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[item 11] Statement by Head of Delegations(ROK)

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Thank you Mr. Chairperson,

Honorable Director-General, fellow delegates, ladies and gentlemen,

It is my honor to speak to you on behalf of the Republic of Korea here at the 35<sup>th</sup> FAO Regional Conference for Asia and the Pacific. My sincere thanks to the Secretariat and to the government of Bhutan.

The COVID-19 crisis and extreme weather events pose a grave threat to global food supply and demand. Unlike in previous crises, we have sufficient food. Nevertheless, 381 million people in Asia are still undernourished. The deadly virus is hitting the vulnerable and making their situation even worse.

Korea has also been impacted by COVID-19 from a very early stage.

As a food importer, Korea has been keeping a close eye on the global supply chain, as international logistics slowed down and food export restrictions were imposed by some countries.

Also, as people refrain from face-to-face meetings and physical contact, working from home has become more common. Shopping

online has grown too, as we spend more time at home.

To minimize the economic impact of COVID-19, the Korean government recently announced a “Korean New Deal”, a package of policies and projects to overcome the crisis. We plan to ensure food for people and to restore the livelihood of farmers, fishermen, and rural people.

Korea will increase its domestic production capacity. In particular, we will focus on wheat and soybeans. Consumption is high, but production is insufficient. Korea sees smart farms and smart aquaculture as very promising sectors, which harness the power of ICT in production. We will focus on supporting such projects, not only in Korea but also in neighboring countries.

In order to improve the livelihood of people in the Asia-Pacific region, digital technology can help. Korea plans to build demonstration greenhouses and set up information management systems in neighboring countries. This will help build regional resilience to climate change.

Expanding online wholesale trade to simplify the distribution channel is another example of linking ICT with the food supply system. We want to participate in and share our experience with the International Platform for Digital Food and Agriculture.

In order to enhance the sustainability of coastal fishing, Korea will restore the marine resource ecosystem and reorganize fishery

management from the current system of input control to one that controls the output of total allowable catch.

Furthermore, the Korean government and FAO are to hold the 15th World Forestry Congress in May 2021. Its theme is “Building a green, healthy and resilient future with forests” and it will serve as a forum for discussions on improving human health through forests. I look forward to the active participation of all your nations.

As Korea was once helped, we now share our rural development experience with FAO member countries. Now Korea is sharing its experience of containing the spread of the Coronavirus, ensuring the provision of medical equipment and supplies, and supporting initiatives such as the COVID-19 Vaccine Global Access Facility. Close cooperation and proactive information exchange are needed for this global health crisis not to develop into a food crisis.

A major challenge ahead will be to figure out how to rebuild damaged economies and make the world free and open again. I hope the current crisis can provide momentum for innovation and an opportunity for expanding the scope of global cooperation.

Thank you very much.