

Delegation of the Republic of Korea

Position Paper for the General Assembly Second Committee

The topics before the General Assembly Second Committee (GA2) are: Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) for Sustainable Economic and Financial Development; and Disaster Risk Reduction. Having long-standing experience in both topics, the Republic of Korea believes that there can be high gain by addressing both topics. Therefore, the Republic of Korea is eager to cooperate with all fellow Member States on both topics.

I. Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) for Sustainable Economic and Financial Development

The possibilities concerning the access to and the use of the advantages of the internet is unequally distributed throughout the world: In Least Developed Countries, the average price per Megabit for an internet connection would be sometimes up to 150 Dollars and more – in some parts 1000 times more than in the Republic of Korea. More than four billion people around the world do not have access to the internet, and the rate of overall connectedness at the African continent is below 40 percent. This is especially a problem as ICTs can have a positive impact on development: As His Excellency, the Ambassador Oh Joon of the Permanent Mission of the Republic of Korea to the United Nations stated, “Technology has greatly shaped our society and is a central means for advancing all of the SDGs.”

The commitment to sustainable development of the Republic of Korea has officially started with the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development 1992 in Rio de Janeiro. Following this summit, the Republic of Korea passed a National Action Plan to implement the objectives of the *Agenda 21* as it has been passed in Rio de Janeiro. Adding up on this, in the year 2000, the Presidential National Commission on Sustainable Development (PNCSD) has been established. This resulted in the Presidential Declaration *A National Vision for Sustainable Development* in 2005, which highlighted the importance of sustainable development in a balance between economy, society, and environment. With the establishment of the *Framework Act on Sustainable Development*, the PNCSD became the National Commission on Sustainable Development (NCSD). The Republic of Korea is willing to share its experience as it moved from being a low-income country to a highly industrialized country within only a few years. As the host country for the United Nations Office for Sustainable Development, the Republic of Korea makes its experiences accessible by other countries without imposing what other countries should do. The Republic of Korea therefore actively works to establish mutual learning partnerships and sharing development lessons. As the Republic of Korea’s own development has been highly based on technological advancement, the Republic of Korea observes that technology must play a key role if a country wants to achieve sustainable development. The importance of ICTs for sustainable development has been recognized on an international level in General Assembly (GA) resolution 65/141 *Information and communications technologies for development*, which has been unanimously adopted. With the Science, Technology and Innovation (STI) for Better Life Initiative, the Republic of Korea aims to help developing countries to overcome the major stumbling blocks for their research and development capacities. This particular initiative aims to contribute to the goals 1, 3, 4, 5, 7, 9, 10, and 17 of the Sustainable Development Goals, adopted by the UN GA in Resolution 70/1 *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*. For the sake of an inclusive and economically beneficial implementation of new technologies, the Republic of Korea recognizes the need of a level-playing field for all technologic companies. It has therefore passed its *Framework Act on Informatization Promotion* back in 1987, establishing net neutrality and equal access for small companies as well as bigger ones to the internet. This helps development and the founding of small technology businesses, as every company has got the same opportunity to offer its services via the internet. The Republic of Korea is therefore in support of Human Rights Council (HRC) resolution 32/13 *The promotion, protection and enjoyment of human rights on the Internet* and its follow-up resolutions, as it reaffirms the open nature of the internet.

The Republic of Korea notes with concern that nowadays, net neutrality is under more pressure than ever before. With big international internet content providers being about to take over the majority of all sea cables worldwide, the development of ICT access in developing countries is at risk of leading to dangerous monopolies, harming the possibilities for self-sustaining economic development in usage of ICTs in developing countries. The United Nations have to react by implementing a robust strategy to ensure equal access to the internet all over the world. If the HRC resolution 32/13 is to bear any fruits, we cannot wait for private entities to establish internet access all by themselves. International guiding documents are needed for this strategy. The Republic of Korea therefore proposes an international

convention on net neutrality, building upon the experiences made with local net neutrality laws. Promoting the use of the internet furthermore requires the access to cheap and secure technology. Reusage of mobile phones plays a key role, as many of them could be reused by simply adding software. The Republic of Korea therefore proposes an international initiative in cooperation with technology providers to collect used phones in shops and public collection centres in order to refurbish and reuse them, building upon existing initiatives and implementing them within existing aid frameworks of the United Nations. Furthermore, in order to ensure secure and equal access to internet content as well as virtual financial transactions, international regulation is needed to secure compliance with standards of security, equal usage, and the fair use of data. The Republic of Korea is looking forward to work with all fellow Member States in the search for solutions for these issues.

II. Disaster Risk Reduction

Disaster has got many faces: Ranging from tsunamis via earthquakes and wildfires all the way to health crisis, disastrous situations can occur in many ways. The global Coronavirus Pandemic has once more shown the importance of preparation for all kinds of disasters. When infrastructure breaks down, when regular emergency services are overloaded, disaster plans come into action. Disaster plans are needed to save human lives and reduce material loss when disaster strikes, but the preparedness for disaster situations throughout the world is unequal. Countries lacking the resources to procure emergency vehicles and modern disaster response technology cannot prepare themselves as others do: “Often, the communities most affected by disasters are those less equipped to deal with them”, as United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres remarked in a video message concerning disaster risk reduction in developing countries. While a warning 24 hours before strong weather hits can reduce the damage by 30 percent, some of the Member States most vulnerable to natural disasters do not have sufficient early warning capacities.

The main framework the international community has got today when it comes to disaster risk reduction is the *Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015 – 2030*, as it has been adopted in GA resolution 69/283 in 2015. It lays down the objectives of current disaster risk reduction strategies and recommends the implementation of disaster risk reduction plans in all Member States. The Republic of Korea has been in support of this resolution as well as GA resolution 70/204 (2016) and its follow up resolutions that recognize the scale of action needed on the national level for the implementation of the *Sendai Framework*. The Republic of Korea, being threatened by minor earthquakes and flooding itself, has already been preparing for possible disasters for decades and is constantly updating its plans. As its global commitment, the Republic of Korea shares its experience and technology for disaster risk reduction with other member states within the United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Risk Reduction, which has now merged into the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNDRR). Caring about the wellbeing of its fellow Member States, the Republic of Korea offers its technology via the “Global DRR technology”-website, where emergency coordinators and authorities can get into contact with experts on specific subjects from the Republic of Korea. When it comes to disaster response, the Republic of Korea is a long-standing donor for UN Disaster Assessment and Coordination (UNDAC), making it possible for the emergency response teams and emergency preparedness missions to be deployed free of charge for the requesting countries. The Republic of Korea also supported GA resolution 46/182 *Strengthening of the coordination of humanitarian emergency assistance of the United Nations*, which has been unanimously adopted in 1991 and led to the establishment of the International Search and Rescue Advisory Group (INSARAG), which now acts as the secretariat for all kinds of international disaster response coordination.

Seeing the technological possibilities when it comes to disaster response, the Republic of Korea wants to highlight the need for adequate funding for disaster response technology and sufficient equipment for Member States to be able to prepare and react accordingly when disaster strikes. The installation of early warning technology in all Member States would be a great means to evade economic loss and poverty due to disasters. The Republic of Korea therefore advertises the further development and use of the “Global DRR technology”-website and encourages all fellow Member States to prepare before disaster strikes. It further encourages all fellow Member States to implement National Disaster Risk Reduction Plans as required by the *Sendai Framework* since with the ongoing climate crisis, even most unexpected disasters can occur in most Member States. Having all needed resources on standby, including early warning centres, is therefore imperative, and Member States that do not have the financial means necessary to do so need to be helped by the international community. The Republic of Korea sees the need for further action on the national level in order to save human lives and is willing to cooperate with all fellow Member States in order to be prepared before it is too late to react.