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Session 2

Remarks by Ambassador KIM Sung-Hwan of the Republic of Korea

Discussion on Promoting Respect for Cultural and Religious Diversity

Thank you, Mr./Ms. Moderator.

Since this is my first time taking the floor, I would like to begin by thanking the Government of the State of Israel and the OSCE Secretariat whose extensive efforts given the short amount of time available in preparing, organizing and hosting this joint annual seminar have clearly paid off.

I would also like to express my sincere appreciation to the Spanish Chairmanship for its endeavors to engage more the Partners for Co-operation in the OSCE's work and activities by elevating our participation in the decision-making as well as informal subsidiary bodies of the organization. I welcome in particular the Ministerial Declaration on the OSCE Partners for Co-operation adopted in Madrid this November. This declaration reflects the Participating States' support for deepening relations with and increasing participation by Partners for Co-Operation to promote OSCE norms, principles and commitments in their respective regions. As an Asian Partner for Co-operation, the Republic of Korea will make every effort to further the objectives outlined therein. I also acknowledge the PC Decision on establishing the Partnership Fund adopted on the margin of the Ministerial Council.

Mr./Ms. Moderator,

My delegation believes that the Decision No.10/07 "Tolerance and Non-Discrimination: Promoting Mutual Respect and Understanding" adopted in Madrid is a timely reminder of the value of cultural and religious diversity as a source of mutual enrichment of societies and underlines the importance of integration with respect for cultural and religious diversity as a key element of mutual respect and understanding.

Korean society is a unique one in which a variety of religions—Buddhism, numerous Christian faiths, Confucianism and Islams—have flourished alongside each other and respect for cultural and religious diversity has enjoyed a long tradition. From Chosun Dynasty philosophers who taught that all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and human rights to modern efforts to promulgate and codify such beliefs, Korea has recognized the need to confront intolerance, stereotyping and misunderstanding.

Korean society is also one that stresses the role of education in fostering understanding and improving people's lives. Recognizing this, my Government has increased its efforts to eliminate intolerance and promote understanding through education and public-awareness campaigns. Starting in 2009, human rights education as a topic of study in a wide range of school subjects will be introduced into primary and middle school curricula in a comprehensive and systematic manner. The National Police Agency is also providing training on the prevention of human rights violations to its officers in order to maintain high standards of conduct and accountability when dealing with citizens, residents and visitors alike.

In an effort to assist children of married migrants, the Educational Plan for Children from Multicultural Families was initiated in 2006 to help multicultural families adjust to life in Korea. The Korean Government allows children of illegal immigrants to attend school regardless of the status of their parents. As a result of the Ministry of Education's leading role in instructing local Offices of Education to follow this practice, the enrolment rate of migrant children in primary and secondary schools has increased dramatically.

The Ministry of Education has also tapped the expertise of academia to review progress in promoting the role of education as a means of combating intolerance and misunderstanding. Having already developed textbooks for multicultural education and consultative materials at the request of the Ministry of Education, the College of Education at Seoul National University announced plans earlier this year to establish Korea's first institution in charge of addressing the educational needs of children from multicultural families. The center will carry out studies on education models and programs, evaluate curricula and develop instructional materials aimed at preserving respect for diversity while facilitating the integration of multicultural families into Korean

daily life. I believe that efforts such as these and partnerships between civil society and government will be vital to the long term success of Korea's efforts to combat intolerance, stereotyping and misunderstanding in a rapidly evolving world.

In conclusion, I hope that today's discussion will lead to constructive suggestions that help OSCE participating States and Partners for Co-operation in their efforts to promote respect for cultural and religious diversity in their respective regions. Thank you for your attention.