**Opening Remarks**

**by Seong Deok YUN, Ambassador,**

**Permanent Representative of the Republic of Korea**

**For the OHCHR Expert Meeting on Enhancing Capacity-Building for Local Governments to Incorporate Human Rights into All Their Work**

**(Monday, 28 August 2023, 10:00-10:20)**

Thank you.

Distinguished Colleagues,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am honored and delighted to be participating in the opening session of the OHCHR expert meeting today. I express my gratitude to the distinguished panelists from States, local governments, academia and international human rights mechanisms who are here today to share their valuable insights on this pertinent and important topic. I would also like to thank the President of the Human Rights Council, Ambassador Vaclav Balek, for his warm and enlightening message, and also looking forward to the opening remarks of the Deputy High Commissioner for Human Rights, Ms. Al-Nashif. Additionally, I would like to thank delegations and stakeholders for taking time to join us here today.

Distinguished Colleagues,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me start by stating the obvious: local governments, providing public services that address local needs and priorities and given its proximity to individuals, have an important role to play in the protection, promotion and realization of human rights. While recognizing that primary responsibility for the protection and promotion of human rights rests upon States represented by central governments, realization of human rights cannot be guaranteed without the crucial role of local governments in implementing human rights commitments through concrete actions.

This is why it is important to incorporate human rights into all the work of local governments, and strive to achieve a whole-of-government approach to ensure human rights policy coherence across all sectors and levels of government. Local governments should also be able to have a larger role in the international human rights framework as a whole, in particular by strengthening their engagement with international human rights mechanisms. In this vein, we welcome the growth of promising initiatives at local government level to promote and protect human rights, including the implementation of dedicated policies and programs for human rights and via increased engagement with international mechanisms.

Distinguished Colleagues,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Despite such a need for local governments to integrate human rights in their work and better engage with international human rights mechanisms, local governments continue to face significant challenges in achieving these objectives. Some of these challenges stem from the insufficient capacity of the local governments themselves, or lack of awareness amongst public officials. Other difficulties are derived from more structural reasons, such as lack of coordination amongst various levels of government, and insufficient provision of financial resources. Taking into account such a multifaceted nature of this problem, it is imperative for all relevant actors at regional, national and international levels collaborate effectively to strengthen the capacity of local governments to fulfil their human rights roles.

It is in this spirit that the Human Rights Council, at its 51st Session, adopted the Resolution on Local Government and Human Rights with a focus on strengthened capacity-building of local governments, and gave a mandate to the OHCHR to host the Expert Meeting. Korea, along with a cross-regional core group of Romania, Chile and Egypt, has been leading this initiative, and is delighted that a diverse group of panelists has been formed to provide diverse, yet enlightening perspectives toward a multi-dimensional solution to better equip local governments for human rights roles. We hope that the discussions today provides us with more concrete insight on the ways the Human Rights Council, and the international community as a whole, can contribute to helping local governments better discharge their human rights responsibilities and be a more effective player in the international human rights framework.

Thank you.

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