

Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and Challenges for Korea



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The United Nations adopted the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as part of the 2030 Agenda by the General Assembly on its seventieth session held in September 2015. The implementation of 17 goals and 169 targets requires whole-of-government approaches because the targets of indicators are integrated and inter-connected. In particular, Goal 17 seeks to strengthen global partnerships to achieve the Agenda's goals, bringing together national governments, the international community, civil society, the private sector and other actors. Members of the OECD, including Germany, Finland and Norway, have already developed their own national strategies based on the UN SDGs.

As for the Korean government, it was necessary to modify the 3rd General Plans for Sustainable Development (2016-2035) because the Plans previously set in 2016 had a different structure from the UN SDGs and did not specify targets. Accordingly, the Korean Sustainable Development Goals (hereinafter referred to as K-SDGs) have been set to complement such aspects of the UN SDGs and be supplemented after a social consensus process. In this regard, the K-SDGs have been established through a bottom-up approach rather than the existing top-down go-

vernment approach.

In April 2018, a total of 192 experts and specialists participated in 14 working groups to set targets and indicators for all areas including the economy, society and the environment. Basically, the setting of K-SDGs targets are in line with the UN SDGs. However, some of the goals had to be reshaped as they were originally set for developing nations and therefore not suited to the circumstances in Korea. In turn, most working groups have worked with the Korea Major Groups and other Stakeholders (hereinafter referred to as K-MGoS), which is made up from 90 organizations and institutions and has held two large scale public forums to gather public opinion. The outcome of that process was finalized through coordination with other concerned government offices.

Eventually, the K-SDGs for ensuring sustainability were confirmed after deliberations at the Cabinet Meeting on December 24, 2018. They have been a milestone that Korea has set to be achieved by 2030 in all government sectors across the economy, society and the environment. Regarding the framework of the K-SDGs, 5 strategies along with 17 goals and 122 targets for implementation have been suggested under the vision of “A Sustainable Nation that Embraces All.” 214 indicators have been set along with 2030 targets, with newly added targets such as responding to chronic disease, tackling the low birth rate, developing alternative materials to plastic, establishing a permanent peace regime between the North and the South Korea, etc. These are targets that need to be addressed urgently in Korea.

However, the 122 targets of the K-SDGs have not been fully reflected, and 214 indicators are still complicated and independent due to the lack of consensus and coordination among stakeholders. It is necessary to select major indicators by goals and modify key indicators through a social consensus process. Since it is difficult to implement the plan at the whole-of-government level and set the target by indicator in earnest, policy efforts should be strengthened to mainstream domestic policies at each stage of the policy process, from policy planning to execution to evaluation. Many tasks and challenges need to be addressed to improve the K-SDGs process and the implementation system.

First of all, a process of social consensus is needed to monitor and evaluate the K-SDGs. Targets and representative indicators are selected for the K-SDGs, and indicators need to be added and supplemented through the K-SDGs forum. Key indicators selected by working group during the K-SDGs establishment phase should be integrated into social, economic and environmental sectors, and index adjustment and supplementation should be more sys-

tematically reviewed through the social consensus process. In July 2019, the Ministry of Environment plans to host a series of forums organizing the K-SDGs targets and indicators into four sectors.

Secondly, the implementation of the K-SDGs in Korea needs to be promoted to the Commission for Sustainable Development at the pan-government level by revising the Sustainable Development Act under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Environment to establish an integrated K-SDGs implementation system. Also integration with the Green Growth Committee under the Prime Minister's Office, which has overlapping functions and status, needs to be reviewed. To this end, the Sustainable Development Act, which is currently a sub-law of the Framework Act on Low Carbon Green Growth, needs to be revised to the Basic Law on Sustainable Development, a higher law, along with strengthening the status of the Commission on Sustainable Development.

Since joining the OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC) in 2010, the government has been strengthening its global partnerships by advancing ODA policies as an emerging donor country and continuously expanding the size of aid. The launch of SDGs provides new challenges and opportunities for Korea's development cooperation, but there are many limitations and constraints when it comes to Korea expanding its responsibilities and role as an advanced donor country due to constraints on its fiscal size. In order to expand cooperation to developing countries more substantially, it is urgent to integrate and correlate various support policies for developing countries, such as expanding market access through preferential trade tariffs as well as ODA as suggested in the SDGs.

Nevertheless, the areas where we should focus on to secure implementation means for SDGs and global partnerships will be to expand development resources and mobilizing private funds through public-private partnerships and preparing innovative development funds. As already mentioned, the average ratio of ODA to GNI is 0.31% in OECD DAC member countries, while Korea is only 0.14% as of 2017. The ODA/GNI target promised to the international community should be increased to 0.20% by 2020 and 0.30% by 2030.

North Korea also reflected its major plans for implementing SDGs in its five-year national economic development initiative adopted at the 7th Party Congress held in May 2016, and announced plans for implementation in major areas such as energy, food and agriculture, drinking water and sanitation, forest restoration and environmental protection. Under the leadership of the UNDP, North Korea's plans to implement the SDGs have been established

for up to 2030, and various implementation plans and technology cooperation projects linking the North's five-year national economic development strategy with its goal of achieving SDGs are expected to be gradually expanded. Therefore, as a member of the international community, North Korea is paying attention to multilateral cooperation as a major means of achieving the SDGs, and the international community is in urgent need of an effective, inclusive and reliable promotion system to address the challenges facing the Korean Peninsula. These developments point to the need to actively consider establishing the SDGs for integration through inter-Korean cooperation. **KIEP**