

APF members, delegations from NGOs, governments and distinguished guests.

Coming November, it will be 6 years since the founding of the National Human Rights Commission of Korea. About this time last year, I accepted the position of this Commission's chairperson, in the midst of criticism which placed the role, indeed the very necessity of the existence of the organization in question. Thus, for the past year I have worked to stabilize the organization while at the same time placing emphasis on strengthening the Commission through effective international cooperation. I was elected as APF chairperson early this year due to unexpected circumstances, and was also elected as ICC Deputy Chairperson, as which I did my best to strengthen the role of National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs) during the institution building process of the Human Rights Council. I consider it an honor to be standing here today in the 12th APF annual meeting, and to have this opportunity to report on the work the NHRCK has done over the past year.

In last year's annual meeting the NHRCK reported that it had established its mid- to long-term work agenda. As a follow through, in 2007 we are focusing our resources on projects such as the promoting the human rights of children; of people in protective facilities; of the disabled; and of migrant workers and internationally married people. Projects to strengthen the right to adequate standard of living of the poor and the vulnerable; to call the international and domestic attention to the North Korean human rights; to establish a reference guidebook to identify discrimination and human rights violations; to establish a comprehensive plan towards human rights education; to strengthen the international role of the NHRCK; to actively submit opinions to pending cases related to human rights are also underway, and are receiving our close attention as well.

In 2006, two international conventions that presented important opportunities and challenges to the NHRCK were adopted or came into force. These were the International Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, and the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment. The former contains specific provision on the monitoring role of National Human Rights Institutions, while the latter allows the NHRIs to assume the role of national preventive mechanism. Our Commission continuously participated in the working group towards the successful adoption of the Disability Convention with the cooperation of the APF, and strived for an ever better and more relevant convention

draft through vigilant assessment of domestic situations. After the Convention was adopted, we published and distributed a 290-page commentary which explains the Convention, possibly being the first of its kind throughout the world.

The National Human Rights Commission of Korea possesses enough resources and authority to carry out the mandates as the Paris Principles stipulated, and is looking towards strengthening its role in the international human rights community. As part of this effort, the Commission is closely cooperating with the APF to successfully carry out various joint projects. The "International Symposium on the Structure and Function of National Human Rights Institutions" held in December 2006 was an example of such joint efforts, in which delegates from numerous NHRIs from the Asia Pacific region along with the APF secretariat got together and engaged in in-depth discussions.

Also, in November 2006 the NHRCK hosted a four day educational workshop in which three APT educators informed investigators relevant aspects of the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture. The program, which was sponsored by the APT, included courses on practical interviewing methodology as well as case studies and field visits to detention facilities. The participants were also informed of the minimum interrogation standard developed by the ACJ, which is a preventive measure against torture. On the last day of the workshop we hosted a seminar which invited personnel from related government branches and NGOs, in which we educated participants about the Optional Protocol to the Convention Against Torture and facilitated discussions regarding the possibility of its ratification, and whether or not the ratification was necessary in the first place. The general feedback we received from the participants was that the training program was a much needed effort, and that additional opportunities to learn investigation methods were greatly desired. In responding to this request, the Commission is scheduled to hold two training sessions for investigators this October, in which 50 investigators from the NHRCK will receive training with specialists from the Australian Human Rights Commission.

In May of this year, the NHRCK also hosted a study visit program for the Chinese delegation working for the establishment of a national human rights institution, under the sponsorship of the APF secretariat and the Raoul Wallenberg Institute. The visit, made possible through the request of the APF secretariat, provided Chinese delegates with an opportunity to learn about the National Human Rights Commission Act of Korea and about the driving force behind the effort to legislate the act as well as the

political and social context under which the Commission was established. The Chinese delegation also had a chance to meet with National Assembly members who played important roles in the passing of the Act. Our Commission, on the flip side, was able to gain confidence in having proposed a working model for NHRIs, and to have shared that experience with others, especially in the context of the East Asian region.

Our Commission has also participated in the institution building process of the Human Rights Council this June, and has contributed to expanding the role of national human rights institutions in cooperation with the ICC and APF members. We are also fully living up to the responsibilities as the representative to the ICC Sub Committee on Accreditation. I would also like to highlight that the Commission is devoting much effort in carrying out its international role through cooperative activities such as inviting six employees from the Nigerian, Afghanistan and Timor-Leste human rights institutions for a week-long training program in September.

For Korea, the presidential election is scheduled to take place this December. Also, as Korean society pursues higher levels of economic and democratic development, voices requesting more effective measures against various forms of discrimination are continuously on the rise. New challenges present themselves on a daily basis, but our Commission is responding to them in stride, growing in the process. We believe that cooperation and collaboration with other NIs, the APF and the UN are very important and necessary for us to succeed in this process, while at the same time it is our hope and expectation that more opportunities for our Commission to make meaningful contributions to the international human rights will present themselves in the future.

Thank you.