**Keynote Speech**

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Good morning.

First, I would like to thank Dr. Fernand de Varennes, UN Special Rapporteur on Minority Issues, for giving me this opportunity to present our experiences and activities relating to hate speech in this forum.

The global spread of COVID-19 pandemic is transforming our daily lives. Just as we have a virtual meeting today, untact has become the new normal for our society.

As noted in the COVID-19 Guidance of the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, the pandemic has brought numerous challenges to a society, government, community and individuals across political, cultural and social spheres.

The COVID-19 pandemic does not care who we are, where we live, what we believe or other factors that define us. The pandemic itself generates panic and fear, which are exacerbated by hatred and discrimination against an infected person. Furthermore, it creates feelings of fear and panic among minority groups and poses a threat to their daily lives and survival.

Taking note of the relationship between the spread of COVID-19 and instances of online hate speech, the National Human Rights Commission of Korea conducted a big data analysis for hate speech found on social networking sites and other online platforms from January through May of 2020.

The analysis revealed a surge in hateful language targeting vulnerable groups based on their ethnicity, sexual orientation/gender identity, place of origin and religions along with the spread of the pandemic.

This shows that hate speech blames different groups for the outbreak of social disasters and fears about the virus justify discriminatory language about specific groups.

We found a decline in hate speech thanks to the work of the government, the Commission and other related bodies stressing the importance of solidarity and cooperation and the efforts to generate counter-speeches. However, we have not seen a wide range of voices in public debates yet.

We need to create a message to effectively combat negative prejudices underlying hate speech, but just as important is to generate counter-narratives against hate speech that show the civil society’s support and solidarity with target groups. We learned that such efforts to build counter-narratives created the effects of tackling hate speech and ensuring the inclusion of socially disadvantaged groups.

This shows that increased capacity of civil society to combat hate speech is very important. States should speak out against hate speech and actively support capacity-building efforts of civil society.

Back in 2019, the Commission established a Hate Speech Project Team out of recognition of the importance of actively addressing the issues of hate and discrimination. We have since worked to build a public consensus and raise public awareness of hate speech issues to promote efforts to combat hate speech in different sectors of society.

In particular, it is essential to eradicate discrimination and realize equality as hate speech reinforced structural discrimination against vulnerable population. Recognizing the need to achieve equality, the Commission issued a recommendation on the enactment of equality law that regulates hate speech against marginalized groups in June 2020.

Distinguished participants,

The United Nations Strategy and Plan of Action on Hate Speech, released in May 2019, states that “tackling hate speech is the responsibility of all – governments, societies, the private sector. (....) All are responsible, all must act.”

Measures such as penalizing the authors of hate speech or removing hateful contents have their limits and thus should be accompanied by social and institutional responses to fight intolerance and discrimination based on certain characteristics.

Each sector of society should be encouraged to establish their own norms to tackle hate speech. Institutional efforts need to be made to ensure civil society actors provide solid support for victims as well.

In January 2020, the Commission released a declaration against hate speech along with media and media advocacy groups, which reaffirms the role of the media in combating hate speech.

Furthermore, the Commission has been collaborating with Kakao, one of Korea’s leading portal sites, and the Korean Society for Media Law, Ethics and Policy Research, an academic research institute, since June 2020 to lay the theoretical foundation to address online hate speech.

Such collaboration will result in guidelines on self-regulation of hate speech on media and online platforms.

Mr. David Kaye, UN Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression, stressed that portal site operators should redefine their roles as a defender of human rights in dealing with online hate speech last year.

In doing so, they will be able to conduct various activities such as user education, awareness-raising campaigns and support for development of counter-narrative contents as well as regulating online hate speech.

The COVID-19 crisis has not only caused immense suffering for many people, but also offered us invaluable experiences and insights.

I hope that States actively establish a framework that makes sure that each sector of society plays its part to pay attention of the issues of minority groups and ensure their inclusion in public dialogues.

Thank you.