

COUNTRY YOUTH

# CALL TO ACTION 2025

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Advancing sustainable, inclusive, science and evidence based solutions for the 2030 agenda and its SDGs for leaving no young person behind in Asia and the Pacific



SOUTH KOREA

## Situational Analysis

In January 2022, South Korea enacted the Basic Law on Sustainable Development, and reorganized institutional mechanisms for SDG implementation, including the establishment of sustainable development plans and evaluation systems at the national and local levels. The country also regularly monitors the status of SDG implementation based on global SDG indicators, contributing to building a foundation for achieving the SDGs according to the SDG in Republic of South Korea: Progress Report 2024, analyzed a total of 71 indicators. It conducted the trend analysis based on time-series data, the state analysis of the vulnerable using disaggregated data, and international comparison analysis.

As far as Goal 3: Good Health and Well-Being is considered, there have been considerable improvements in healthy behaviors and environments, including a reduction in alcohol consumption and low level deaths attributed to unintentional poisoning. However, there is increasing geographic variation in the healthcare workforce. In 2023, South Korea recorded a suicide rate of 27.3 per 100,000 people. This figure is significantly higher than that of other countries, placing South Korea among the highest in suicide rates among comparable nations. The country's suicide rate is approximately twice the OECD average. Looking at Goal 5: Gender Equality, in South Korea, women have continued to disproportionately fall victim to sexual violence and domestic violence, and have remained under-represented in the managerial positions of the government, public institutes, public corporation and private firms and the education/administration sector.

Looking at Goal 8: decent work and economic growth, the unemployment rate has hit its lowest since 2000, but

the wage gap between men and women has not narrowed and is the highest in OECD. The number of deaths from industrial accidents in 2022 increased year-on-year, especially with high fatalities in workplaces with fewer than 50 employees.

Analyzing the Goal 14 Life Below Water gives a vivid picture of the speed of expanding marine protected areas that has been slow in relation to the targets. Coastal plastic debris is on the rise. Meanwhile, there are ongoing national efforts to conserve marine resources by complying with international standards such as the United Nations Convention of the Law of the Sea and Marine Convention and Deep-sea Fisheries and by improving the total allowable catch (TAC) scheme. If we look at the Goal 17 partnership for the Goals, South Korea's ODA volume slightly increased compared to the previous year. Its bilateral assistance to the least developed countries (LDCs) accounted for a high rate of 35.8% and the trade volume with these countries was on the rise, too. With outstanding statistical capacities, South Korea is committed to supporting reinforcement of statistical capacities in the LDCs.

## Recommendations

Our recommendations for South Korea on selected SDGs to achieve optimum target are as follows-

### Goal 3: Good Health and Well-being

- In 2022, among the total licensed nurses in South Korea (481,211), only 52.8% (254,227) were employed as clinical nurses in medical institutions. This figure is significantly lower than the OECD average of 68.2%,

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placing South Korea among the lowest-ranking countries in this regard. The annual growth rate of nurses in South Korea is more than four times higher than the OECD average. However, approximately 10,000 nurses leave the clinical field each year due to excessive workloads, poor working conditions, and challenges in adapting to their roles. To promote health and well-being in South Korea, we recommend establishing strict patient-to-nurse ratios to alleviate the burden on nurses, as has already been implemented in the United States and Australia. Salaries were higher in the capital region, and regional salary differences increased during 2011~2020. Regional salary differences were associated with regional staffing differences and the number of additionally required practicing nurses. Government and health insurance policies are required to encourage hospitals in the non-capital region to improve staffing and salaries.

- We recommend launching the campaign that educate the public on the critical facts that individuals contemplating suicide often exhibit warning signs to those around them. The campaign should emphasize that suicidal thoughts are temporary and that recognizing these signals and providing timely support can prevent tragedy. Timely support is crucial, as recognizing the signs and offering assistance can play a significant role in preventing suicide.
- Increase government's investment and funding for youth friendly, affordable, high-quality medical facilities and services, including mental health, Sexual and reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) information and services, for young people particularly in rural, and hard to reach areas.

### Goal 5: Gender Equality

- In 2022, the percentages of female managers were only 22.4% in public institutes, 10.7% in local public enterprises and 22.5% in private companies respectively. Enacting legislation to mandate a strict proportion of women in managerial positions within the government and corporate sectors is essential for promoting gender equality.
- Experts point out that sentencing for sex crimes in South Korea is significantly more lenient compared to that of advanced countries. The United States and the United Kingdom generally impose stricter punishments for sex crimes than South Korea. In South Korea, for example, a man who secretly laced a woman's beer with drugs was sentenced in September 2021 to one year and six months in prison, with a three-year suspended sentence. In the United Kingdom, secretly administering

drugs to another person can result in a prison sentence of up to 10 years. In the United States, if drugs are administered without consent to facilitate crimes such as sexual assault, the offender may face an aggravated sentence of up to 20 years in prison. We recommend the strong enforcement and implementation of laws regarding sex crimes are necessary to protect women.

- Implement CSE, for reducing VAW that disproportionately impacts the lives of women and girls.

### Goal 8: Decent Work and Economic Growth

- We recommend ensuring equal compensation for workers regardless of gender when performing the same job.
- Additionally, we propose enacting legislation to support this principle in order to achieve gender equality in South Korea. Providing financial assistance for research and development (R&D) to foster new drivers of industrial growth can contribute to economic development.
- We suggest deploying more supervisors in workplaces to reduce accidents and ensure workers comply with safety regulations.

### Goal 14: Life Below Water

Owing to low degradation coupled with unsustainable production, use, and disposal, plastics and microplastics have become a severe transboundary threat to natural ecosystems and human health. Therefore, we recommend that governments implement solutions to reduce both large-scale marine plastic waste and microplastic pollution.

### Goal 17: Partnership for the Goals

We recommend implementing the Digital ODA initiative to ensure that no one is left behind in the digital era. Initiatives that take a comprehensive approach by not only developing digital infrastructure but also incorporating digital literacy education and digital health are essential.

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*The APFSD country and sub-regional briefs were developed through collective discussions and engagements between youth advocates at the APFSD Youth Forum in Bangkok on 19-21 February, 2025. The South Korea Call to Action was drafted by Min-Jeong Kim. Overall supervision was provided by the ARROW Call To Action team.*

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