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Statement

by H.E. Min, Dong-seok

Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs and Trade of the

Republic of Korea

at the General Debate of the

4th Bali Democracy Forum

Bali, Indonesia

December 8, 2011

His Excellency, Marty Natalegawa (마르띠 나팔레가와),
Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia,
Excellencies,
Distinguished Delegates,

It is an honor for me to have this opportunity to deliver a speech at the Fourth Bali Democracy Forum. I would like to begin by expressing my gratitude to the Indonesian Government for its efforts in organizing the Bali Democracy Forum every year since 2008.

Thanks to the outstanding leadership demonstrated by H.E. President Yudhoyono and the commitment on the part of world leaders to enhance democracy in Asia, the Bali Democracy Forum has now become one of the leading initiatives for cooperation in this region.

As Co-chair of the Third Bali Democracy Forum last year, the President Lee Myung-bak of the Republic of Korea also expressed his strong commitment and continued dedication to regional cooperation in fostering democracy in the Asia-Pacific region.

Butterfly Effect in the Global Information Age

As President Lee Myung-bak noted in his speech at this Forum last year, in the global information age of the 21st century, events in one corner of the globe can be disseminated simultaneously to people around the world through the Internet and Twitter.

The information technology revolution leads to increased interdependence and sensitivity among states. They cause a so-called ‘butterfly effect’ where a small change in one place can result in a large difference to another place.

This year, we all witnessed an example of this effect in North Africa and the Middle East. A young fruit seller in a small town in southern Tunisia set himself on fire in protest after being abused by state police and this sparked a democratic uprising. This wave of democratization rapidly spread across the neighboring region through social network services such as Twitter and Facebook and finally contributed to bringing about the so-called 'Arab Spring.'

It is becoming virtually impossible for the government to monopolize or control information. And 'democracy' based on the freedom and equality of individuals is no longer an option but a necessity as a universal value. No country can be an exception to this trend. The people's demand for democracy is their legitimate right. The voices of the people who are suffering persecution and human rights abuses must be heard and responded by their governments and also international community, if necessary.

Against this backdrop, the subject of this Forum is timely and important. As a historical concept, the format and content of 'democracy' can differ from era to era or country to country. Today, in the global information age, 'democratic participation' which allows governments to respond to democratic voices is more urgent than ever. In this regard, I would like to give thought to the following three ways to enhance democratic participation.

Building Democratic Institutions

As a first step towards strengthening democratic participation, 'building democratic institutions' such as a system of free and fair election, the rule of law, independent judiciaries, and a free press is a key element in ensuring democratic participation.

The process of building democratic institutions does not simply come to an end with the adoption of democratic institutions. Rather, there is a need for the government to make continuous efforts to reorganize and adjust to its own situation in the actual process of application. The Republic of Korea also has undergone a long process of trial and error and struggled for the establishment of democratic institutions which can function efficiently in Korean society.

Fostering a Mature Democratic Civil Society

In order for democracy to take firm root, there is a need not only to build democratic institutions but also to foster a mature democratic civil society. And this democratic civil society is nurtured through education for democratic citizenship.

In this information age where information and ideas spread rapidly through the mass media and SNS, the risk and side effects of disseminating false information are also mounting. It is therefore critical to satisfy the requirements of mature democratic citizenship through continuous and full education.

The Republic of Korea, one of the leading countries in the advance of information technology, also faces these side effects of SNS and makes every effort to improve the interactive communication between government and citizens. While remaining open to innovation and the free flow of information, there is growing need for transparent and stable framework to deal with this emerging issue. Korea will contribute to the efforts of the international community to develop norms and principles for acceptable behavior in cyberspace by holding the Conference on Cyberspace in 2013.

International Cooperation for Consolidating Democracy

In the age of increased interdependence, democratic transition in one country can affect other countries in the political, economic, and social fields. In this

sense, regional and international cooperation for the consolidation of democracy around the world is imperative.

Korea has strived to do its part in the regional and global efforts to further promote and strengthen democracy. Besides active participation in the Bali Democracy Forum, we also assume a leading role in the Asia-Pacific Democracy Partnership and the Community of Democracies.

In addition, as reflected in President Lee Myung-bak's emphasis on the complementary relationship between democracy and economic development, democracy constitutes a foundation for sustainable national development. For the Republic of Korea, economic growth and democratization have been achieved in a mutually reinforcing manner. Our experience could be a good reference for other developing countries to achieve both democratic advances and economic growth at the same time.

Distinguished Delegates,

The collapse of authoritarian regimes does not automatically mean the accomplishment of democracy. It is necessary to make continuous efforts toward a mature democratic society.

The Korean Government looks forward to sharing the wisdom we have learned in our process of democratization. We hope to play our own part in encouraging many other countries to pay more attention to the voices of people in this highly interdependent world.

Thank you. /End/