

5th World Conference of Speakers of Parliament

Vienna, 6-8 September 2021

**The global response to the COVID-19 pandemic
challenges multilateralism's ability to deliver for the people.**

Delivered by H.E. Park Byeong-seug,

Speaker of the National Assembly of the Republic of Korea

Thank you, Chair.

Dear colleagues,

We face an unprecedented challenge caused by Covid-19. Even in this difficult time, Korea is trying to contain the virus without a single nation-wide lockdown, upholding the values of openness and transparency.

However, there is something to be desired about the response of the global community. Countries have closed borders. The multilateral system has not been able to function effectively, combined with issues of narrow national interests and protectionism.

We must learn from this crisis. We must turn this into an opportunity to rebuild the system of multilateral cooperation.

This is because the threat posed by Covid-19 and its variants continues to remind us that “No one is safe until everyone is safe.”

Today, I would like to share with you two points that I think are the most important in our response to the crisis in multilateralism.

First, countries large and small, developed and developing, should understand that we are inter-dependent and should work together based on universally acceptable norms of international law and principles of multilateralism.

The UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) has reclassified the Republic of Korea from a developing to a developed economy. Korea will build on its experience as a bridge connecting developed and developing countries to promote inclusive multilateral cooperation.

Second, we must step up efforts to strengthen solidarity and cooperation for the development of vaccines and treatments for Covid-19 under the principle of multilateralism.

The virus does not discriminate, but its social and economic fallout hits vulnerable groups the hardest. Therefore, we must bring together our infection control experiences, knowledge, and resources to address the shortage of vaccines and treatments.

In responding to humanity's health crisis, Korea will increase research and investment in vaccine development to become a global vaccine hub and utilize our drug-manufacturing capacity to expand the global vaccine supply.

Fellow parliamentary leaders,

Korea rose from the ruins of war more than 70 years ago, and managed to achieve both industrialization and democratization.

Our history is a testament to the significance of cooperation and support of the international community and expansion of multilateral trade.

Going forward, the Korean National Assembly will continue to play a bridging role in promoting the values of solidarity and cooperation.

Thank you for your attention.