

Executive Summary

Introduction

In September 2015, the Member States of the United Nations committed themselves to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (herein the 2030 Agenda) containing 17 Goals and 169 Targets, most of which are to be achieved by 2030. The 2030 Agenda goes much further than the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), addressing the root causes of poverty and the universal need for sustainable development that works for all people. Encompassing universal, transformative, inclusive and integrated goals and targets that herald a historic turning point for our world, the 2030 Agenda is arguably the most comprehensive global agenda adopted since 1945.

This Executive Summary outlines the Voluntary National Review of the Republic of Korea, entitled ***From a Model of Development Success to a Vision for Sustainable Development*** (tentative title) (herein the Review), which analyses the enabling environments, prospects, challenges and opportunities for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (herein the SDGs) in the Republic of Korea (herein the ROK), and explains its best practices to share knowledge with all the stakeholders within and outside the ROK. The Review aims to help the Member States to cooperate with and learn from each other to successfully attain the SDGs.

Six main steps have been taken to produce this Review: i) reviewing national social, economic and environmental conditions against the SDGs; ii) analyzing goals with special attentions to trade-offs and synergies between goals and targets; iii) mapping and screening of governmental and non-governmental institutions to address the SDGs; iv) selecting relevant national indicators to the SDGs; v) collecting relevant data from both government and non-governmental organizations; and vi) identifying organizations and actors with potentials to contribute to achieving the SDGs in the three pillars of sustainability (economy, society, environment). Literature reviews and semi-structured interviews with key stakeholders of governmental, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations within and outside the ROK have been used to collect data.

Efforts toward Sustainable Development: prior to the adoption of the 2030 Agenda

The success of the ROK is not only about economic growth but also about the rapid reduction of poverty and inequality and the transition to democracy. Consistent efforts to further develop an inclusive society, which include the successful economic and social policy responses to the Asian Economic Crisis in 1997 and the Global Economic Crisis in 2008, are particularly notable features of the ROK's development experience.

The Korean government's commitment to sustainable development, which started with the Earth Summit in 1992, is a continuation of these consistent developmental efforts. After the Summit, the government established the National Action Plan to implement the Rio Agenda 21 in 1996 and the Presidential National Commission on Sustainable Development (PNCSD) in 2000. Since its inception, the PNCSD has developed sectoral strategies for sustainable development in various areas (energy, water, gender, social welfare, land, climate change, transportation, conflict management and ODA) and integrated these sectoral strategies into national policies through effective coordination and consensus-building processes among different line ministries. The Presidential Declaration of 2005, "A National Vision for Sustainable Development" the goal of which was to continue the growth of the ROK as "an advanced country while maintaining balance among economy, society and the environment," clearly resonates the integrative approach of the 2030 Agenda to sustainable development.

Since then, a series of laws and policies have been introduced to establish organizations to implement sustainable development related goals. They include the Standard Guideline for the Management and Support for Implementing Organization of Local Agenda 21(2004), and the Framework Act on Sustainable Development (FASD) (2007). The National Commission on Sustainable Development (herein the NCSD) has been established by the FASD, and the NCSD prepares a report every two years, which consolidates the results of the evaluation of sustainability, and publishes it after reporting to the President. The report is also submitted to the National Assembly.

Another feature of the ROK's developmental success is its sharing of knowledge and experience on development through international development cooperation. Focusing on disseminating what the ROK did rather than imposing what other countries should do, the ROK incorporates the lessons drawn from its own development experience into international development cooperation, and establishes a genuine partnership for mutual learning and sharing development lessons. In addition, as the host country of UN Office for Sustainable Development under UN DESA, the ROK is actively supporting UN member states in planning and implementing sustainable development strategies, notably through knowledge sharing, research, training, and partnership building.

Policies and Enabling Environment for Sustainable Development Goals

The government has continued its efforts to incorporate sustainable development concepts into its national and international development strategies since the early 1990s. However, as the framework and details of goals and targets of the SDGs were solidified, the necessity for building an institutional framework that can monitor and review the process of SDGs implementation from a broader perspective that fully integrates the three pillars of the SDGs has emerged. At present, relevant ministries to the implementation of the SDGs including the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA), Ministry of Environment (MOE), Statistics Korea, and the Office for Government Policy Coordination are making concerted efforts in further mainstreaming the SDGs into the government's policy.

Integrating the SDGs into National Framework

In January 2016, the Third National Basic Plan for Sustainable Development, which is updated every five years, was established by consultations with 26 government ministries and agencies. The Third Plan envisions a "harmonized development of the environment, society, and economy." It also outlines 14 strategic targets around four overarching goal areas including: healthy land; integrated and safe society; inclusive creative economy; and global prosperity. The government has also adopted the Road Map to Achieve National Greenhouse Gas Reduction Goals (herein the Road Map) in 2014 which contains detailed implementation plans to achieve the national greenhouse gas reduction goals set in 2009. Considering the impact of greenhouse gas on various aspects of development including climate change, the Road Map is expected to contribute to achieving many SDGs, particularly Goal 13.

Furthermore, the government has been implementing 140 policy goals within the framework of the 140 Government Policy and Governance Tasks (herein the Tasks). The Tasks include 42 economic development, 52 social development, 13 environment, and 23 governance associated goals. The government has developed policies to achieve these tasks in a way to create synergies with the SDGs.

In addition, the government has been implementing the Three Year Plan for Economic Innovation which aims at reforming the public sector, promoting a creative economy and boosting domestic demand. It is targeting SDGs that are mainly associated with social and economic development such as fair and efficient economy, growth through innovation, and the balance between exports and domestic consumption. Its expected outcomes associated with welfare and income of the youth, women and the elderly, economic participation, and fair and transparent business environment are particularly conducive to achieving the economic and social development related SDGs such as Goal 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 8, 10, and 17.

The government is paying special attention to the gender equality issue. The Framework Act on Gender Equality (2015) (herein the FAGE) and the Act on Promotion of Economic Activities of Career-Interrupted Women (2010) are in effect. In particular, the FAGE contains reinforced policies for gender equality such as implementing quota for administrative positions in public organizations and promoting participation of women in decision making process of public, political, and economic spheres.

Last but not least, the government has established a series of laws and policy proposals to respond to the ageing population in the ROK, particularly those addressing social and economic insecurity of people in various stages of their life course. They include the Plan for Ageing Society and Population (2015), the Framework Act on Low Fertility and Population Ageing (2014), and the Law for Promoting the Elderly Friendly Industries (2013).

The framework of existing government policies and plans, despite their direct and indirect relationship to the SDGs, was established before the adoption of SDGs and therefore needs to be fine-tuned accordingly to incorporate SDGs into the policies and plans. The government is making efforts to mainstream the SDGs so that the government policies can address integrated and indivisible SDGs goals and targets with full attention to trade-offs, synergies and complementarities among social, economic and environmental goals.

In that context, the Office for Government Policy Coordination (OGPC), MOFA, and MOE together with Statistics Korea that are playing a main role in mainstreaming the SDGs, have recently begun mapping exercises to identify existing laws, rules, regulations and policies conducive to achieving the SDGs. In parallel, the government will also identify the relevant targets of the SDGs to the national context. Particularly, Statistics Korea is conducting a SDG indicator analysis which will lay the foundation for the modification of national sustainable development indicators so as to ensure the availability of solid, disaggregated data for monitoring and evaluating the progress of SDG implementation in the ROK.

Engaging with the National Assembly

The National Assembly has been playing a significant role in shaping the political impetus for SDGs implementation in the ROK. In 2014, the special committee on sustainable development has been established with 18 members of the National Assembly. It proposed a position paper on the amendment of the FASD to accelerate the sustainable development. In the same year, the Korea National Assembly UN SDGs Forum (NSD) was founded by 43 members of the National Assembly collaboratively with the Korea Association for Supporting the SDGs for the UN (ASD), a NGO with special consultative status with the ECOSOC. The NSD has engaged in diverse congressional activities related to the SDGs including holding seven regular forums, launching two campaigns, and visiting the UN headquarter in New York. It is arguably the world's first consultative group of congressional leaders for the SDGs. Such efforts will be continued to develop practical and diverse global initiatives to implement the SDGs in the ROK.

Engaging with Various Stakeholders

Civil society organizations' active participation in designing and implementing policies for sustainable development is a result of synergy-making interactions between the government and civil society. Since the 1992 Rio Summit, civil society organizations and the government, in particular at the local level, have engaged with each other to establish local agendas and action for sustainable development. Concerted efforts of the government and civil society organizations have culminated in the establishment of the Local Sustainability Alliance of Korea (herein the LSAK) as a nation-wide network of Local Agenda 21 organizations (Local Councils for Sustainable Development) in 2000, and the Standard Guideline for the Management and Support for Implementing Organization of Local Agenda 21 (2004). In particular, the LSAK, which consists of about 200 organizations in 17 provinces as of 2016, has played a significant role in establishing local institutional and organizational frameworks for the SDGs in close collaboration with nine major local groups, including local governments, and addressing the SDG related goals and targets. The

LSAK continues its operations to further promote SDGs implementation in the local context.

The role of local governments remains crucial in ensuring coherent implementation of the SDGs across the country. For instance, the Seoul Metropolitan Government will organize International Forum on Urban Policy for the SDGs (2016) to discuss SDGs related to urban issues. The Forum will provide a platform to support policy actions for the implementation of the SDGs at the local government level. Combined with the policies and frameworks at the national level, such contributions from local governments will create synergies for a more inclusive and coherent SDGs implementation.

There are also a number of grassroots movements. Many organizations committed to making contributions to implementing the SDGs are holding meetings and consultations to strengthen their partnership with other stakeholders in enhancing public awareness of the SDGs and sharing the information and knowledge with the government. They include Korea Civil Society Forum on International Development Cooperation (KoFID), a network of Korean civil society organizations working to make development cooperation more effective, Korea NGO Council for Overseas Development Cooperation (KCOC), the UN Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN) Korea to name a few. Recognizing the importance of multi-stakeholder partnership in achieving SDGs, the Government of ROK will promote participation of various stakeholders, in particular, vulnerable groups such as the persons with disabilities, women, children, and the elderly.

The ROK's Contributions to the Revitalization of Global Partnership

To contribute to the revitalization of global partnerships to ensure the implementation of the SDGs, the ROK government established the Second Mid-term ODA Policy 2016 - 2020 (herein the Second Policy), which goes beyond the provision of specific means to meet the sectoral needs towards the integrated and inclusive approach to achieve the SDGs and enhance the effectiveness of development cooperation.

Integrated ODA for SDGs Implementation

The government has established a new decision making process to better align various development projects in a more coherent and concentrated manner. In accordance with the new principles and strategies laid out in the Second Policy, each ministry and agency in charge of ODA is requested to come up with annual ODA plans. In an effort to strengthen strategic cooperation between development cooperation agencies that are respectively in charge of grants and concessional loans projects, the government has established a consultative mechanism between Office for Government Policy Coordination (OGPC), MOFA, and Ministry of Strategy and Finance (MOSF) and government aid agencies such as Korea International Cooperation Agency (KOICA) and EXIM Bank.

In addition, to maximize the advantage of global partnerships through the strategic selection of partners and concentration of resources, the International Development Cooperation Committee, composed of the Prime Minister and Ministers of relevant ministries including MOFA and MOSF, established the Country Partnership Strategy for sustainable development of 24 prioritized countries.

Building a Robust Framework for ODA

In order to come up with new models for ODA programs, the government is examining its existing ODA programs by analyzing success cases to derive lessons that can be applied to different regions, situations, and various demands of development partners. In the meantime, the organizational structure of KOICA has been changed with increased manpower to enhance its project management and ODA program development capacity.

In order to guarantee systematic evaluation of ODA programs, the government has made it mandatory for

all national agencies for international development cooperation to undertake evaluation of implementation of projects twice a financial year, and has established a new mechanism to check the contribution of projects with regard to achieving SDGs. From this year, each ministry and agency carrying out various ODA projects are requested to specify the SDGs goals and targets that are relevant to the particular projects submitted. At least 70% of the projects submitted had close relevance to achieving SDGs. In addition, the Korean government will enhance the transparency of ODA by submitting comprehensive information on ODA projects in a timely manner to the International Aid Transparency Initiative (IATI) from 2016, with a view to promote effectiveness and predictability of development cooperation. It will also try to gradually expand coverage and quality of the ODA data.

Inclusive ODA Approach that Leaves No One Behind

In order to maximize synergies between diverse actors of both public and non-governmental sectors, the government has established the principle of “Inclusive ODA” and facilitated the participation of the private sector via the Academy Partnership Program, Business Partnership Program (BPP), Civil Society Partnership Program, and Creative Technology Solution. The BPP, for instance, deliberates on innovative solutions to development financing to utilize private financial resources and new inclusive business models, in collaboration with organizations such as the Federation of Korean Industries, and Korea Federation of Small and Medium Enterprises.

In order to raise public awareness of the SDGs, the government has been encouraging education institutions to include the contents addressing ODA and the SDGs in the textbooks for primary and secondary school students, carrying out nation-wide campaigns for the implementation of SDGs, and expanding funds for sending more youth to the project sites of international development cooperation.

While leaving no one behind is a key value for the Korean ODA, emphasis on humanitarian work is one of the pillars that constitute the ROK’s Inclusive ODA principle. The government puts “humanitarian diplomacy” at one of its top diplomatic agenda and has come up with the Strategy for Humanitarian Assistance in March 2015. Moreover, its budget for humanitarian assistance has doubled over the last four years.

Key initiatives for the SDGs

The Second Policy particularly emphasizes the efforts of Korean international development cooperation to address areas such as education, health, science and technology, and rural development where the ROK’s own experience can create comparative advantages.

The Better Life for Girls Initiative, announced by President Park Geun-hye at the UN Development Summit September 2015, focuses on girls’ education, health and profession and takes a gender-focused and goal-driven approach to empower girls and reinforce their position in society. By addressing the needs of the most vulnerable, the Initiative is expected to serve as the surest investment in securing a sustainable future.

The Safe Life for All Initiative is a manifestation of the ROK’s strong commitment to keeping with the goals of the Global Health Security Agenda and making this world safe and secure from infectious diseases. It aims to support the enhancement of health security partner countries to proactively prevent infectious diseases, detect them as early as possible, and respond rapidly to public health crises.

The Science, Technology and Innovation (STI) for Better Life Initiative is designed to help developing countries to overcome major stumbling blocks for their insufficient R&D expenditure and inadequate capacity of research institutes. Given the fact that STI constitutes a critical means for economic growth, the ROK aims to establish and develop an appropriate innovation system, by supporting science and

technology education, to strengthen the R&D capacity of developing countries.

The knowledge and experience sharing of Saemaul Undong draws a lesson from the ROK's unique rural development case in the 1970s. According to a recent OECD report, it was a multi-dimensional and multi-sectoral strategy that buffered large-scale migration from rural to urban areas and increasing rural-urban income gap during the time of industrialization. The ROK is committed to sharing the formula for the development of rural areas where more than three billion people live. In this regard, the Special High-Level Event on Saemaul Undong on the occasion of the Development Summit 2015 which was chaired by the ROK President herself and joined by heads of states and international organizations was a very meaningful occasion in translating the ROK's rural development experience into shared knowledge for all.

These initiatives address the most vulnerable through the intervention in key areas of sustainable development particularly the Goals 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, and 17. They have been formulated on the basis of the development experience of the ROK and its accumulated expertise, which is the basis of creating synergies between knowledge and resources.

Means of Implementation

ODA should remain as an important development resource in the SDGs era, especially for poor and vulnerable countries with special needs. As such, Korea will continue to increase its ODA. Korea's second mid-term ODA policy (2016-2020) states that the government will aim at increasing the total volume of ODA so that it reaches 0.2% of GNI by 2020. The current level is at 0.14%. Korea also supports the Addis Ababa Action Agenda (AAAA) which provides a comprehensive framework to maximize the potential of all development actors and resources for financing sustainable development. Also, Korea has been actively engaging in various initiatives and activities to promote collective efforts. In this regard, Korea is taking part in the Addis Tax Initiatives and it has continued to provide assistance to developing countries to modernize their tax administration system and build capacity.

Conclusion

The early and proactive engagement of the Korean government and civil society with sustainable development has created a favorable environment for building systems for the implementation of the SDGs. A series of laws and regulations and a variety of governmental and non-governmental organizations for attaining sustainable development have developed in a mutually reinforcing way, which have already begun addressing many of the SDGs. However, policy efforts of various governmental ministries and agencies to address sustainable development goals pose both opportunities and challenges.

The active participation of multi-stakeholders in the formulation of the SDGs in its early phase has produced a set of good conditions for inclusive and integrated approach to the SDGs. The encouragement and facilitation by the government for meaningful participation of civil society organizations and the active roles of local governments and their interactions with local civil society organizations in implementing SDGs will be particularly important in leaving no one behind over the next 15 years.

Reshaping international development cooperation strategy in line with the SDGs is also important. Through both bilateral and multilateral partnerships, the ROK's new strategy contributes to leaving no one behind by forging global partnerships for the SDGs. Its key initiatives for sharing knowledge and experience of the ROK such as the Better Life for Girls, Saemaul Undong for rural development, Scientific and Technological Innovation for Better Life and Safe Life for All also offer an innovative pathway to enhance the effectiveness of ODA in the SDGs period and beyond.

All these institutional and policy environments and conditions in the ROK have both opportunities and challenges for the implementation of the SDGs. The successful development of enabling environments for attaining the SDGs will be ultimately dependent upon the willingness and capacities of all the stakeholders to make inclusive and integrative approaches to the SDGs. The initial responses of the ROK are promising.