Speech by Ki June Yoo, head of the Korean delegation

1st GLOBE Climate Legislation Summit

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Ladies and Gentlemen, Good morning! My name is Ki June Yoo, president of GLOBE Korea and member of the Korean National Assembly. It is a great delight and honor to take part in the 1st GLOBE Climate Legislation Summit.

First of all, let me introduce GLOBE Korea. GLOBE Korea was founded in November, 2009. We have about 36 legislators from the ruling and opposition parties. Today, I’m here with 3 other members from GLOBE Korea. May I introduce Hon. Jae Yun, Kim; Hon. Seong Ho Park and Hon. Eun He Ryu.

Next, I would like to talk to you about what the Korean National Assembly has done for the past decade to address climate change, and what kinds of efforts and achievements we have made so far.

The Korean economy is highly dependent on overseas trade, and is primarily led by energy-intensive industries. Knowing that, Koreans used to view anti-climate change policies as just a hindrance to economic growth. As a result, the Korean administration took a passive stance on greenhouse gas reduction for quite a long time.

However, a small but significant change had begun in the beginning of New Millennium, 2000. The National Assembly began to call upon the administration to take more action against climate change in the early 2000s. In 2001, the 16th National Assembly formed the "Special Committee on Climate Change" to provide its assessments of and opinions on the government's response to climate change. The committee was regarded as the leading anti-climate change organization in Korea as it monitored all the ministries' policies, which was essential since climate change affects every part of society.

The committee continued its work through the term of the 17th National Assembly. The key activities of the special committee can be seen in the following three steps. First, the committee suggested emission rights trading as a necessary tool for carbon reduction, and called on each ministry to take the appropriate measures, especially in the form of designing and implementing industrial and environmental policies. Second, it asked the Ministry of
Foreign Affairs to become more actively engaged in the negotiations on the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change. Even though Korea was not listed as an Annex Ⅰ country in the Kyoto Protocol, the National Assembly believed that the country should do more to meet the global community's expectations, rather than remaining in the mere status of a developing country. Third, it urged the forestry authorities to make greater efforts to boost greenhouse gas absorption. That demand initiated support for tree planting and care in the third countries, including Mongolia.

Then the Lee Myung-bak administration, who is a current president of the South Korea, took office in 2008, and set a whole new direction for the country's climate change policy. As a national strategy, it adopted the "Low Carbon Green Growth Policy," which was based on the concept of sustainable growth, and began to take much more progressive approaches to counteract climate change. The new administration's enthusiasm is best exemplified by the fact that it announced its intention to reduce down carbon emissions in Korea by 30% against BAU by 2020, even though Korea was not obligated by the Kyoto Protocol to reduce emissions.

In support of these efforts made by the administration, the Korean National Assembly enacted and revised many laws on climate change. First, the Korean National Assembly established the "Low Carbon Green Growth Act" in 2009 in order to set up the necessary systems and institutional groundwork to pursue low-carbon green growth in an efficient and orderly manner, with greater harmony between the goals of economic development and environmental protection. This was done by seamlessly linking and combining the various measures for climate change mitigation and sustainable growth which had been implemented by different ministries under separate laws. Encompassing both environmental policies and economic policies, the "Low Carbon Green Growth Act" presented the primary principles of climate change control, methods of climate change impact assessment, and recommendations for a stronger climate change adaptation policy. It also stipulated the formation of the Presidential Committee on Green Growth, which would oversee all climate change policies. Of note is that this act set a reduction target for the first time as a non-Annex Ⅰ country, and also defined rules for emissions trading.

The Korean National Assembly also introduced the "Act on the Allocation and Trading of Greenhouse Gas Emission Permits" in 2012 to use market mechanisms as a means for
emissions reduction. In the face of the resistance from steelmakers and other industries during the enactment process, the National Assembly effectively arbitrated between the administration and business sectors, thus helping South Korea to become the world's third country to adopt the cap-and-trade system following the EU and New Zealand. The National Assembly also revised the "Energy Use Rationalization Act" to implement the Greenhouse Gas/Energy Target Management System and enable more direct command and control of carbon emissions.

In order to expand the use of renewable energy and decrease emissions from fossil fuel combustion, The Korean National Assembly revised the "Act on the Promotion of the Development, Use and Diffusion of New and Renewable Energy" and replaced the feed-in tariff system with a Renewable Portfolio Standard. The Korean National Assembly also amended the "Clean Air Conservation Act" to set a fleet average standard and cut transportation-related emissions. Under these new laws and amendments, Korea secured necessary tools for greenhouse gas reduction in the three largest emitting sectors: energy (Renewable Portfolio Standard), transportation (fleet average standard), and industry (emissions trading and Target Management System).

The National Assembly is also assisting developing countries with climate change adaptation. Since 2008, we have significantly increased climate change ODA (Official Development Assistance) financing, part of which has been allocated for the "East Asia Climate Partnership" through the Korea International Cooperation Agency. Moreover, the National Assembly approved the budget for the Global Green Growth Institute and the Green Climate Fund Secretariat, paving the way for Korea to step up its engagement in global efforts against climate change.

After 10 years of such hard work by the National Assembly, South Korea successfully put in place a systematic and extensive legal framework for climate change control, and became one of the top green countries leading the world's legislative activities to cope with climate change.

Currently, the National Assembly is preparing new measures to help the incoming administration better respond to climate change. For instance, we plan to revise the "Government Organization Act" to integrate climate change-related ministries, and the "Traffic, Energy and Environment Tax Act" to launch green tax reforms.
I have briefly outlined the efforts the Korean National Assembly has made so far to cope with climate change and the outcomes of its legislative activities.

Parliaments have a very crucial role to play in addressing climate change, a challenge which is hard to address without detailed and binding laws. South Korea had to overcome many difficulties in order to pass the laws that I have mentioned so far. I know this because I played a key role in reviewing and passing those bills as the head of the Legislation and Judiciary Subcommittee and the ruling party's administrative secretary on the Special Committee on Climate Change, which devised most of the bills on climate change in Korea. During the legislation processes, we faced many obstacles, including industry worrying about the negative impact on economic growth, civil groups demanding even stronger regulations, and the administration trying to keep hold of its regulatory power. Despite the hardships, however, the Korean National Assembly achieved a breakthrough, and I am very proud to share this story with you today.

I believe the Korean National Assembly's experience and accomplishments will inspire many other countries working to build an institutional framework for climate change control. And I am convinced that the GLOBE Summit will serve as an invaluable platform for climate change-related discussions and exchanges among parliaments worldwide.

In closing, I extend my deep gratitude to the Rt Hon.(Right Honourable) John Gummer, Lord Deben, and the members of the GLOBE Secretariat for organizing this wonderful event. I also express my heartfelt appreciation and respect for the legislators who have graced us with their presence today.

Thank you.