

South Korea

CONTEXT:

South Korea's stance on women's issues and the Women, Peace, and Security (WPS) agenda reflects its ongoing struggle with traditional patriarchal ideologies and its commitment to advancing women's rights and gender equality. Since the 1970s, South Korea has witnessed a robust women's civil society movement advocating for gender equality. However, challenges persist, such as a significant gender wage gap, low female employment rates, and societal expectations that often force women to leave their jobs post-marriage to focus on household and childcare duties, reinforcing male dominance and gender division domestically.

Since 2017, South Korea has significantly enhanced its involvement in the WPS agenda. This escalation was signaled by the historic appointment of the nation's first female Foreign Minister and the creation of a National Action Plan in 2014, following Resolution 1325. Through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA), South Korea broadened its foreign policy scope, focusing on collaborative efforts in development, humanitarian support, and peacekeeping operations. A key aspect of MOFA's dedication to the WPS agenda is its support for victims of conflict-induced sexual violence, channeled through its increasing Official Development Assistance (ODA), which is largely concentrated in Asia and aims to bolster peace and security in vulnerable states.¹

Recent political developments have also influenced the gender equality landscape. The election of a conservative government, which has expressed skepticism about gender inequalities, has mobilized women activists advocating for peace, justice, and equality. This political shift underscores the dynamic nature of gender politics in South Korea and the ongoing efforts to promote gender equality amidst a culturally dominant patriarchal framework.²

¹ Jung, Yeonju and Tsujisaka, Ayako. (2019). "Emerging Actors in the Women, Peace and Security Agenda: South Korea and Japan". SIPRI, Stockholm

² WILPF International Secretariat. (2022). "The Fight for Gender Equality and Peace in South Korea Following Presidential Election". Women's International League for Peace & Freedom

IN SUPPORT OF:

As South Korean delegates enter negotiations, there are items that they would like to discuss and are willing to push to include in the Regional Action Plan:

1. Receive apologies and reparations for victims of Japanese Imperial soldiers wartime sexual slavery ("comfort women") from Japan.³ Restoring the honor of the grandmothers is a deeply emotional issue for South Korea.
2. Incorporate WPS agenda throughout all phases of foreign aid policy and international development cooperation to countries experiencing direct conflict.
3. Allow for regular dialogue between South and North Korean women's groups.
4. Promote universal rights of women based on international standards of gender equality. All countries should adopt the same standards on women's rights. South Korea believes this will lead to a fair and just world.
5. Adopting policies that allow South Korea to balance its relationships with both the U.S. and China. South Korea relies on China economically and the U.S. for national security, so maintaining a balance between both countries is essential.

OPPOSED TO:

There are also items which South Korea does **not** want to include in the Regional Action Plan, but may be willing to compromise on if an adequate trade off is met. *Remember that you don't have to offer these right away in a negotiation.* These include:

1. Calls to reduce national military expenditure and reallocate resources to address social issues. The South Korean government views this as a threat to national security.⁴
2. Pressure to address domestic WPS issues, including gender-based violence, feminist issues, or the gendered impact of militarization. WPS is seen primarily as an international initiative for humanitarian assistance
3. Any policy proposal that concedes too much to Japan. South Korea still feels distrustful of Japan due to the history of colonization.

³ [Republic of Korea WPS National Action Plan \(2021-2023\)](#)

⁴ [People's Solidarity for Participatory Democracy. \(2020\). "Himeul tonghan pyeonghwa daesin siminui anjeon, yeoseongui annyeong, cheongnyeoni miraega bojangdoeneun jeoggeukjeok pyeonghwa". \[Active peace that guarantees the safety of citizens, the well-being of women, and the future of youth, instead of peace through power\].\(Korean\)](#)