

(Unofficial Translation)

**Address by Prime Minister Chung Sye-kyun  
at the 31st Session of the United Nations General Assembly  
in Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic**

Mr. President,

Mr. Secretary-General and Distinguished Delegates,

Our global community has been besieged by a new surge of COVID-19 this winter.

The chance to participate in this Special Session of the United Nations General Assembly finds great meaning at a time when the need for close international cooperation is so urgent.

Over the past year, the rapid spread of the virus across national borders has disrupted everyday life around the world to the point of unprecedented crisis.

At the same time, we have learned the valuable lesson that this global crisis cannot be overcome through the efforts or will of any single country alone.

Peace and prosperity for oneself can only be secured in concert with the safety and welfare of one's neighbors.

Seventy-five years ago, the international community created the UN in order to safeguard the universal values of humanity. Now, once again, we have been called upon to demonstrate the power of solidarity and cooperation in this crucial moment.

The Korean people are working side by side as neighbors to overcome this unprecedented crisis. Each and every citizen has readily assumed the role of an active agent in disease control efforts.

Embracing the three main principles of openness, transparency, and democracy, the Korean government has actively communicated with citizens so as to encourage their voluntary participation.

We have also been swift to introduce such innovative measures as drive-through screening stations, residential treatment centers, and QR code-based entry log systems.

So long as our collective struggle with COVID-19 continues, Korea will do its utmost to share with the rest of the world its experiences in disease control and resulting expertise as the groundwork for global coexistence.

However, the most definite way to break free from the grave threat posed by COVID-19 lies in the development of effective vaccines and treatments.

Now, more than anything else, the whole world must redouble such collaborative efforts to avoid any further loss of even a single life.

To envision a resolution to this crisis that leaves no one behind, we must guarantee equitable access to vaccines and treatments, once available.

Korea is an active participant in the COVAX Facility and has committed to contributing 10 million USD towards providing developing countries with vaccines. In addition, Korea has joined global efforts to develop and distribute vaccines through its support of the International Vaccine Institute (IVI), which is headquartered in the ROK.

We will continue to tirelessly champion international cooperation geared towards the rapid development and equitable distribution of vaccines and treatments as essential public goods, accessible to all in this pandemic era.

The COVID-19 crisis has hit hardest the most vulnerable members of society, including women, children, the elderly, and the disabled. Developing countries have also suffered disproportionately.

To bolster the global COVID-19 response, the Korean government has extended a helping hand to countries in distress, with a focus on providing humanitarian assistance, strengthening public health capacity and healthcare systems, and responding to long-term socio-economic effects.

Such efforts are also crucial in the pursuit of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which aim to leave no one behind.

Korea will expand official development assistance (ODA) in the public health and medical sector and implement a ‘COVID-19 Response ODA Strategy’ that adapts the ROK’s model of disease control to the specific needs of respective partner countries. We hope to thereby contribute to both the international community’s struggle against the pandemic as well as the achievement of SDGs.

Excellencies, Distinguished Delegates,

Various nations' responses to the COVID-19 crisis now threaten to turn back humanity's range of perspective to the limited scope of decades past.

The closing of national borders and the contraction of global exchange brought about by disease control measures have exacerbated the impacts of the pandemic. Furthermore, the existing economic system, geared towards quantitative growth, is now widening inequality.

All over the world, voices calling for the transformation of these challenges into opportunities for better recovery are gaining ground.

In a proactive response that views the current crisis as a springboard for progress, the Korean government has presented the 'Korean New Deal,' which is based on the pillars of the Digital, Green, and Regional Balance New Deals.

I hope that Korea's new initiative may serve as an exemplar of post-COVID-19 development strategy. By combining innovative technologies with people-centered values, the hope is to promote an inclusive society of prosperity for all while pursuing the successful transition to an eco-friendly and low-carbon economy.

In particular, Korea will host the 2nd P4G Summit in Seoul next May and share the progress of its Korean New Deal with the international community. As such, Korea hopes to stand at the forefront of efforts to overcome COVID-19 and realize a future of sustainable prosperity.

COVID-19 has also underscored the need for multilateral cooperation at the regional level, which extends beyond the efforts of any single nation alone.

At the UN General Assembly this September, President Moon Jae-in proposed the launch of a ‘Northeast Asia Cooperation Initiative for Infectious Disease Control and Public Health’ comprising the nations of the region, including both South and North Korea.

I call on the international community to take heed and provide support for such efforts as these countries come together to safeguard lives and security as they pave the way for peace in Northeast Asia.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I look forward to our discussions today serving as a milestone in our quest to surmount this global crisis and foster hope for a bright future.

As a responsible member of the international community, Korea pledges to play its part as the world embarks on a collective journey to build back better.

Thank you.