

## **Speech of the Minister of Labor and Employment**

107th International Labour Conference, Geneva, Switzerland

June 5, 2018

Mr. President, Ministers of the member states, workers' and employers' representatives, and distinguished delegates!

Since its launch in May last year, the Moon (Jae-in) administration has pursued "a society where labor is truly respected" as a national agenda, bringing a lot of changes to labor policies in Korea.

As the first female Minister of Employment and Labor of the Republic of Korea, I am pleased to introduce to you policy changes brought by the new government under the theme of "women at work".

When I worked at a bank in the past, I witnessed gender discrimination prevalent in the workplace, and I decided to start a labor movement.

As a labor activist, I took the lead in enacting the Equal Employment Opportunity Act of Korea and revising the law to include the "equal pay for work of equal value" principle.

However, even today, 30 years after establishment of the Act, women still have fewer opportunities to participate in the labor market, face discrimination in employment, promotion and pay, and are very vulnerable to violence and harassment at work as well as career interruptions not just in Korea, but in many other countries around the world.

Under the circumstances, I believe that the Director General's report on gender equality in the world of work and the agenda for discussion at the technical Committee, Ending Violence and Harassment in the World of Work, are very meaningful and could not have come at a more opportune time.

In this sense, the Korean government strongly supports the ILO's Women at Work Initiative and has taken various measures in this regard.

First, the government is eliminating factors behind women's career interruptions by laying a foundation for work-family balance.

As the Director General's report underlines the growth of "care economy" as a way to support women's entry into the labor market, we need more workplace childcare centers where working parents can willingly leave their children with trust.

Starting this year, the government is establishing public workplace daycare centers in residential areas and transportation hubs for low-income mothers and fathers at small and medium-sized enterprises.

Next year, the Government will further promote public workplace daycare centers through a four times increase in the budget to about 55 million dollars.

Second, the government is taking strict measures to root out discrimination and violence against women.

Recently, the Me Too movement has been growing in Korea, raising public awareness about sexual harassment and violence and spreading efforts to put an end to them.

Taking advantage of this movement, the Korean government has revised the law last year to take stronger action against gender discrimination in hiring and ensure that perpetrators of sexual harassment or sexual violence face heavy punishment, while victims receive stronger protection from secondary victimization.

Third, the Korean government is striving to improve the way people work and their work culture.

Koreans have worked the longest hours per year in the world.

In February this year, the National Assembly of the Republic of Korea passed a law to reduce the maximum weekly hours of work, paving the way for a better work-family balance.

Furthermore, the Government plans to give more people the right to request reduced working hours.

Currently, this right is limited to those who are pregnant or with childcare responsibilities, but the target will be expanded to include those who need to take care of their family members or those who need medical treatment due to illness.

The Government is also promoting flexible work arrangements to allow women to decide how many hours they work every day.

Finally, the Korean government is breaking the glass ceiling by increasing the number of women in senior positions.

Under the Moon administration, women account for 30 percent of the ministers, which is the highest ever in Korean history.

The Government also plans to gradually increase the share of female executives in public organizations to as high as 28 percent by 2022.

Of course, it is still not high enough, but as the Korean government has just taken the first step toward more women at work, I would like to ask for your continued support.

Mr. President and distinguished delegates of the workers', employers' and governments!

Gender equality in the world of work is a common task which requires cooperation among countries around the world and with international organizations.

I hope that this year's Conference will be a valuable opportunity for the ILO as well as workers, employers and governments from around the world to share experiences and wisdom, and develop important policy ideas for all.

For Korea's part, the Government will step up its efforts to achieve a "society where labor is truly respected" through continuous dialogue with workers and employers and will do its best to ratify the ILO fundamental Conventions.

Before I conclude, Korea, the only divided country in the world, after a long history of enmity and confrontation, is now at a watershed moment for a path toward peace and prosperity.

Following the two inter-Korean summits, the first historic talks between the heads of North Korea and the United States are just one week away.

I would like to ask for your support to ensure that this summit will serve as an opportunity to shift Korea from the status of an armistice to a complete end of war and from conflict to peace.

Thank you for your kind attention.