

POSITION PAPER – SOUTH KOREA

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Topic : Consequences of the pandemic

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According to WHO, a pandemic is an epidemic of an infectious disease that has spread across a large region, for instance multiple continents or worldwide, affecting a substantial number of people. Throughout human history, there have been number of pandemics of diseases like small pox and tuberculosis. The most fatal pandemic recorded in human history was Black Death which killed an estimated 75-200 million people in 14th century. Another such pandemic has hit us today, Corona Virus or COVID-19. According to media reports, more than 200 countries and territories have been affected by COVID-19, with major outbreaks occurring in Central China, Iran, Western Europe and the United States. On 11 March 2020, the World Health Organisation characterized the spread of COVID-19 as a pandemic. **As of 14 June 2020, the number of people infected with COVID-19 has reached over 7.67 million worldwide, of whom around 3,886,181 have recovered. The death toll is 425, 919.** The following statistics shows the need to deeply understand about the consequences and nature of the pandemic and the way to deal with it.

According to Lee Jong-wook, former Director-General of the World Health Organization (WHO), *pandemics do not respect international borders*. Therefore, they have the potential to weaken many societies, political systems and economies simultaneously. In 1995, the World Health Assembly (WHA) agreed to revise the International Health Regulations (IHR), the only international legal framework governing how WHO and its member States should respond to infectious disease outbreaks, on the grounds that revision was needed to take “effective account of the threat posed by the international spread of new and re-emerging diseases”. In 2005, the IHR revisions were adopted as WHA Resolution 58.3. Article 2 announced that the scope and purpose of the instrument was “to prevent, protect against, control and provide a public health response to the international spread of disease in ways that are commensurate with and restricted to public health risks”. Since its entry into force in 2007, signatory States have been working, individually and collectively, to meet their core capacity requirements under the new framework. The focus of IHR is on the prevention and containment of public health emergencies of international concern. Member States committed themselves to building core capacities in the areas of national legislation, policy and financing, coordination and National Focal Point (NFP) communications, surveillance, response, preparedness, risk communication, and human resources and laboratories.

On 20 January 2020, the first case in South Korea was announced. The number of confirmed cases increased on 19 February by 20, and on 20 February by 58 or

70, giving a total of 346 confirmed cases on 21 February 2020, according to the Centres for disease control and Prevention Korea, with the sudden jump mostly attributed to "Patient 31" who participated in a gathering at a church in Daegu. By 18 March, South Korea's KOSPI stock index had dropped nearly 30% compared to a month earlier. The drop began on 23 February, when the country raised the coronavirus alert to 'highest level'. On 15 March, the KOSPI closed at 1,771.44 and the Kosdaq finished at 524 points, down 7%, prompting the Financial Supervisory Commission to impose a six-month ban on short-selling, the first such action in nearly nine years. The economy of South Korea is forecast to grow 1.9%, which is down from 2.1%. The government has provided 136.7 billion won for local governments as support. The government has also organized the procurement of masks and other hygiene equipment. *The Washington Post* has praised the South Korean government's handling of coronavirus outbreak and stated that South Korea is a model for the U.S. response instead of Iran. The Washington Post also appreciated South Korea's response as a successful model for democratic countries. *Time* magazine and BBC News concluded that the reason for the high number of confirmed cases of the coronavirus in South Korea is thanks to the relative "openness" and "transparency" of South Korean society.

South Korea's Centers for Disease Control and Prevention on Thursday reported 45 new cases, a daily rise that has been fairly consistent since late May. Most have been in the Seoul metropolitan area, where health authorities have struggled to trace transmissions. "Considering the quick transmission of COVID-19, there's limits to what we can do with contact tracing alone to slow the spread," said Yoon Taeho, a senior Health Ministry official during a virus briefing on Thursday, where he repeated a plea for residents in the capital area to stay at home. Health authorities and hospital officials last week participated in an exercise for sharing hospital capacities between Seoul and nearby cities, hoping to ensure swift transports of patients so that a spike of cases in one area doesn't overwhelm its hospital system. South Korea will be enforcing stricter distancing rules but considering the huge blow it could deal to the country's weak economy, which the Bank of Korea could shrink for the first time in 22 yrs.