment, the ROK Government continues to conduct content analysis on gender equality in mass media alongside media awareness-raising activities such as media education and campaigns on gender equality.

The content analysis of media coverage of the Telegram sextortion case in 2020, which sparked social controversy, highlighted the problem of sensationalizing sex offenses and distorting the nature of these crimes by portraying perpetrators as abnormal individuals. Given the prevalent consumption of media content via mobile devices regardless of location and time, continuous content analysis of mass media was conducted, prompting efforts for improvement.

In 2021, a content analysis broadly covering online content was conducted in response to the evolving media landscape. With heightened reliance on media in the post-COVID-19 era, consistent efforts were made to conduct ongoing content analysis on mass media, with the aim of addressing any gender-discriminatory expressions within media.

In 2022, given the evolving media environment and user behavior, a content analysis regarding various media was performed. With the prolonged COVID-19 period, the impact of media on our lives became more profound, and to respond to these environmental changes, a Gender Equality Media Forum was organized on the theme of “Exploring Ways to Create a Gender-Equal Media Environment after COVID-19,” aiming to share government initiatives with the public. The forum was broadcast live online to facilitate broader participation, and consensus was fostered through real-time comments.

21. In the past five years, what actions has your country taken specifically tailored to address violence against marginalized groups of women and girls?

■ **Migrant women**

a) Support for marriage migrant victims of violence

To support marriage migrants who have been victimized by violence, including domestic violence, the Ministry of Gender Equality and Family (MOGEF) provides 24-hour multilingual counseling services through the Danuri Call Center, emergency shelter support, and immediate assistance such as referrals to counseling centers and shelters. In addition, the Ministry conducts post-monitoring to ensure sustained care for families in crisis and coordinates responses through a hotline established with the police to support marriage migrants affected by violence.

b) Support for migrant women victims of violence

The MOGEF currently operates 33 shelters for migrant women who are victims of violence, along with nine counseling centers for migrant women under the Act on the Prevention of Domestic Violence and Protection, etc. of Victims. Initially, these shelters were intended for foreign victims whose spouses are Korean nationals, but the law was amended to allow shelters to admit foreigners whose spouses are not Korean nationals. Presently, even unregistered foreigners can access these facilities.

The facilities provide temporary protection for migrant women who are victims of domestic and other forms of violence, as well as their accompanying children, offering counseling, legal aid, medical services, and other necessary support. They provide new self-reliance subsidies of KRW 5 million per person to victims upon their discharge, assisting them with finding housing and purchasing essential goods. Starting in 2024, an additional KRW 2.5 million per accompanying child is also being provided to promote their economic independence and stable settlement in Korean society.

For further information, please refer to the response to question 3.

■ **Women with disabilities**

To protect and support women with disabilities who are victims of sexual violence or domestic violence, as of 2023, there are 26 counseling centers for people with disabilities (including 22 centers for victims of sexual violence, one center for domestic violence, and three integrated counseling centers), and 14 protection facilities for people with disabilities (including three protection facilities for domestic violence victims and 11 protection facilities for sexual violence victims). They are connected to medical, legal, and other necessary services to facilitate physical and mental healing and protect the rights and interests of people with disabilities. Moreover, support for facilities serving women with disabilities has been strengthened with additional subsidies available to cover transportation expenses and to increase personnel.

For further information, please refer to the response to question 3.

Participation, accountability and gender-responsive institutions

22. In the past five years, what actions and measures has your country to promote women's participation in public life and decision-making?

■ Provided opportunities for capacity building and skills development

With the formulation of the Plan to Improve Gender Representation in the Public Sector (2023-2027), the ROK Government annually establishes action plans across 12 specific areas every year, conducts periodic implementation monitoring (semi-annual reports to the Working Committee on Gender Equality), and maintains continuous performance management efforts. These endeavors aim to increasing the participation rate of women in the public sector.

Additionally, efforts are underway to broaden the foundation for female participation by actively discovering female talents in various fields and recommending them for roles in institutional and committee leadership, etc. Support is provided to enhance their capabilities through specialized training, network-building assistance, and ongoing information sharing for individuals listed in the female talent pool (DB).

Meanwhile, through the Korea Women Leaders Academy, support has been provided to facilitate women's growth into key leaders within the organization, including customized training for each stage of their careers and competencies, along with systematic network support. To accommodate women who encounter difficulties attending group training sessions, online training courses were introduced and operated, with mobile services enabling access to online learning from anywhere at any time. Regional hub agencies were designated and operated to enhance accessibility and convenience for women in local areas, ensuring a demand-driven approach to education.

Furthermore, alumni associations were established for graduates of senior management training, and events such Next-generation Women Leaders Conference, Women Managers in Public Institutions Conference, and the Korea Women Leaders Academy were organized to enhance the effectiveness of education and support the formation of a network of women talents.

■ Encouraged the equal political participation of all women, including young women and underrepresented groups like indigenous women, through capacity building, skills development, sensitization and mentorship programmes

The Young Women's Mentoring program, initiated as cyber mentoring in 2002 and transitioning to offline customized mentoring starting from 2016, aims to support the career development of female college students, women preparing for employment, and early-career women by connecting them with female leader role models (mentors). Mentors and mentees participating in the program collaborate to design practical programs tailored to meet the specific needs of mentees, taking into account the mentor's career, and mentoring goals, as well as the mentee's interests and aptitudes. Through this mentoring initiative, mentees cultivate leadership skills, establish emotional support systems, communicate with female role models in their fields of interest, and gain direct and indirect career experiences, thereby reducing barriers to entry into new fields and engaging in various career-related activities.

Furthermore, to provide practical career and entrepreneurship-related information and establish networks where empathy can flourish, short-term mentoring events like "Mentoring Day" have been organized. These initiatives aim to offer role models for young women, supporting their career development.

■ Collected and analyzed data on women's political participation, including in appointed and elected positions

Pursuant to Article 21 (Participation in Policy-Making Processes) of the Framework Act on Gender Equality, data collection and analysis on women's political participation, encompassing appointed and elected positions, are conducted to enhance women's decision-making authority in the public sector, thereby improving substantive gender balance.

Furthermore, as part of the five-year Plan to Improve Gender Representation in the Public Sector (2023-2027), annual action plans are developed for 12 specific areas, which include the status of female Senior Civil Service officials and female executives in public institutions, and regular monitoring of implementation is carried out.

< Share of Women Elected as Members of the National Assembly >

(Source: National Election Commission, person, %)

Classification	Total (a+b)			Constituency (a)			Proportional representation (b)		
	Total	Women	Ratio	Total	Women	Ratio	Total	Women	Ratio
19 th Session of NA (2012)	300	47	15.7	246	19	7.7	54	28	51.9
20 th Session of NA (2016)	300	51	17.0	253	26	10.2	47	25	53.1
21 st Session of NA (2020)	300	57	19.0	253	29	11.5	47	28	59.6

<Share of Women Elected as Heads of Local Governments >

(Source: National Election Commission, person, %)

Classification	Local government heads (a+b)			<i>Gwangyeok</i> (major urban governments) (a)			<i>Gicho</i> (small cities and provincial governments) (b)		
	Total	Women	Ratio	Total	Women	Ratio	Total	Women	Ratio
The 5 th local election (2010)	244	6	2.5	16	-	-	228	6	2.6
The 6 th local election (2014)	243	9	3.7	17	-	-	226	9	4.0
The 7 th local election (2018)	243	8	3.3	17	-	-	226	8	3.5
The 8 th local election (2022)	243	7	2.9	17	-	-	226	7	3.1

< Share of Women Elected as Members of Local Governments >

(Source: National Election Commission, person, %)

Classification	Total local government members (a+b)			<i>Gwangyeok</i> (major urban governments) (a)			<i>Gicho</i> (small cities and provincial governments) (b)		
	Total	Women	Ratio	Total	Women	Ratio	Total	Women	Ratio
The 5 th local election (2010)	3,649	739	20.3	761	113	14.8	2,888	626	21.7

The 6 th local election (2014)	3,687	845	22.9	789	113	14.3	2,898	732	25.3
The 7 th local election (2018)	3,750	1,060	28.3	824	160	19.4	2,926	900	30.8
The 8 th local election (2022)	3,859	1,171	30.3	872	173	19.8	2,987	998	33.4

< Share of Women in Senior Civil Service Officials >

(Source: Ministry of Personnel Management, as of Dec. 31 each year, person, %)

Year	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Central administrative agency (Senior Civil Service officials)	1,514	1,539	1,544	1,600	1,565
Women	102	122	132	160	175
Ratio	6.7	7.9	8.5	10.0	11.2

<Share of Women Executives in Public Organizations>

(Source: Ministry of Economy and Finance, as of Dec. 31 each year, person, %)

Year	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
No. of public institutions	337	339	340	349	350
Total executives	3,624	3,652	3,670	3,606	3,505
Women	647	772	810	812	826
Ratio	17.9	21.1	22.1	22.5	23.6

23. In the past five years, what actions has your country taken to increase women's access to expression and participation in decision-making in the media, including through information and communication technologies (ICT)?

■ Other (Provision of vocational education and training)

At a time marked by shifting industrial and demographic structures that emphasize the importance of utilizing the female workforce, the ROK Government provides vocational training tailored to the demands of job capability development through the Saeil Center (women's reemployment center), etc. This effort contributes to fostering the female workforce in emerging industries and new technology fields, while also addressing the gender digital divide. Additionally, the ROK Government recommends that research institutes in the field of science and technology aim to have a certain percentage of new hires and employees who are women.

24. Please describe your country's current national women's machinery (government entity exclusively dedicated to the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women) and describe the measures that your country taken over the past five years to establish and/or strengthen it

In 2001, the Ministry of Gender Equality was established in Korea with the primary mandate to promote and implement initiatives for women's empowerment and gender equality. In 2010, this ministry was expanded and renamed the current Ministry of Gender Equality and Family, encompassing responsibilities related to youth and family affairs. The Ministry's main responsibilities include planning and consolidating policies on women, promoting women's rights and interests, nurturing and ensuring the welfare and protection of youth, establishing, coordinating, and supporting family and multicultural family policies, and preventing and protecting women, children, and youth from violence.

The Ministry of Gender Equality and Family (MOGEF) is one of the 19 ministerial-level central administrative agencies established under the Government Organization Act. The Minister of Gender Equality and Family serves as a member of the State Council and participates in its proceedings. As of 2024, the budget allocated to the MOGEF is KRW 1 trillion and 723.4 billion.

In addition, under Article 11 of the Framework Act on Gender Equality, the Gender Equality Council is established and operated under the Prime Minister and deliberates on and coordinates major matters regarding gender equality policies, such as establishing master plans and action plans for gender equality policies, inspecting the results of implementing gender equality policies, and evaluating and improving relevant systems.

25. In the past five years, what other mechanisms and tools has your country used to mainstream gender equality across sectors? (e.g. gender focal points in the Executive, Legislature or Judiciary; inter-ministerial coordination mechanisms; gender audits, consultations with women's organizations)

The #MeToo movement, initially sparked by incidents of sexual harassment and sexual violence in the workplace, expanded its reach to include schools, culture, and the sports sector. This highlighted the need to fortify the framework for promoting gender equality, enabling government ministries to take responsibility and address entrenched issues of sexism and sexual violence across society, while considering the unique characteristics of each domain. In response to these imperatives, Gender Equality Policy Officers were established within eight ministries (May 7, 2019), including the Ministry of Environment, Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism, Ministry of Health and Welfare, and Ministry of Employment and Labor as they oversee a broad spectrum of policy areas, encompassing schools, culture and arts, and workplaces, with significant societal implications.

To empower departments specializing in gender equality to effectively carry out their functions, a directive was issued (April 29, 2020) for the "Regulations on the Operation of the Gender Equality Policy Officer Consultative Body," which led to the formation of a consultative body consisting of Gender Equality Policy Officers from eight ministries. The primary role of this consultative body is to facilitate inter-ministerial discussions aimed at promoting gender equality policies and promoting an enabling culture. It focuses on important matters regarding gender equality policies, such as the Master Plan for Gender Equality Policy and Gender Impact Assessment, and major policy matters for combating violence against women, including the Framework Act on Prevention of Violence against Women and the Master Plan of Policies to Prevent Violence against Women.

26. If there is a national human rights institution in your country, what measures has it taken to address violations of women's rights and promote gender equality?

■ Establishment of a national human rights institution

The National Human Rights Commission of Korea (Hereinafter "NHRCK") was established on November 25, 2001, to protect and improve the quality of the inviolable and fundamental human rights of all individuals. Article 2 (3) of the National Human Rights Commission Act stipulates that the term "discriminatory act violating the equal right" is "any act of favorably treating, excluding, discriminating against or unfavorable treating a particular person, without reasonable grounds, and on the ground of sex, sexual orientation, etc. and an act of sexual harassment that makes a person feel sexually humiliated or loathsome by taking advantage of one's superior position or sexual comments, etc. with regard to one's duties, etc." In order to specialize in sex/gender-based discrimination, the NHRCK established the Gender Discrimination Remediation Division in 2018, which is responsible for investigating and studying laws, systems, policies, and practices related to gender (including gender identity) and sexual orientation, sexual harassment, and making recommendations or expressing opinions on matters requiring improvement while investigating and remedying acts of sexual harassment and gender discrimination. In addition, the division conducts research on the implementation of international human rights treaties related to women, makes recommendations or expresses opinions, and is responsible for domestic and international public relations cooperation on gender discrimination and sexual harassment.

■ Measures taken by the national human rights institution to address violations of women's rights and promote gender equality

From 2019 to 2023, the NHRCK received a total of 2,353 complaints of gender discrimination (including gender, pregnancy and childbirth, sexual harassment, sexual orientation, and gender identity), of which 281 resulted in remedies. In addition, a total of 20 recommendations were made through policy research, and the following are representative examples.

On February 25, 2020, the NHRCK recommended that, in order to prevent sexual harassment and sexual violence in the arts and culture industry, the government should: 1) specify in

relevant guidelines that sexual harassment of all artists constitutes unfair behavior that hinders artistic creation; 2) establish a “Review Committee on Sexual Harassment and Sexual Violence in the Arts and Culture”; 3) expand a dedicated department and dedicated personnel to investigate and handle reported cases; and 4) exclude those who have received criminal penalties and administrative fines for sexual harassment from being selected as subcontractors. Sanctions against sexual harassers are necessary because the culture and arts industry is characterized by a closed network and hierarchy, with many freelance workers working under contract, leaving many blind spots where the law does not apply, and power concentrated in the hands of a few individuals or groups has far-reaching influence within the industry.

On March 16, 2022, the National Human Rights Commission recommended that the Nationally Approved Statistical Survey and the Survey of Actual Situation conducted by central administrative agencies should include a new survey item on transgender people and other LGBTQI persons in the Nationally Approved Statistical Survey, and that the Korean Standard Classification of Diseases and Causes of Death should be revised to remove transsexualism from the classification of mental disorders.

To improve the gender imbalance in the political sphere, on May 12, 2022, the NHRCK recommended that the quota system for nominating candidates for the National Assembly and local council elections be made mandatory for local constituency seats as well as proportional representation seats, but no single gender shall exceed six-tenths of the total, and that a quota system be applied to nominate candidates for mayors of metropolitan and basic local governments, but no single gender shall exceed six-tenths of the total.

Peaceful and inclusive societies

27. In the past five years, what actions has your country taken to build and sustain peace, promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development and implement the women, peace and security agenda?

■ Adopted and/or implemented a National Action Plan on women, peace and security

The ROK Government, in order to effectively implement United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 and expand the participation and role of women in conflict prevention, conflict resolution and peacebuilding processes, as well as to efficiently protect women's human rights in armed conflicts, has collected opinions from relevant ministries, NGOs, and experts, engaged with NGOs and experts, and formulated the Third National Action Plan (2021-2023) in 2021.

The Third National Action Plan (NAP) consists of 11 goals and 24 specific tasks across five areas: Prevention, Participation, Protection, Relief and Recovery, and Implementation and Monitoring. The main contents of the plan include: △ improve the capacity of people working in conflict prevention, peace, activism, and international development cooperation on women, peace and security; △ expanding women's participation in the area of defense, diplomacy, peace, reunification, and security, and spreading governance; △ providing support for victims of sexual violence in the military and conflict zones, as well as strengthening punishment against offenders; △ ensuring support for North Korean women defectors and refugee women; and △ assisting in the recovery of conflict-related victims and bolstering international development cooperation.

In addition, the Peaceful Unification Advisory Council was added as a new implementing agency for the Third NAP, bringing the total number of participating ministries and agencies in NAP implementation to ten. To enhance the accountability of each implementing agency, the previous approach of joint public-private implementation and monitoring (twice a year) was revised so that each agency conducts its own implementation and monitoring in the first half of the year, followed by joint public-private implementation and monitoring in the second half of the year.

Meanwhile, in 2023, efforts were undertaken to re-examine and supplement the third NAP and develop the fourth NAP, including conducting research titled “Research for Establishing the Fourth National Action Plan” and organizing a public hearing to gather feedback from stakeholders in the private sector and academia. As a result, the Ministry of Environment was included as a new implementing agency, joining a total of 11 ministries and agencies involved in devising the fourth NAP. The draft plan is scheduled to be finalized after deliberation by the Gender Equality Council chaired by the Prime Minister in 2024.

■ Integrated women, peace and security commitments into key national and inter-ministerial policy, planning and monitoring frameworks

To align with the global focus on women, peace and security, and to effectively advance Korea's National Action Plan in accordance with United Nations Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security, the Framework Act on Gender Equality mandates the establishment of a national action plan, and matters concerning the evaluation of the Plan’s implementation are deliberated and coordinated by the Gender Equality Council, chaired by the Prime Minister.

In accordance with this framework, private sector advisors involved with the National Action Plan and participating ministries jointly conduct monitoring of its implementation and report the findings to the Gender Equality Council, thereby sharing the progress in the implementation of the NAP and examining areas for improvement.

On the other hand, to establish the Fourth NAP to be enforced starting from 2024, the government, academia, civil society, and other stakeholders engaged in discussions, including meetings with relevant ministries and public hearings. These efforts refined and restructured the implementation tasks outlined in the Third NAP for the drafting of the Fourth NAP. The Fourth NAP comprises 11 goals and 21 specific tasks, and it newly involves the Ministry of Environment with the aim of addressing emerging global agendas such as climate change and cybersecurity. All stakeholders are striving to enhance accountability related to women, peace and security (WPS) and to improve implementation outcomes.

■ Used communication strategies, including social media, to increase awareness of the women, peace and security agenda

Since the UN Security Council adopted Resolution 1325 on women, peace and security, the agenda for women, peace and security has gained continuous emphasis in the international community, prompting many countries to develop relevant national action plans. The year 2020 marked the 25th anniversary of the adoption of the Beijing Platform for Action and the 20th anniversary of the adoption of UN Security Council Resolution 1325. To commemorate these milestones, the Korea Gender Equality Forum was held for the first time to promote policy achievements and secure global leadership on women, peace and security, and a session titled "UNSCR+20 & the Young Generation" was organized as part of the event. Through a live broadcast on YouTube, the forum discussed strategies for expanding the discourse on women, peace and security, as well as Korea's achievements and challenges in the discussion on women, peace and security, and other related topics, in an effort to raise awareness at home and abroad. Meanwhile, promotional leaflets on UN Security Council Resolution 1325 were produced and distributed to relevant organizations to enhance public awareness and strengthen accountability for implementing the National Action Plan.

■ Working with the international community to advance the women, peace and security agenda

In 2018, the ROK Government launched a new initiative called “Action with Women and Peace” to significantly enhance its contribution to the Women, Peace and Security (WPS) agenda, with a particular focus on addressing sexual violence in conflict situations. As an integral part of this endeavor, the ROK Government has hosted five international conferences on “Action with Women and Peace” in Seoul since 2019. Additionally, the ROK Government, in collaboration with international organizations, has provided support to various groups, including Syrian refugee women in Jordan (IOM, 2019-2021, USD 1 million), Rohingya refugee women and girls in Bangladesh (UNICEF, 2020-2022, USD 1 million), Sudanese women and girls (UNFPA, 2020-2022, USD 1 million / 2022-2023, USD 830,000), and women residing in border areas of Cameroon (UNFPA, 2021-2022, USD 840,000). The Government remains committed to expanding development cooperation projects and humanitarian aid, drawing on its accumulated experience and expertise.

Meanwhile, the Korea International Cooperation Agency (KOICA), as part of its efforts to advance the Women, Peace, and Security (WPS) agenda, has also been providing support to

alleviate the vulnerabilities experienced by women and refugees in conflict-affected and fragile contexts and build peace through its 'Conflict and Fragility Program.' Since 2018, KOICA has designated gender-based violence in conflict as one of the target issues for its Humanitarian Partnership Program. From 2018 to 2024, KOICA has carried out a total of 12 projects, valued at approximately KRW 6.5 billion, in five countries (Bangladesh, Uganda, Ethiopia, Lebanon, and Egypt) in partnership with 10 NGOs. Through its initiatives, KOICA endeavors to empower refugee women so that they can overcome the adversities of conflicts and emerge as catalysts for positive change.

Furthermore, Korea is also strengthening international cooperation on gender equality issues through collaboration with the OECD Development Centre and participation in the OECD DAC Network on Gender Equality (GENDERNET). Korea contributed to the global data collection of the OECD Development Centre's Social Institutional Gender Index (SIGI) in 2023, which is one of the official data sources for monitoring the SDG 5.1.1 indicator, and the publication of the 2024 SIGI regional report for Southeast Asia. Korea is also actively participating in the regular meetings of the GENDERNET to identify emerging global trends in gender equality discussions within the realm of development cooperation and to foster substantive dialogue among member states and international organizations on pertinent issues.

28. In the past five years, what actions has your country taken to increase the leadership, representation and participation of women in conflict prevention, resolution, peacebuilding, humanitarian action and crisis response, at decision-making levels in situations of armed and other conflicts, and in fragile or crisis settings?

■ Promoted and supported women's meaningful participation in peace processes and the implementation of peace agreements at all levels

a) Women's participation in decision-making related to the establishment of peace

With North Korea carrying out a series of military provocations and claiming that there are "two different countries," inter-Korean relations is facing a downturn. However, the ROK Government will respond vigorously to North Korea's provocations while making long-term and steady preparations for unification. Therefore, women's participation in this process is increasingly important to reflect a gender-sensitive perspective.

The Ministry of Unification (MOU) agrees with the need for balanced participation of women in decision-making related to the establishment of peace and has been increasing the proportion of women in key positions. As of 2024, 10 out of 32 directors at the Ministry's headquarters are women (31.3%). This is an increase from 23.3% in 2018, and the achievements of the Ministry exceed the target ratio set for central government agencies of the Republic of Korea. To prepare for unification, the Ministry holds a social dialogue in which people from different backgrounds discuss unification and North Korea policy so that the government can incorporate their voices into its policies. During the social dialogue, more than 50% of the participants were women. To ensure that the Korean people have a better understanding of unification, the ROK Government provides capacity building sessions for specialized lecturers on unification education. Of all the lecturers attending the capacity building session, more than 60% were women. Among the members of the Unification Education Committee who live in and out of Korea to promote unification education to strengthen our people's will and capacity for unification, 29% of all members were women in 2019, and this proportion has gradually increased to 35% in 2023. In addition, 45% of the members of the Youth Advisory Committee, which was established in 2023 to reflect the views of the youth on unification, were women. Furthermore, the Government will continue

to provide support in various ways to promote women's participation in the process of preparing for peaceful unification on the basis of a liberal democratic system.

b) Establishment and operation of UN Women Centre of Excellence for Gender Equality

In 2020, commemorating the 25th anniversary of the Beijing Platform for Action and the 20th anniversary of UN Security Council Resolution 1325, the ROK Government publicly affirmed its commitment to actively participate in global efforts towards realizing gender equality. To leap forward as a hub for gender equality networks in Asia, the ROK Government pursued the establishment of a specialized UN Women center. As a result, the UN Women Centre of Excellence for Gender Equality was established in Seoul, Korea, in 2022, with the objective of building networks and partnerships across Asia to advance the agendas of gender equality, peace, and development. The Centre commenced full operations in 2023.

In addition, the Ministry of Gender Equality and Family serves as the lead ministry for the WPS agenda within the Korea-NATO Individually Tailored Partnership Programme (ITPP) and collaborates with the Ministry of National Defense (MND) and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) to integrate gender-sensitive perspectives into the defense and security sectors. Efforts are underway to exchange information and best practices, as well as to foster understanding for the advancement of the women, peace and security agenda.

■ Adopted gender-responsive approaches to the prevention and resolution of armed or other conflict

a) Gender impact assessment for policies in the areas of defense, foreign affairs, peace, and unification

In response to the adoption of UN Security Council Resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security in 2000, Korea formulated and implemented the Third National Action Plan (2021-2023). Efforts are made to broaden gender-sensitive approaches across policies concerning conflict prevention and peace initiatives. Gender Impact Assessments are conducted on new and amended laws in the fields of national defense, foreign affairs, peace, and unification, as well as for major policy projects. Projects identified for policy improvement through Gender

Impact Assessments are linked to that subject to Gender Responsive Budgeting, thereby establishing a system for ongoing management of improvement areas.

b) Integrated a gender perspective in the prevention and resolution of armed or other conflict through gender sensitivity training for UN Missions

The Ministry of National Defense (MND) has continuously increased the percentage of women dispatched for the United Nations Mission over time and conducted gender awareness training before and after dispatch. The proportion of UN peacekeeping women is 19.0% in the second half of 2023 and will be increased to 25% by 2028. The MND has raised gender equality awareness by conducting training on gender equality and sexual violence prevention, as well as integrated training regarding women, peace and security for troops deployed to Peacekeeping Operations (PKO), ensuring understanding of the differences in perceptions of disputes between men and women in conflict areas and analyzing gender inequality cases.

■ Developed, adopted and / or implemented a high impact National Action Plan on 1325

For further information, please refer to the response to question 27.

29. In the last five years, what actions has your country taken to enhance judicial and non-judicial accountability for violations of international humanitarian law and violations of the human rights of women and girls in situations of armed and other conflicts or humanitarian action and crisis response?

■ Taken measures to combat trafficking in women and children

The Investigation Bureau for Crimes Against Women and Children is established in key prosecutors' offices nationwide, with dedicated prosecutors assigned to handle relevant cases in all 60 prosecutors' offices. These measures ensure dedicated investigation and prosecution of crimes with sexual purposes, including human trafficking, targeting socially vulnerable groups including women and children, as outlined in laws such as the Act on the Punishment of Arrangement of Commercial Sex Acts, thereby providing protection and support for the victims involved.

Additionally, the enforcement of the Act on Prevention of Human Trafficking and Protection of Victim in January 2023 established legal provisions for the protection and support of human trafficking victims, including measures such as the notification of the indicators in March 2023 for identifying and protecting victims of human trafficking.

In July 2023, prosecutors implemented comprehensive measures to close any gap in victim protection throughout the entire procedure of investigations and trials, such as transfer and disposition, involving crimes like human trafficking. These measures include providing active support for medical bills and emergency living costs. In accordance with Article 11 of the Act on Prevention of Human Trafficking and Protection of Victims and Article 5 of its Enforcement Decree, annual training on victim identification related to crimes such as human trafficking is conducted for personnel involved in investigating and trying human trafficking crimes and indicators for identifying and protecting human trafficking victims (Notification no. 2023-13 by the MOGEF) are being utilized. These intensive efforts aim to continuously enhance capabilities in responding to human trafficking crimes and uphold victims' human rights throughout the investigation process for crimes such human trafficking.

Moving forward, prosecutors, particularly the divisions exclusively dedicated to aggravated crimes in all 60 prosecutors' offices nationwide, will maintain close collaboration with the police from the onset of crimes and make utmost efforts in cracking down human trafficking offenders by ensuring meticulous investigation and comprehensive protection and support for victims.

30. **In the last five years, what actions has your country taken to eliminate discrimination against and violations of the rights of the girl child, including adolescent girls?**

■ **Taken measures to combat discriminatory social norms and practices and increased awareness of the needs and potential of girl children**

For further information, please refer to the response to questions 5 and 11.

■ **Strengthened girls' access to quality education, skills development, and training**

The Ministry of Education (MOE) guarantees access to education without discrimination on the basis of gender, religion, belief, race, social status, economic status, or physical condition, and provides six years of compulsory primary education and three years of compulsory lower secondary education to ensure the right to education based on individual ability and aptitude. As of 2019, public education expenditure per student by education level in Korea was USD 13,341 (OECD average USD 9,923) for primary education and USD 17,078 (OECD average USD 11,400) for secondary education, and the ratio of public education expenditure to GDP was 3.74% for primary, secondary, post-secondary non-tertiary education (OECD average 3.44%), and the ratio of total government expenditure to total government expenditure by education level was 10.2% for primary, secondary, post-secondary non-tertiary education (OECD average 7.8%). Additionally, the enrollment rates by education level and by gender as of 2022 were: 98.5% of enrollment in primary school with 98.5% for males and 98.5% for females; 98.2% of enrollment in middle school with 98.2% for males and 98.2% for females; 94.5% of enrollment in high school with 94.9% for males and 94.2% for females; and 71.9% of enrollment in higher education with 70.0% for males and 73.8% for females. The ROK Government has established and implemented educational policies to promote gender equality awareness and practical skills, such as the development of skills in physical education and science and technology, where women are relatively underrepresented; educational measures to support career choices that break away from gender stereotypes; and measures to create amenities and educational environments that take gender characteristics into consideration.

■ **Implemented policies and programmes to eliminate violence against girls, including physical and sexual violence and harmful practices**

To protect children and youth from sex offenses and prevent sexual offenders from reoffending, the ROK Government has implemented the “Sex Offender Personal Information Disclosure and Notification System” to sternly combat sex offenses. In accordance with the Act on the Protection of Children and Youth against Sex Offenses, the personal information of sex offenders who have received a disclosure and notification order from the court is disclosed online, and when a sex offense occurs in an area or a sex offender moves into or out of an area, residents responsible for protecting children and youth under the age of 19, as well as related child and youth organizations, are notified by mail. In addition, to protect children and youth from sex offenders, the “Sex Offender Employment Restriction System” is being enforced to proactively block sex offenders’ accessibility to organizations related to children and youth, etc. Courts issue employment restriction orders for up to 10 years upon adjudication of the case, and the government, in collaboration with relevant ministries, conducts joint inspections and verification of employment at child- and youth-related organizations at least once a year. Moreover, the ROK Government operates the “Mandatory Reporting of Sex Offenses System,” which requires personnel working in child- and youth-related organizations to promptly report any occurrence of sex offenses against children and youth to investigative agencies upon becoming aware of such facts in the course of their duties. Training on mandatory reporting of sex offenses against children and youth is also provided to personnel at relevant institutions.

The Support Facility for Youth Victims of Sex Trafficking (13 locations) provides systematic support for youth victims of sex trafficking, including room and board, counseling, medical and legal assistance, educational guidance, and vocational training to discourage them from re-entering the sex trade and support their healthy social reintegration. Meanwhile, the Support Center for Children and Youth Victims of Sexual Exploitation (17 locations) offers comprehensive services including emergency rescue, counseling, treatment and recovery, and support for self-reliance and self-sufficiency, thus also strengthening the prevention of sexual exploitation. Furthermore, the operation of the Sexuality Education Center for Youth (57 locations) provides a permanent space for sexuality education where children and youth can engage in self-directed learning using various tools and media, supporting the establishment of healthy sexual values among them.

Environmental conservation, protection and rehabilitation

31. In the past five years, what actions has your country taken to integrate gender perspectives and concerns into environmental policies, including climate change adaptation and mitigation, biodiversity conservation and land degradation?

■ Strengthened evidence and/or raised awareness about gender-specific environmental and health hazards

Women experience physiological changes during pregnancy, such as decreased digestive function and increased breathing rate, which can lead to higher concentrations of environmentally hazardous substances in the body. The fetus receives not only nutrition necessary for growth and development through the mother's placenta but also environmentally hazardous substances and is particularly vulnerable to exposure to environmentally hazardous substances because its organs and immune system are not fully developed.

In this regard, in 2015, the Ministry of Environment launched the "Korean CHildren's ENvironmental health Study (Ko-CHENS)" to identify the causal relationship between environmental exposures and diseases through a long-term follow-up on exposures to environmentally hazardous factors and health impacts from prenatal period to adolescence, and recruited about 70,000 pregnant women for the study by 2021. Surveys on childbirth information and indoor–outdoor environments, etc. were conducted on these women, and their biological samples (blood and urine) were collected and analyzed for follow-up purposes. Additionally, annual follow-up studies have been carried out on their children.

The National Environmental Health Specimen Bank was opened in 2023 and has since operated to stably store biological samples collected in the Korean CHildren's ENvironmental health Study. Moreover, in 2024, guidelines for reducing exposure to environmentally hazardous factors during pregnancy (Practical Guide for Environmental Health in Daily Life (Pregnant Women)) were distributed to guide the public on how to practice environmental health in daily life.

32. In the past five years, what actions has your country taken to integrate gender perspectives into policies and programmes for disaster risk reduction and building environmental and climate resilience?

■ Promoted access of women in situations of disaster to services such as relief payments, disaster insurance and compensation

Under Article 4-2 of the Disaster Relief Act (Usage, etc. of Temporary Residential Facilities), relief agencies may use any of the facilities of hospital-level medical institutions as temporary residential facilities to relieve victims of disasters, etc. whose residential facilities are lost or rendered virtually inhabitable as a result of disasters for the relief of the vulnerable in need of relief support including pregnant women, persons with severe disability, the elderly, and others. As the elderly, infants, children, pregnant women, and others are vulnerable to the communal living in temporary residential facilities, they are first identified, and checked for their current health, provided with necessary areas and goods for relief, such as sanitary pads for women. Separate resting areas for the vulnerable, including play areas for children, are established, and they are allocated areas near basic facilities such as toilets, washrooms, and others.

■ Introduced or strengthened and implemented gender-responsive laws and policies related to disaster risk reduction and building climate and environmental resilience

Below is a list of laws that have been amended to consider “gender responsiveness,” aimed at enhancing women’s engagement in the phases of disaster management, by ensuring gender considerations in the appointment of committee members among statutes related to disaster risk reduction.

-Enforcement Decree of the Framework Act on the Management of Disasters and Safety

Article 10 (Organization and Operation of Working Committees)

Article 12-3 (Organization and Operation of Central Public-Private Cooperative Committee)

Article 43-11 (Organization and Operation of Safety Standards Deliberative Committee)

-Enforcement Decree of the Disaster Relief Act

Article 4-3 (Central Psychological Support Group)

-Enforcement Decree of the Elevator Facilities Safety Management Act

Article 39 (Judgement Committee on Accident Investigation)

- Special Act on Services to Prevent Dangers Resulting from Natural Disasters and Measures for Migration

Article 3 (Central Deliberating Committee)

-Enforcement Decree of the Act on the Preparation for Earthquakes and Volcanic Eruptions

Article 8-4 (Earthquake and Volcano Disasters Prevention Policy Committee)

-Enforcement Decree of the Storm and Flood Insurance Act

Article 5 (Committee for Deliberation on Storm and Flood Insurance)

Section Four: National institutions and processes

33. Please describe your country's national strategy or action plan for gender equality, including its name, the period it covers, its priority, funding and alignment with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, including the targets under SDG 5.

The ROK Government has established a legal and institutional framework for gender equality through the First (1998-2002), Second (2003-2007), Third (2008-2012), and Fourth (2013-2017) Master Plans for Women's Policy.

In 2015, the Framework Act on Women's Development was wholly amended as the Framework Act on Gender Equality (enforced from July 1, 2015), and the Fourth Master Plan for Women's Policy (2013-2017) was revised and supplemented to establish the First Master Plan for Gender Equality Policy (2015-2017). In the First Master Plan for Gender Equality Policy, the dissemination of gender equality culture and work-life balance were set as the top policy priorities. The Second Master Plan for Gender Equality Policy (2018-2022) established core policies for each sector with the goal of fostering mature gender equality awareness, equality in women's employment and social participation, work-life balance, and promoting women's safety and health.

In 2023, the Third Master Plan for Gender Equality Policy (2023-2027) was formulated, setting out specific tasks for each area, including the following: creating a fair and gender-equal working environment; establishing a care safety net for all; supporting victims of violence and ensuring gender-responsive health rights; spreading a culture of gender equality where men and women can co-prosper; and strengthening the foundation for gender equality policies.

34. Please describe your country's system for tracking the proportion of the national budget that is invested in the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women (gender-responsive budgeting), including the approximate proportion of the national budget that is invested in this area.

a) Gender responsive budgeting system

The Gender Responsive Budgeting system is a mechanism that incorporates a gender-responsive perspective into the budgeting process, aiming to transform the allocation structure of budgets and policies in a direction towards gender equality. It was introduced through the enactment of the National Finance Act in late 2006 and was fully implemented starting from the fiscal year 2010 budget. In addition, in 2011, the Local Finance Act was amended to deploy the Gender Responsive Budgeting system in local governments, and from the fiscal year 2013, this system has been fully implemented across central administrative agencies and local governments.

In 2020, the Ministry of Economy and Finance (MOEF) (which oversees the Gender Responsive Budgeting system) enacted the Regulations for the Operation of the Gender Responsive Budgeting and Settlement Council (MOEF Decree, enforced from January 2021), thereby expanding and reorganizing the Permanent Consultative Body for Gender Responsive Budgeting and Settlement, previously under the MOEF and operated as a consultative body of relevant ministries (Ministry of the Interior and Safety and MOGEF, etc.), into the Gender Responsive Budgeting and Settlement Council. Additionally, a specialized evaluation committee was established within the Gender Responsive Budgeting and Settlement Council to strengthen the deliberation and evaluation functions for target projects.

In addition, efforts have been made to enhance the effectiveness of the Gender Responsive Budgeting system by formally introducing the performance evaluation system that was piloted for target projects in 2021, as a standard evaluation system from 2022. Moreover, the members of the Gender Responsive Budgeting and Settlement Council (comprising the specialized evaluation committee and working-level evaluation committee members) include civilian members such as professors in specialized fields, researchers from research institutes, and NGO activists, aiming to further strengthen governance with administrative agencies.

Meanwhile, in fiscal year 2024, the Gender Responsive Budget amounted to KRW 27 trillion and 697.1 billion, covering 283 specific projects submitted by 40 central administrative

agencies, which accounts for approximately 3.6% of the total national budget. Projects aimed at promoting gender equality and women's empowerment include creating an enabling social environment for work-life balance, spreading a culture of gender equality, providing incentives for employment creation, supporting the development of female scientists and engineers, promoting women's economic activities, fostering women's enterprises, offering childcare support for maternity protection, delivering Idolbom Childcare Service, and supporting workplace childcare centers.

b) ODA gender equality policy markers

The ROK Government has been tracking the ratio of its ODA invested in the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women since it joined the OECD DAC in 2010, through "Gender Equality Policy Markers" for all bilateral aid projects, excluding administrative costs. Gender Equality Policy Markers identify projects with "Principal Objectives" and "Significant Objectives," depending on the purpose and the target area of each project. Projects reported as those with "Principal Objectives" mainly aim to prevent social, economic, or political gender discrimination; compensate for past gender discrimination; strengthen gender equality or anti-discrimination policies, legislation, and institutions; support gender-related organizations and institutions; or eradicate violence against women. On the other hand, if the above gender equality elements are relatively essential for a project, but not the primary motivation for its implementation, it is reported as a project with "Significant Objectives." Over the past five years, the proportion of gender equality-related projects among all bilateral aid projects has consistently ranged from approximately 10% to 20% of total disbursements, with a reported figure of 17.4% in 2022.

<2018-2022 Gross Disbursements of Bilateral Aid Projects Relevant to Gender Equality>					
(unit: USD million)					
	Gross Disbursements				
	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022
Total bilateral aids	1,910.00	2,045.89	1,925.23	2,452.11	2,471.17
Projects reported as Principal Objectives (A)	67.88	75.13	60.58	151.47	89.86
Projects reported as	167.05	150.71	442.09	380.57	340.86

Significant Objectives (B)					
Total (A+B)	234.93	225.84	502.67	532.04	430.72
Ratio	12.3%	11%	26%	21.7%	17.4%

35. What formal mechanisms are in place for different stakeholders to participate in the implementation and monitoring of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development?

To prepare the national report for the 30th anniversary of the adoption of the Beijing Platform for Action (BPfA), various government ministries associated with the 12 critical areas of concern outlined in the BPfA participated in drafting the report. The report was developed through a public-private partnership, involving the collection of opinions on the draft national report jointly drawn up by the ministries concerned, as well as input from academics, civil society organizations, and relevant experts. This feedback was incorporated into the final version of the report, alongside other collaborative efforts.

In addition, UN Women Centre of Excellence for Gender Equality, established in Seoul, Republic of Korea, organized a workshop for relevant ministries involved in the drafting process as well as private sector stakeholders. The workshop aimed at enhancing understanding and improving the outcomes of preparing the national report commemorating the 30th anniversary of the adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action.

36. Please describe how stakeholders have contributed to the preparation of the present national report.

To prepare the national report on the occasion of the 30th anniversary of the adoption of the Beijing Platform for Action, various government ministries related to 12 critical areas of concern of the BPfA collaborated jointly to draft the report. Additionally, various stakeholders including academics, civil society organizations, and relevant experts contributed to the report by engaging in its review and other activities.

In addition, UN Women Centre of Excellence for Gender Equality, established in Seoul, Republic of Korea in 2022 through a partnership between Ministry of Gender Equality and Family (MOGEF) and UN Women, organized a workshop. This workshop aimed to provide information and facilitate discussions on the guidelines for comprehensive national-level reviews distributed by UN Women to stakeholders from diverse backgrounds, in order to address implementation progress and formulate strategies on the occasion of the 30th anniversary of the adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action. It contributed to sharing the significance of the adoption of the BPfA across Korea and the Asia-Pacific region.

37. Please describe your country's action plan and timeline for implementation of the recommendations of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (if a State party), or of the recommendations of the Universal Periodic Review or other United Nations human rights mechanisms that address gender inequality/discrimination against women.

a) Implementation of the UN Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women

The Republic of Korea, as a State party to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), underwent a consideration in February 2018 of its Eighth Periodic Report, which had been submitted in 2015. The Concluding Observations resulting from this consideration were adopted in March 2018.

To implement these Concluding Observations, relevant government ministries collaborated to establish an implementation plan for the recommendations. The plan was finalized through a resolution of the Gender Equality Council under the Prime Minister's office, which coordinates and deliberates on gender equality policies. Additionally, annual monitoring of implementation progress was conducted to ensure effective execution. In March 2020, a follow-up report on the Concluding Observations from the consideration of the Eighth Periodic Report was submitted.

In March 2022, the Republic of Korea submitted its Ninth Periodic Report, which provided a comprehensive overview of its policy achievements related to each Article of the Convention since the 2018 review. These achievements included the enactment of the Framework Act on Prevention of Violence against Women, strengthening the punishment of digital sex crimes and support for victims, improving women's representation in the public sector, creating a gender-equal labor market, and bolstering the job base for women. Details on the status of implementation of the recommendations from the review of the Eighth Periodic Report were also contained in the report. The CEDAW Committee considered the ROK's Ninth Periodic Report in May 2024 and adopted its concluding observation as the outcome of the consideration in June 2024.

b) Universal Periodic Review (UPR)

On January 26, 2023, the Republic of Korea formed a delegation involving 10 ministries, namely the Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Health and Welfare,

Ministry of Employment and Labor, and Ministry of Gender Equality and Family, to participate in the fourth Universal Periodic Review (UPR). During the dialogue, 50 recommendations were made by other Member States, focusing on issues such as combating violence against women and girls, promoting women's participation in all sectors including both public and private, and addressing gender inequality and discrimination against women, including closing the gender wage gap. The Republic of Korea accepted 48 out of the 50 recommendations. The ROK Government plans to review the implementation progress of those recommendations by drafting the mid-term report of the fourth UPR.

Section Five: Data and statistics

38. **What are the most important areas in which your country has made most progress over the past five years when it comes to gender statistics at the national level?**

■ **Re-processed existing data (e.g., censuses and surveys) to produce more disaggregated and/or new gender statistics**

To enhance gender-sensitive improvements in nationally approved statistics, the MOGEF is conducting reviews of newly approved national statistics with the aim to identify areas needing improvement for gender equality policy formulation and evaluation, and to derive improvement suggestions accordingly. Proposed ideas for improvement are communicated to the statistics service agencies responsible for producing these statistics for their consideration and incorporation. As of November 2023, among newly approved statistics from 2012 to 2021, 44 types of survey items have been enhanced, five new items have been added, and 37 types of statistics disaggregated by gender in results tables have been improved.

<Degree of Incorporation of Recommended Gender-responsive Improvements in Newly Approved Statistics (2012-2021)>

(Unit: Type (Case), %)

Classification	Improvement in survey items	Addition of new items	Improvement in gender disaggregation in results tables
Improvement request (A)	144 (258)	20 (27)	165 (3,533)
Acceptance (B)	97 (149)	18 (27)	118 (1,612)
Incorporation (C)	44 (59)	5 (6)	37 (429)
Improvement request to acceptance ratio (B/A×100)	67.4	90.0	71.5

Improvement request to incorporation Ratio (C/A×100)	30.6	25.0	22.4
Acceptance to incorporation ratio (C/B×100)	45.4	27.8	31.4

* Acceptance includes partial acceptance.

* The number of incorporated improvement types (cases) refers to the number of improvement types incorporated to survey tables and result tables approved and changed in the statistical policy management system of Statistics Korea by November 15, 2023.

Moreover, since 2016, continuous efforts have been made to monitor and identify improvement suggestions for sector-specific approved statistics, which are then communicated to statistics service agencies for enhancements. In 2022, proposals were put forward to produce gender statistics that address issues from a gender equality standpoint, such as gender-based occupational segregation, STEM fields, wealth disparities, and platform workers.

<Areas of Gender-Responsive Monitoring of Nationally Approved Statistics>

Year	Area of monitoring
2016	Health and welfare
2017	Education and culture
2018	ICT, safety, and violence
2019	Business management
2020	Social survey
2021	Labor
2022	Gender-based occupational segregation, STEM, etc.

■ Engaged in capacity building to strengthen the use of gender statistics (e.g., trainings, statistical appreciation seminars)

To build robust gender-responsive statistics, it is essential for statistics producers to focus on developing and producing statistics sensitive to gender considerations, and equally important for users to better understand the significance and application of gender-responsive statistics. In response, the MOGEF developed the Gender Responsive Statistics Education Program and

utilized it for educational purposes. In 2019, a foundational course program titled “Understanding Gender-Sensitive Statistics” was developed, which covered methods for comprehending issues from a gender perspective using statistics and integrating a gender perspective into the collection and presentation of statistics, among other topics. Also, an advanced course program was developed specifically for the field of “Labor and violence,” addressing gender-specific issues within these contexts and methods for improving gender statistics. Additionally, in 2021, another program was launched on the utilization of gender statistics in the field of “Decision-making.” The gender statistics training utilizing these foundational and advanced programs was initially conducted as a two-day course at the Statistics Training Institute (“KOSTAT”) in 2019, targeting public officials, students, and interested individuals. Subsequently, in 2021, the training was conducted in real-time via an online format, allowing for remote participation.

The KOSTAT has been providing training on Understanding of Gender-Sensitive Statistics as part of group courses from 2008 to 2020 to promote gender sensitivity among public officials and offer them opportunities to practice and discuss the process for producing gender-sensitive statistics. In addition, basic education courses for Statistics Korea employees have consistently covered subjects on gender sensitivity, gender equality, and gender-based violence prevention. Starting from 2021, group training courses have been scaled down due to the impact of Covid-19. Consequently, KOSTAT has launched e-learning courses for the “Understanding of Gender-Sensitive Statistics” program, aiming to actively enhance national gender statistics. Moreover, e-learning courses on “Prevention Education for Secondary Victimization of Women Victims in Public Institutions” and “Gender-based Violence Prevention Education” aim to promote gender etiquette and foster a safe and healthy environment for public officials. Furthermore, KOSTAT collaborated with UN SIAP (United Nations Statistical Institute for Asia and the Pacific) and UN WOMEN to conduct a gender-sensitive statistics course in the latter half of 2019, with the goal of strengthening the capacity of statistics officials in developing countries in Asia and the Pacific to develop SDG5 gender-sensitive indicators. After Covid-19 in 2023, the curriculum restarted with a training course “Gender Statistics for SDG Monitoring” for female officials in developing countries in Asia and the Pacific. In 2024, KOSTAT plans to run this course again in cooperation with KOICA. The course will cover the meaning and use of gender data, calculation of gender statistics for SDG monitoring, and utilization of gender data for policy purposes. It will be scheduled to operate every year as a regular course, in collaboration with UN SIAP, UN WOMEN, and KOICA.

39. **Over the next five years**, what are your country's priorities for strengthening national gender statistics?

■ **Re-processing of existing data (e.g., censuses and surveys) to produce more disaggregated and/or new gender statistics**

This is an area where the MOGEF makes efforts each year to improve national statistics from a gender perspective. The enhancement of gender responsiveness in national statistics is approached in two ways: firstly, through the inspection and review of newly approved statistics to recommend gender disaggregation where necessary for promoting gender equality policies; and secondly, by proposing new survey questions and modifying or supplementing existing ones. This approach has been consistently pursued by the MOGEF and Statistics Korea since signing a cooperation arrangement on statistical work in 2011.

■ **Greater utilization and/or improvement of administrative-based or alternative data sources to address gender data gaps**

To substantially enhance gender responsiveness in nationally approved statistics, the MOGEF has requested relevant agencies to review statistical data in fields such as health and welfare, education and culture, labor and land, urging them to enhance their gender responsiveness. The Ministry will work closely with statistics service agencies to generate gender-responsive statistics and aims to develop a diverse range of such statistics essential for supporting gender equality-related policies.

■ **Statistical capacity building of users to increase statistical appreciation on and use of gender statistics**

The MOGEF plans to integrate gender statistics into relevant training materials, considering the increasing production and use of gender statistics resulting from the implementation of Gender Impact Assessment and Gender Responsive Budgeting and Settlement systems, along

with the broader promotion of regional gender equality policies. By presenting examples of gender statistics production and utilization in policy cases related to Gender Impact Assessment, it is anticipated that this will increase appreciation for gender statistics among those responsible for policy implementation and contribute to building stronger capacities for practical implementation.

40. What gender-specific indicators has your country prioritized for monitoring progress on the SDGs?

The ROK Government established the 2030 national vision, K-SDGs in 2018, which encompasses all national policy areas, including social, economic, environmental, peace, and global partnership, to ensure the national implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) adopted by the United Nations. Subsequently, to faithfully adhere to international agreements related to sustainable development and promote national sustainable development, the ROK Government has been formulating plans every five years under a 20-year planning period. The Government established the Fourth Basic Plan for Sustainable Development (2021-2040) in 2020. This plan maintains the existing framework of 17 goals but extends the target year to 2040. Within the K-SDGs' 17 goals, there are 119 detailed targets, resulting in a total of 241 indicators. Among these, there are seven detailed targets and 14 indicators specifically related to gender equality. Key contents include the eradication of all forms of discrimination and human trafficking, the abolition of sexual exploitation, recognition of the value of care and domestic work, ensuring leadership opportunities for women, expanding access to technology for the empowerment of women, and promoting gender equality through the adoption of policies and laws.

41. Which data disaggregations are routinely provided by major surveys in your country?

Different surveys for social statistics have different classifications for common survey items on demographic/social characteristics, which makes it difficult to make comparisons between statistics. In particular, now that administrative data is used more widely, it has been frequently pointed out that it is hard to link and analyze statistics due to the inconsistent classifications between different statistics or between survey statistics and administrative data. Accordingly, in 2018, KOSTAT introduced measures to standardize common items in socio-demographic statistics surveys, aiming to facilitate statistical production and utilization through data linkage and integration. KOSTAT will implement standardization in gradual steps for existing statistics in a way that takes time series into account, while encouraging standardization to be implemented for new statistics when they are approved as national statistics.

The demographic items include socio-demographic characteristics such as name, gender, age (when the survey is conducted), age (birthday), marital status, and relationship with head of the household, while the geographic items are address (residential area), and the socioeconomic items are level of educational, academic background, field of study, criteria of income survey (before tax/after tax), monthly income bracket (minimum/maximum), level of economic activity, industry, occupation, working status, residence type, and type of occupancy.

Most of the items related to Question 41 are covered by the standardization measures, but there is no suggested standard classification for race/ethnicity, status of sojourn for immigrants, and disability.

Section Six: Conclusion and next steps

To enhance the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and accelerate the implementation of the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals, sustained attention and policy efforts are required from both public and private sectors to foster fair and gender-equal working and social environments.

First and foremost, efforts should focus on addressing gender discrimination in employment opportunities and workplace environments, while promoting expanded and balanced job participation resilient to structural shifts in industries, such as digital transformation. Additionally, support should be strengthened to promote work-life balance by improving the effectiveness of maternity and paternity protection systems, thereby enabling workers to have adequate time to take care of their children while fulfilling their professional commitments.

Moreover, a systematic approach is necessary to establish a childcare safety net, which includes enhancing accessibility to childcare services and expanding *Idolbom* Childcare Services. It is essential to elevate both the quantity and quality of childcare services to strengthen support for childcare and reinforce public care infrastructure. Likewise, a system should be established to improve and support the treatment related to care work, including enhancing the working conditions of care workers.

Furthermore, efforts should be made to strengthen responses to victimization of violence, including guaranteeing the legal and institutional rights of victims and expanding support to eradicate five major types of violence, such as power-based sex crimes and digital sex crimes. Also, to guarantee the right to gender-responsive health, there is a need to promote gender-sensitive analysis of health issues related to healthcare and medical services, as well as to enhance sexual and reproductive health and rights.

On the other hand, it is vital to cultivate a social environment where the younger generation can coexist and thrive by expanding opportunities for gender equality education. Addressing awareness gaps among youth and enhancing gender representation will help promote a culture of gender balance.

Finally, it is imperative to enhance the framework for advancing gender equality policies by strengthening the functions of the Gender Equality Council, among other things, and improve gender-responsive policies such as Gender Impact Assessment and Gender Responsive Budgeting. These endeavors are aimed at increasing the relevance and effectiveness of policies for the public, thereby solidifying the foundation of gender equality policies.

These challenges are not isolated to any single sector but are overlapping, cross-sectoral issues. Therefore, it will be paramount for relevant ministries and stakeholders to collaborate closely towards fostering a gender-equal society and achieving the empowerment of all women and girls.