



The Civil Society Forum under the EU-Korea Free Trade Agreement
5th meeting in Brussels 20–21 February 2017

CONCLUSIONS

1. The Civil Society Forum (CSF) under the EU-Korea Free Trade Agreement held its fifth meeting in Brussels on 20–21 February 2017. It was co-chaired by Mr Georgi Stoev (Eurochambres) and Mr Kiu-Sik Bae (Korea Labor Institute).
2. The meeting provided the EU side with an opportunity to welcome the new Korea Domestic Advisory Group (DAG) Chair and to look forward to their fruitful cooperation.
3. The CSF expressed regret that its meeting was not held in conjunction with a meeting of the Committee on Trade and Sustainable Development (CTSD), as was established practice, precluding an exchange of views. While expressing understanding for the technical explanation of that lapse on this occasion – which should not create a precedent – the CSF insisted that its co-chairs should be invited to address the next CTSD meeting.

On Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)

The CSF

4. expresses the view that there is scope for further discussion and cooperation, and exchange of best practice on CSR, with a view to contributing to sustainable development in the EU, Korea and third countries;
5. recognises the efforts made so far in both the EU and Korea about developing national action plans;
6. agrees to build on lessons learnt and to enhance cooperation on CSR policy and practice, with regard to:
 - environmental aspects of CSR;
 - further implementation of the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights, including sharing information on the development of National Action Plans and implementation of human rights due diligence;
 - enhancement of the performance of the National Contact Points (NCPs) for the OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises;

7. invites the DAGs and the Committee on Trade and Sustainable Development (CTSD) to consider joint EU-Korea projects and cooperation on the implementation of the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights and the OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises, and to consider organising a follow-up on these questions at the next CSF.

On economic relations between the EU and Korea

The CSF

8. underlines that the European and Korean economies are highly developed and that the digitisation is spreading fast in nearly all industrial sectors, as well as in the daily life of the citizens; therefore notes that the impact of digitisation on jobs, fundamental rights, the organisation of work and the labour markets in general and the environment should be studied in the coming years and discussed at the CSF.

On labour standards

The CSF

9. welcomes continued ILO contribution to its work;
10. expresses concern for shortcomings in the implementation of the ILO Fundamental Rights and Principles Conventions in EU Member States and the continued lack of effective implementation in Korea;
11. welcomes that the texts setting out progress to date and further intended steps toward ratification of ILO fundamental and other up-to-date conventions had been shared with the CSF in 2015 as requested;
12. recalls however that the CSF had unanimously expressed disappointment with the lack of progress and concrete steps, in particular regarding the ratification and effective implementation of the ILO fundamental conventions;
13. regrets that Korea's explicit agreement to prepare and share, before this meeting, texts setting out intended concrete steps towards removing obstacles for ratification of the core ILO conventions has not been respected;
14. urges the Korean Government to step up its actions in this regard, including using the technical expertise available in the ILO, and to commit to set out progress and concrete steps toward the ratification of ILO fundamental and other up-to-date conventions before the next meeting of the Committee on Trade and Sustainable Development (CTSD);
15. reiterates its request that the two DAGs should be involved in the development of that text along with the timeline.

The CSF asks the Korean Government

16. to ratify the remaining ILO fundamental conventions, notably No 29 and 105 (prohibition of forced labour), as well as No 87 and 98 (freedom of association and the right to collective bargaining) which is a commitment under Article 13.4.1 of the FTA;
17. to address the persisting shortcomings of effective implementation of the ILO Fundamental Conventions and in particular the issues identified by the ILO supervisory mechanism;
18. to engage constructively in social dialogue with representatives of employers and workers on issues of designing and applying labour and employment policy and law.

The CSF

19. recalls that nobody should be detained for trade union activities in the EU and in Korea.

The CSF requests the EU Member States

20. to effectively implement all fundamental and up-to-date ILO Conventions by taking immediate action to address comments of the ILO Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations (CEACR), in particular, on Conventions No 87 (Hungary, Poland, Romania, Spain, Sweden and UK) and on Convention No 98 (Germany, Poland, Romania, Slovenia and Sweden), and open Freedom of Association cases (Romania and Spain).

The CSF

21. stresses that the ILO, due to its mandate, tripartite structure and expertise, is best placed to provide assistance for its member states in improving their record in ratification and implementation of the ILO Conventions; recommends the Korean Government and the EU member states not implementing ILO core conventions to seize this opportunity and to use technical assistance of the ILO experts;
22. expresses strongly the hope that the EU-Korea Joint Project on ILO Convention No. 111 will be conducted with more input from Korean stakeholders and concluded satisfactorily and provide independent conclusions that can form the basis for further work and evaluation;
23. decides to continue its discussion and work in this area.

On environmental issues

The CSF

24. notes that the tragedy happened by humidifier sterilizers in South Korea raises the need for the EU and Korea to investigate the tragedy thoroughly and come up with more fundamental actions against such tragic accidents related to chemical substances or products in the context of applicable laws and corporate social responsibility;
 25. recalls that the participants in the supply chains have a responsibility to protect the resource they rely on and for the decarbonisation of the environment;
 26. recommends that both the Korean government and the European Commission consider a co-investment scheme in order to find cost-effective investment solutions to decarbonisation in road infrastructure and production processes;
 27. underlines that the existence of sustainable seafood creates economic stability both in terms of the price of the fish and seafood as well as the needs for employment throughout the supply chain, from catch to processing to sales;
 28. underlines that electric vehicles can be a crucial part of green economy which can bring job creation as well as greenhouse gas reduction, and recommends both Parties to cooperate and collaborate in bringing about technological innovation to improve battery performance and fast charging mechanism;
 29. considers that the seafood industry and the government can have a huge leverage on fisheries and farms by creating a market incentive for sustainable seafood.
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