

SUMMARY OF PRESENTATION

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The Sustainable Development Report 2020: China and Koreas in the World

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There were two momentous events in 2015 achieved under the leadership of the then UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon. One was the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, including the 17 Sustainable Development Goals as a universal action agenda, at the UN Summit in September to transform the world for sustainable development by 2030. The other momentous event was the adoption of the Paris Agreement at the 21st Conference of Parties meeting of the UNFCCC in December. The Paris Agreement led the world to, among others, adopt the goal of achieving net zero carbon emissions by the middle of this century.

The environment, the economy and the society are all interconnected and constitute three pillars of sustainable development founded on the pedestal of good governance.) The Goal 13, in particular, the climate action Goal, commits the world to appropriate climate actions to implement the Paris Agreement, including to the net zero carbon emissions target by the mid-21st century. Climate change mitigation and adaptation under SDG 13 and the Paris Agreement are necessary or beneficial for all of the 17 SDGs. COVID-19, a zoonotic pandemic is a blunt, devastating manifestation of the global sustainable development crisis and demonstrates the urgency of the SDGs actions.

The Yellow Sea is a common which are shared by China, North Korea and South Korea. This is a reminder that Yellow Sea cooperation is an agenda for all three of those countries. The Yellow Sea is one of the most intensely exploited areas in the world. It poses many transboundary environmental problems which challenge our three countries. The three countries owe it not only to themselves but also to the world to restore and preserve the sustainability of the Yellow Sea. But there is a complex interaction among the 17 goals so that, in order to achieve SDG 14, we should make progress on the other SDGs as well.

With only 10 years left to 2030, the world still remains outside 10% of reaching the targets on most of the Goals. What is particularly worrying is that the world is on negative trends regarding many targets including malnutrition, income inequality, use of natural resources, greenhouse emissions, coastal waters, overfishing, and biodiversity losses on land. Four critical SD challenges stand out, indicating that countries as a whole may be walking backward to cross the tipping points: worsening inequalities, global warming headed to exceed 1.5°C during 2030-2052, and 3°C by 2100, waste accumulation continues including plastics in the oceans, and continuing biodiversity loss threatening to cause the 6th Great Extinction.

Three countries around the Yellow Sea have already achieved one or two or three Goals, depending on the country, but remain facing significant or major challenges for many other Goals. And their policies are still following wrong directions for some Goals. Our three countries should indeed each launch a serious stocktaking of their progress in the SDGs implementation, followed by bold actions to speed up the implementation over the decade of action for sustainable development.

To use traffic signals, the implementation status of the respective countries for SDG 14 is in red for China and North Korea and in brown for South Korea. The red color indicates that the country faces major challenges in implementation, while the brown color indicates that the country faces significant challenges. In terms of SDG trend for Goal 14, all three countries are stagnating, that is, making no progress. This is a wake-up call: they should then take cooperation for the Yellow Sea seriously. I think that held in the first year of the Decade of Action on the SDGs, this forum is very timely, and should consider launching a program of concerted research activities on SDG 14 for the Yellow Sea over the next two to three years.

The latest good news is that China has declared the goal of carbon neutrality by 2060 while South Korea has declared the goal of carbon neutrality by 2050. This development will help accelerate the implementation of the SDGs in our two countries. Even more exciting is the news that South Korea's President Moon declared the launching of a Korean New Deal consisting of enhancement of social and employment safety nets, a green new deal, and a digital new deal, and he would soon launch a Presidential Committee on Carbon Neutrality by 2050. These encouraging development in China and South Korea will be conducive to active sustainable development cooperation for the Yellow Sea.