

**Official Event
Round Table**

**Resilience city responding to
poverty and inequality**

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I would like to welcome all officials from global cities and international organizations, and human rights activists attending the 13th Human Rights Cities Forum to Gwangju, a city of democracy, human rights, and peace.

The theme of this year's forum is "Human Rights Cities Responding to Poverty and Inequalities". As you know, a most comprehensive challenge that the world has faced is 'poverty and inequalities'.

The goal No.1 of UN SDGs is 'poverty eradication' aiming at ending absolute poverty living on 1.25 dollars a day by 2030. To that end, it requires to reduce national gaps in education, medical service and environment and to address various types of poverty in our society. Additionally, nations and cities have to take more responsibilities in order to cope with inequalities existing in various context such as political, economic and social circumstances. When looking into inequality issue, we have talked a lot about economic inequality.

Considering economic perspective only, global poverty rate has lowered and income inequality has decreased both in and among nations since 2000. Inequalities, however, still remain in various forms in our society in a way to undermine a sustainable development.

There are three good examples. First, urbanization has created new forms of poverty and inequalities. Currently, 56.2% of the world population reside in urbans and, it is also expected that more than two thirds of total population would inhabit in urbans by 2050. Urbanization, of course, has led to positive results such as job creation, expanded cultural pleasures, and enhanced quality of life by raising up economic and social scope of urbans. Unban concentration, however, could lead to population decrease, life and transportation infrastructure reduction, and economic and social gaps in series. As a result, inequalities among cities have been accelerated especially between urban and rural, large and small city and capital and non-capital city. Within cities, as polarization in labors, politics and society aggravates and single-person household rises, various forms of social poverty and inequalities have emerged. Issues of residence, transportation and environment derived from a reckless urban development could become the source of new forms of poverty and inequalities.

Second, climate crisis becomes stronger in its influence when it attacks poverty and inequalities. The theme of the 12th World Human Rights Cities Forum was “Human Rights Cities and Climate Justice’. During the forum last year, I urged for cities to put efforts for joint implementation to fairly protect all members of our community from risks caused by climate crisis in a perspective of just transformation. As we have seen in the Covid 19 pandemic, disaster does not evenly affect everyone, which is the case in point of climate crisis, too. Where we could vividly identify the issue of poverty and inequalities in climate crisis is the space of the socially vulnerable.

Third, in order to put an end to poverty and address inequalities, we have to strengthen a comprehensive growth. A comprehensive growth is a sustainable future strategy to get away from an existing material centered growth, address inequalities arising from an economic and social structure and narrow gaps in caring, medical service, and education to escalate the quality of life. The world has already acknowledged that a continued growth is not possible without coping with economic and social inequalities. International organizations including OECD, UNEP and EU and major nations have offered a comprehensive growth as a solution to it.

In Korea, there have been many attempts and efforts for the advancement of an inclusive society in line with the meaning of a comprehensive growth strategy. Specifically, diverse policies have been implemented in order to make sure to establish a virtuous cycle between welfare and production. Under the Kim Young-sam administration, employment insurance scheme was introduced and banking and real estate under the real name started to be implemented. The following Kim Dea-jung administration adopted the National Basic Livelihood System and took advantage of IT economic transformation and venture industry promotion as a key drive for the growth. The formal president Roh Moon-hyun integrated the child care programs into welfare system in earnest, relocated administrative capital under the national balanced development strategy and moved public agencies to rural areas as well as adopted long-term caring insurance and basic pension for the elderly. Moon Jae-in administration also launched child allowance and all-day caring system and attempted to improve the coverage of national health insurance and expand the employment insurance to make sure to cover all the public. At the same time, it implemented digital, green and human new deal along with innovative and inclusive growth strategy.

Now, I would like to propose ‘resilience city’ as a concrete and comprehensive growth strategy and as a solution of human rights cities fighting against poverty and inequalities. The resilience city refers to a city that could flexibly absorb economic, social and environmental impacts and promptly recover in a desirable direction in the process of implementing transformation amid the pressing challenges that cities have faced. Also, it means a city that could learn and develop through experiencing both pain and encourage.

Gwangju has suffered climate crises that have already become our daily life such as the worst heat wave throughout its history in 2018, went through a prolonged drought from 2022 until this year and recorded the worst extreme precipitation both in 2020 and this year.

While weathering all the climate crises, the city has experienced pain and encouragement along with its citizens. Under the circumstance, Gwangju has set and implemented 3 major strategies to reinvent itself as ‘resilience city’. Specifically, we have implemented ‘Gwangjudaum Comprehensive Caring Service’ for recovering humanity and community, a ‘New Economy Map’ for revitalizing local industries and economy, and ‘Desirable Trails, Gwangju RE100’ for promoting ecofriendly city and climate recovery.

First, Gwangjudaum Comprehensive Caring Service to realize a caring democracy. “We all are growing up through someone’s caring and would end our life by someone’s caring. Caring involves raising up people, creating jobs and completing decent citizens. “Especially, Gwangju was able to continue democratic struggling because Gwangju citizens cared each other in May 1980 when they were completely isolated. ‘Gwangjudaum Comprehensive Caring Service’ started and expanded based on the principle of Gwangju spirit. The caring model began in Gwangju is now further developing into a model of caring democracy.

The ‘Gwangjudaum Comprehensive Caring Service’ that started last April has been implemented in four directions distancing from existing welfare criteria and selective welfare system.

- A universal caring service is provided.
- Customized caring services are provided depending on recipients’ circumstances.

- A window for application for the caring service is unified into 'Caring Call' to ensure to make it easily accessible.
- A blind spot is directly identified by institutionalize a mandatory visit program.

First of all, the 'Gwangju Comprehensive Caring' started on April 1, 2023 and it was estimated that over 6,000 Gwangju citizens utilized the service as of the end of August. The service garnered a lot of attention from citizens and cities across the nation. It has also been recognized as an innovative policy by international society especially by making it to the finalist of the Guangzhou International Award for Urban Innovation hosted by the UCLG.

Second, the City of Gwangju has transformed the landscape of economy and industry with a 'new economy map'. In Gwangju, manufacturing industry is disproportionately concentrated on certain industries such as automobile and home appliance ones. Especially, the landscape of local manufacturing industry has been primarily built on low-value added industries as well.

As one of the top cities with the highest proportion of single-person households and self-employed businesses across the nation, Gwangju has seen a severe fluctuation of local economy highly dependent on external economic factors such as global economic crisis.

It required to build future strategic industries to lead the region, create opportunities for start-ups, and upgrade existing industries. With recognizing those necessities, the initiative of 'Gwangju New Economy Map' was launched with the aim of "fostering industries of future driving force, building cities with a high chance of success and creating a new vitalization".

In this regard, Gwangju is expecting to launch the world's class and Korea's only AI Data Center this year. It has also attracted 'National Industrial Complex for Future Vehicles' and 'Specialized Industrial Complex of Material-Parts-Equipment for Future Vehicle' in 1 million pyeong areas and already completed the preparation for advancing future strategic industries based on AI and future mobility.

In terms of creating chances for start-ups, the city has raised an innovative fund as much as KRW 50 million, laid a foundation for pilot project to use the whole city itself as a test bed, and accelerated to attract infrastructure and businesses in order to drive up the chances of success.

Additionally, the city is planning to upgrade existing manufacturing industries by promoting 'smart factory' system and expand 'online commerce' through 'a promotion center for small local businesses'.

Third, we are planning a project of 'a desirable trail course, Gwangju RE100' in hopes to promote itself as a climate resilience city with its top priority on humanity and pedestrians. Many cities around the world are shifting from a vehicle-centered city to a pedestrian-centered one. Making road to be centered around humanity, pedestrians and public transportation could function as an important tool to enhance climate resilience and reduce inequalities.

Gwangju has been putting lots of efforts to promote carbon neutrality, climate crisis adaptation, and renewable energy RE 100 since it proclaimed carbon neutrality by 2045, In the title the 'Desirable Trail, Gwangju RE 100', RE comes from resilience and it refers to RE 100 going beyond Renewable 100. With that goal, the city is working on '100 roads and spaces' in the following 3 directions, recovery of road, recovery of urban, and recovery from climate crisis.

- Gwangju will expand the road centering around pedestrians through the 'desirable trails'.
- It will also adopt various transportation systems through an initiative of 'a city of the most convenient transportation'.
- It will further promote carbon neutrality and enhance climate crisis adaptation through 'climate resilience and energy road'.

Human rights cities refer to cities in which every member of society could be secured for their dignity and right and a fair share of opportunities and resources. Human rights cities fighting against poverty and inequalities have to do more to recover communities and urbans. Human rights cities will fulfill promises and concrete action

plans with taking their responsibilities to make sure our society and responsible members to reopen the path of recovery not to give up.

I would like to close my speech with proposing a more responsible solidarity and implementation plan to all international organizations, cities, and global citizens attending the 13th World Human Rights Cities Forum for the sake of resilient cities fighting against poverty and inequalities.

Once again thank you for your attention.