



**SUMMARY OF DISCUSSIONS  
OF THE  
6<sup>TH</sup> COMMITTEE ON TRADE AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT  
UNDER THE KOREA-EU FTA**

*SEOUL, REPUBLIC OF KOREA, APRIL 13<sup>TH</sup> 2018*

The Republic of Korea (Korea) and the European Union (EU) held the 6<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Committee on Trade and Sustainable Development (6<sup>th</sup> CTSD) under the Korea-EU Free Trade Agreement (Korea-EU FTA) on April 13, 2018 in Seoul.

The 6<sup>th</sup> CTSD was co-chaired by Mr Dae Hwan Kim, Director General of the International Cooperation Bureau, the Korean Ministry of Employment and Labour and Ms Sandra Gallina, Director of Directorate D, DG Trade of the European Commission.

**1. Report from the 6th Civil Society Forum (CSF)**

The chair of the Korean Domestic Advisory Group (DAG), Mr. Hogeun Lee and the chair of the EU DAG, Mr. Georgi Stoev reported on the discussions and the outcome document ([Joint Statement by the Chairs of the Korea DAG and the EU DAG](#)) of the 6<sup>th</sup> CSF held on April 11 in Seoul.

The two chairs of the DAGs emphasised that the 6<sup>th</sup> CSF had insightful discussions and made recommendations to the Parties on circular economy, environmental risk factors, gender pay gap and on labour standards. The two chairs regretted that the 6<sup>th</sup> CSF did not manage to adopt its proper conclusions due to divergent views among its members as regards the cases of detention of trades union leaders in Korea.

The two chairs of the DAGs concluded that they would continue to provide both Parties with constructive opinions and advice from balanced perspectives.

The EU side proposed to facilitate the CSF requests to have two days (instead of one, as has been the practice so far) for its future meetings. The Korean side agreed that it would be possible to extend the forum if the CSF so wishes.

## **2. Discussion on labour policies**

With regard to discussion on labour policies, the EU side reiterated the shared labour commitments under TSD Chapter of the Korea-EU FTA, notably commitment to "*respect and realise in their laws and practices*" the ILO fundamental rights, including the freedom of association and right to collective bargaining and the commitment to make "*continued and sustained efforts*" towards ratifying of outstanding ILO conventions.

The EU side emphasised that over seven years of implementation of the Korea-EU FTA there has been no visible progress by Korean side to meet these commitments, urging the Korean side to make efforts to this end, in particular to ratify the outstanding four fundamental ILO conventions.

The Korean side explained that the new government had been making various efforts to promote labour rights under the philosophy of building a society where labour is respected.

Following the detailed questions from the EU side the Korean side elaborated further on major steps by Korean government to progress on labour commitments under the Korea-EU FTA, in particular towards the ratification of outstanding fundamental ILO conventions and other relevant labour reforms.

### **Steps towards the ratification of the 4 outstanding fundamental ILO conventions**

The Korean side emphasised that the new government set the ratification of the outstanding fundamental ILO conventions (Convention 87 on freedom of association; Convention 98 on the right to organize and collective bargaining; Convention 29 on forced labour; and Convention 105 on abolition of forced labour) as one of its priority tasks.

To this end the Ministry of Labour and Employment is currently consulting the domestic experts, related ministries, and the ILO to review and identify required improvements.

Furthermore, the government established the Expert Committee on labour relations laws and systems with the task of analysing of differences between national laws and the outstanding fundamental ILO conventions. The Experts Committee is expected to complete their work and produce recommendations by July 2018.

Based on these recommendations by the Expert Committee, the tripartite partners will discuss about specific ways to improve laws and systems necessary for ratification of the ILO fundamental conventions. The outcome of the tripartite discussion at the end of 2018, will hopefully allow the government to submit a legislative package to the National Assembly at the earliest possible moment.

The EU side noted that this marks a welcome move to the appropriate level of engagement needed to make progress on implementation of the shared labour commitments in the TSD chapter of the Korea-EU FTA. Close attention will be paid by all stakeholders to ensure that such a level of engagement is maintained.

### **Reforms on freedom of association**

The Korean side presented the Presidential proposal for constitutional amendment, which includes the recognition of the three basic labour rights of public officials in principle that was submitted to the National Assembly on 26 March 2018, and the decision recognizing the Korean Government Employees' Union (KGEU) as a legal union.

### **The effective implementation of ratified ILO conventions**

Regarding the effective implementation of ratified ILO conventions, the Korean side reiterated that there was more work to be done by both sides and expressed its interest in EU members' status of implementation of the ILO Conventions. It requested further information on the cases pending at the Committee of Freedom of Association of the ILO and the case of North Korean workers in forced labour situation in Poland.

The EU side admitted that some EU Member States were also facing challenges in implementing ILO Conventions as seen in the cases of violations of ILO Conventions of its Member States. It said that the EU-level support had been provided to its Member States to help them comply with the ILO conventions. The EU side explained that the status of implementation of the ILO Conventions in the EU Member States is being assessed and compared by using a scoreboard method.

### **Recent trends on labour market trends**

With regard to exchange of information on labour market trends, the Korean side shared information on recent trends in the labour market and elaborated on the government's employment policies including the policy roadmap for job creation.

The EU side introduced the recently proclaimed "*European Pillar of Social Rights*" and added that it had been calling for all EU Member States to ratify the ILO Protocol of 2014 to the Forced Labour Convention. Following the exchange the EU side agreed to share with Korean side more details on the "*European Pillar of Social Rights*".

## **3. Discussions on environmental policies**

With regard to discussion on environment policies, both sides presented current status of their policies on a series of common issues of interest including green growth, circular economy and climate change, and agreed to continue to further cooperate and share relevant information.

As regards the environmental policies, the Korean side provided a general overview of the Framework Act on Resource Circulation, which entered into force as of 1 January 2018. The EU side explained EU's strategy for plastics while emphasizing the need for a new approach to the management of micro plastics. Both sides mutually agreed to provide various types of information in the follow-up to the meeting and deepen cooperation on plastic management.

As regards the climate policies, the Korean side explained how Paris Agreement is being implemented in Korea and both parties further discussed ways to strengthen cooperation on climate change. The EU side mentioned that the cooperation on Emissions Trading Scheme between EU and Korea has been successfully operated so far, yet more profound policy discussions on carbon pricing would be desired.

The EU also referenced to initial discussions on the new cooperation project on implementation of the Paris Agreement discussed at the Joint Committee in Brussels in December 2017 and proposed to advance together this project with the target of organizing the relevant events in 2019, possibly at the margins of next UNFCCC National Adaption Plans (NAP) Expo in April 2019. Both sides agreed to share policies and information on carbon pricing and other relevant areas in the follow-up to this meeting.

#### **4. Discussion on CSR cooperation**

With regard to cooperation under the FTA, recognizing the importance that companies voluntarily take their social responsibilities, both sides shared the view that the governments need to play a more active role in promoting corporate social responsibility (CSR) and Responsible Business Conduct (RBC). Based on this understanding, both sides agreed to expand their cooperation on CSR and RBC.

#### **5. Any other business**

Following initial discussion at 5<sup>th</sup> CTSD in 2017 both Parties agreed on developing together the Rules of Procedure for the TSD Panel of Experts based on text proposal sent by the EU side in July 2017. The Korean side agreed to send their comments on draft proposal shortly after the meeting.