The people of Gwangju City have been active in promoting democracy and justice in the late 20th century of South Korea. With the nation's democratic structures began to be widely established at the end of the century, the people of Gwangju turned their focus towards advancing human rights and peace. A significant step in this journey was the enactment of the 'Ordinance of Establishing Gwangju as the City of Democracy, Human Rights, and Peace' in 2007, which saw refinements in 2009.

The Gwangju Human Rights Charter of 2012 and the regularly reviewed HR Basic Plan showcase our dedication. Moreover, we've established robust systems to champion human rights, including other measures such as:

* A citizen council for HR protection and promotion.
* Mandatory human rights impact reviews for new ordinances.
* Human rights indicators.

In 2010, the city hall inaugurated the Human Rights Office, which stands as the largest and most active of its kind in Korea and possibly the whole East Asian region.

The Gwangju Guiding Principle for a Human Rights City, formulated in 2014, emphasizes human rights training and education as a cornerstone for human rights cities. Mandated Human Rights Education for local government officials and social service organization employees not only contributing to the protection and promotion of human rights. It also fosters cooperation between the local government, civil society, and academia since the courses provide opportunities for local government officials to meet with civil society and academia.

I consider the policy on human rights education and training provided to teachers and students is also crucial, nurturing a culture of respect and understanding not only for teachers but also for the young people, who will be the future of the human rights city of Gwangju. Moreover, our World Human Rights City Forum (WHRCF) has been an avenue where we exchange and learn from global local governments, enriching our human rights journey.

However, challenges persist. One primary concern is the risk of our efforts becoming mere bureaucratic procedures, lacking the zeal and vigor from their inception. The attention of the leaders of the community and the administration has become weakened toward the issue of further developing Gwangju as a human rights city. Consequently, the investment on human rights has been reduced or at least stagnant. I believe three strategies can overcome this challenge:

1. Strengthen Partnerships: Engaging local human rights civil society organizations, academic institutions, and the media will ensure our human rights endeavors remain vibrant and effective.
2. International Collaboration: Our WHRCF, since 2011, has been a reservoir of inspiration. Our international network with leaders of local governments and human rights experts has been invaluable to us.
3. Leverage the OHCHR: The OHCHR’s involvement has amplified our efforts for the human rights city movement at the local level. The OHCHR should harness the UN's influence and stature to bolster this new agenda at both global and local levels. In this regard, the current expert workshop is another important step in making the most of the influence and prestige of the UN.