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*Delegation for relations with the Korean Peninsula*

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8.11.2022

## MISSION REPORT

following the 22nd EU-Republic of Korea Inter-Parliamentary Meeting (IPM),  
Seoul, 19-21 September 2022

Delegation for relations with the Korean Peninsula

Members of the mission:

Lukas Mandl, Chair of the Delegation (PPE) (Leader of the mission)

César Luena, First Vice Chair of the Delegation (S&D)

Emil Radev (PPE)

David Cormand (Verts/ALE)

Thierry Mariani (ID)

Michiel Hoogeveen (ECR)

Elena Kountoura (The Left)

Francesca Donato (NI)

## ***Introduction***

From the 19 of September to the 21 of September 2022, the Delegation for relations with the Korean peninsula (DKOR) paid an official visit to Seoul on the occasion of the 22nd EU-Republic of Korea Inter-Parliamentary Meeting. The programme of the visit included meetings with a variety of interlocutors from the National Assembly, the government, civil society organisations, as well as European and Korean businesses. The visit took place in the same week as a mission of the Industry, Research and Energy Committee of the European Parliament (EP).

The previous EU-Republic of Korea Inter-Parliamentary meeting took place on the 4<sup>th</sup> of November 2019, in Brussels.

## ***Context***

Seven years after the last visit of DKOR to the Republic of Korea (RoK), the timing of the mission was a very good one for at least three reasons.

Firstly, the mission took place a few months after the presidential elections (9 March 2022), which have led to a change of government. A previous mission, planned for May 2022, was cancelled due to the fact that post-electoral changes in the government and parliament were ongoing (a parliamentary by-election took place in 7 constituencies in June 2022). In this context, the agenda of the mission included meetings with high-level stakeholders of the Republic of Korea - EU relation.

Secondly, the composition of the Parliamentary Diplomacy Forum EU-Korea, DKOR's counterpart, has been decided shortly before the visit, which allowed meaningful exchanges to take place in the format of the IPM.

Moreover, the geopolitical context sheds new light on the importance of the EU-Republic of Korea strategic partnership and both partners are interested in further deepening the relations. Korea is increasingly looking to establish itself as a "global pivotal state" and its interest for the EU has increased. From the EU's point of view, the Republic of Korea is a like-minded partner and one of its strategic partners in the Indo-Pacific.

## ***Summary account of meetings***

The mission had a high-level programme, which included:

- The Inter-Parliamentary Meeting (the agenda is in Annex 2).
- Bilateral meetings with the Speaker of the National Assembly, the Deputy Speaker of the National Assembly, as well as with the Chair of the Foreign Affairs and Unification Committee.
- The Chair and Vice-Chair of DKOR met with Prime Minister of the Republic of Korea.
- Meetings with the Minister of Defence and the Minister of Unification.
- Meeting with the European Chamber of Commerce in the Republic of Korea.
- In their efforts to grasp the human rights situation in North Korea, DKOR met with NGOs active on this topic.
- DKOR equally had a tour of the Joint Security Area border zone and was briefed by the United Nations Military Armistice Commission.
- Together with ITRE Members, DKOR visited the Hyundai Motor Studio.

The full programme is attached at the end of this report (Annex 1).

### ***Inter-parliamentary meeting***

The exchanges in the framework of the 22nd EU-Republic of Korea Inter-Parliamentary Meeting were very fruitful and constructive. The discussions focused on a variety of topics, such as the political and economic relations between the EU and the Republic of Korea, the efforts to curb climate change, energy transition, the lessons learned from the COVID-19 pandemic, disinformation, cybersecurity, the Russian war in Ukraine, as well as relations with China.

During the meeting, the role of parliamentary diplomacy in reinforcing understanding between democracies at a local and global level has been underlined. In this context, the importance for the EU and the Republic of Korea to continue to work together in the areas of climate change, energy, pandemics, poverty and economic polarisation, as well as the need to reflect on actions to address the public distrust in politics, has been emphasised in the discussions.

### ***EU - Republic of Korea strategic partnership***

The discussions held in Seoul, indicated that in a complex international environment, the relations between the EU and the Republic of Korea are increasingly important for both sides. The Republic of Korea is one of the EU's strategic partners in a region where there is a clear ambition to increase the engagement, as shown by the recent EU's Strategy of Cooperation for the Indo-Pacific.

The Members of the DKOR delegation and their interlocutors agreed that the strategic partnership between the EU and South Korea, decided in 2010, translated into a deepening of the relations over the past decade. During the discussions, it has repeatedly been underlined that, although the geographical distance is significant, there is great closeness in values and solidarity (freedom, democracy, human rights). The Members of the EP emphasised the EU's readiness to further strengthen the relations with the Republic of Korea, politically and economically. The upcoming EU - Republic of Korea Summit, as well as the reinforcement of cooperation in the climate and digital areas under discussion, will be opportunities in this respect.

Beyond the economic and trade relations, which have traditionally played a significant role in the relations between the EU and the Republic of Korea, DKOR interlocutors underlined the EU can play a vital role in favour of peace and in supporting denuclearisation.

Different DKOR interlocutors mentioned the Republic of Korea's desire to host the World Expo in 2030 in Busan and expressed hope for the support of the Members of the EP in this matter.

## ***The Russian war in Ukraine***

The Members of the EP welcomed the support of the Republic of Korea regarding the Russian aggression of Ukraine. DKOR Members equally pointed out that the Russian war in Ukraine is also a war against the whole of Europe, as well as a war against the world order.

The interlocutors of DKOR underlined that the Republic of Korea has been clear with regard to the Russian aggression, qualifying it as illegal. Moreover, although South Korea is generally reluctant to the imposing sanctions, the country aligned with the joint EU and US sanctions. During the different exchanges, the unity and the strong stance of the EU regarding the Russian aggression has been positively noted.

Throughout the exchanges, the importance for the European Union and the Republic of Korea to continue to work together for peace has been emphasized.

The importance of the First Parliamentary Summit of the International Crimea Platform, taking place in October 2022 in Zagreb (Croatia) has been underlined.

## ***Economic and trade relations***

The Members of the EP and their interlocutors emphasised that the free trade agreement, agreed in 2011 and ratified in 2015, had a very beneficial effect on the economic and trade relations between the EU and the Republic of Korea. Total trade in goods grew by 70.8% from 2011 to 2021, while trade in services showed a significant increase of 72.2% in the same period. For the EU, the Republic of Korea is its ninth largest export destination for goods. For the Republic of Korea, the EU is the third largest import market and the third largest destination of exports.

At the same time, the exchanges held in Seoul pointed out that there is significant potential for further development of trade and investment relations. In this respect, the discussions held with the European Chamber of Commerce in Korea, the benefits of a modernisation of the FTA have been underlined by the European businesses.

DKOR Members repeatedly raised the question of market access for European beef in the Republic of Korea. During the meetings, they received reassurances that particular attention will be given to this question.

The Members of the European Parliament underlined the importance for the Republic of Korea to ratify the last of the four fundamental International Labour Organization (ILO) Conventions - the 1957 Convention on the Abolition of Forced Labour Convention 105. In the EU - Republic of Korea trade agreement, both sides committed to respect international core labour rights and standards, including to make continued and sustained efforts towards ratifying the ILO fundamental conventions. The different interlocutors of DKOR explained that on-going debates on the concrete implications of the ratification in the Republic of Korea delayed the ratification and that a certain number of issues are still to be clarified, such as regarding military service.

A visit to Hyundai Motors Group has shed light on the technological and innovation advancements in the field of electric cars.

### ***Other areas of cooperation***

The Members of the European Parliament regularly raised the question of the energy transition and the importance of an EU - Republic of Korea green partnership. They have been informed that the objective of the Republic of Korea is to become carbon neutral by 2050. The intention of the current administration of the Republic of Korea is to increase the share of nuclear energy (around 20% of the energy mix in the present, soon to be 30%). The interest of European enterprises to invest in renewables in South Korea has been underlined at the meeting with the European Chamber of Commerce in Korea.

Regarding the area of security and defence, there is an increased interest from the Republic of Korea to engage with the EU in the area of security and defence (including cyber security and maritime security). The presence of the Republic of Korea at the last NATO summit positively welcomed by both sides, as well as the participation in the Atlanta operation. Both DKOR Members and their interlocutors expressed willingness to work closer in the area of disinformation.

The interlocutors informed DKOR that South Korea is currently preparing an Indo-Pacific Strategy, which can be an opportunity for cooperation. South Korea remains a key partner of the United States and has a complex relation with China, where trade plays a significant role, as Beijing is the first trade partner of South Korea.

DKOR Members insisted on the gender equality topic in the light of the current debates in the Republic of Korea. The question of the anti-discrimination law and death penalty moratorium were also repeatedly raised and discussed.

### ***Relations on the Korean peninsula***

The different interlocutors explained to the DKOR members that relations on the Korean peninsula are at a low point. According to the discussions, it seems that currently there is not openness on North Korean side for negotiations. In 2022 and until the time of visit, North Korea has conducted 31 ballistic missile launches, 6 of which inter-continental ballistic missiles. It is also suspected that a seventh nuclear test is under preparation. Moreover, few days before the visit, on the 8th of September 2022, the Supreme People's Assembly promulgated a new law on its nuclear policy. The new law lowers the threshold for nuclear use, by mentioning the possibility of pre-emptive strikes.

The exchanges, in particular with the Minister of Unification and the Minister of Defence, allowed the Members of the EP to gain further insight into the "Audacious Initiative" announced by the recently elected President Yoon Suk-yeol. The strategy consists in proposing an economic and humanitarian package to North Korea that is conditional on concrete steps towards denuclearisation. The interlocutors equally pointed out to the recent appointment by the Republic of Korea of a human rights envoy for North Korea, Ms Lee Shin-hwa.

The Members of DKOR, together with the ITRE delegation, equally had the opportunity to visit the Joint Security Area border zone. The briefing by the United Nations Military Armistice Commission gave the Members further insight into the security situation in the peninsula.

## ***Human rights situation in North Korea***

The Members of the EP had the opportunity to gain insight into the situation of human rights in North Korea both during a meeting with civil society organisations working on the matter, but also during the exchanges with the rest of the interlocutors. The Members were informed that the pandemic had a severe impact on the situation in North Korea, as the current regime has used the pandemic related restrictions to further control its citizens. The border with China has also become less permeable, increasing the difficulties for those trying to escape North Korea and limiting trade on the black market. As a result, the economic difficulties encountered by the population have increased, leading to high rates of malnutrition. Forced labour continues in prison camps, as well as in mining areas.

As previously mentioned, in July 2022, the government of the Republic of Korea appointed an ambassador for human rights in North Korea, that the Members of the EP had the opportunity to meet as well.

## ***The role of the European Parliament and follow-up to the mission***

The Republic of Korea is one of the most important partners of the EU in the Indo-Pacific, a region growingly recognized as strategic. In this context, the EP has strong interest in continuing its engagements with the Republic of Korea in at least four areas.

Firstly, through the activities of its committees and of DKOR, the EP should continue to monitor the implementation of the EU - Republic of Korea trade agreement, as well as the EU - Republic of Korea Framework Agreement, which provides the overall structure of the strategic partnership. In particular, the EP should increasingly follow the areas which have been pointed out during the DKOR visit as having a high potential for increased cooperation, such as the green transition, digital, as well as security and defence. Visits of the parliamentary committees to the Republic of Korea focused on these topics would allow the continuation of the constructive exchanges with the government, National Assembly and other relevant stakeholders, held by DKOR in Seoul.

Secondly, consideration should be equally given to ensuring a parliamentary dimension of the upcoming EU - Republic of Korea Summit.

Thirdly, the discussions on how to strengthen the resilience of democracies in a complex international environment, where autocracies are gaining ground, should be pursued. The role of the parliaments and their cooperation in this respect has been underlined numerous times during the visit. Therefore, the EP should use its instruments to further exchange best practices and stimulate a common reflection with the National Assembly of the Republic of Korea on how to address the challenges faced by representative democracies.

Fourthly, the different interlocutors expressed strong interest for the EP to continue to play a diplomatic role in the region, in fostering peace and supporting efforts of denuclearisation. The experience offered by the European history, give the EP an importance advantage in this respect as it is the only EU institution to have diplomatic contacts with North Korea. The role of the EP in improving the humanitarian and human rights situation in North Korea has been particularly emphasised.

DKOR Members reiterated they stand ready to facilitate any efforts to foster dialogue and build lasting peace, given its neutral position and historic experience of the European integration process.

***List of annexes:***

1. Final list of participants
2. Final programme of the visit
3. Final agenda of the EU - Republic of Korea Inter-parliamentary meeting
4. Press release

Annex 1



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*Delegation for relations with the Korean Peninsula*

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**22nd EU-Republic of Korea Interparliamentary Meeting**

*Seoul*

**19-21 September 2022**

**FINAL LIST OF PARTICIPANTS**

<b><u>Members</u></b>	<b><u>Group</u></b>	<b><u>Country</u></b>
Mr Lukas MANDL, <i>Chair of the Delegation</i>	EPP	Austria
Mr César LUENA, <i>First Vice-Chair of the Delegation</i>	S-D	Spain
Mr Emil RADEV	EPP	Bulgaria
Mr David CORMAND	Greens/EFA	France
Mr Thierry MARIANI	ID	France
Mr Michiel HOOGEVEEN	ECR	The Netherlands
Ms Elena KOUNTOURA	GUE/NGL	Greece
Ms Francesca DONATO	NI	Italy

**Staff DG EXPO**

1 Desk Officer

1 AST

**Political Group Advisors**

4 political groups advisors, EPP, S&D, ID, The Left

**Interpreters**

6 interpreters - 2 FR/EN, 2 ES/EN, 2 KR/EN





Европейски парламент Parlamento Europeo Evropský parlament Europa-Parlamentet Europäisches Parlament  
Euroopa Parlament Ευρωπαϊκό Κοινοβούλιο European Parliament Parlement européen Parlaimint na hEorpa  
Europski parlament Parlamento europeo Eiropas Parlaments Euopos Parlamentas Európai Parlament  
Parlament Ewropew Europees Parlement Parlament Europejski Parlamento Europeu Parlamentul European  
Európsky parlament Evropski parlament Euroopan parlamentti Europaparlamentet

Annex 2

## *Delegation for relations with the Korean Peninsula*

### **22nd EU-Republic of Korea Interparliamentary Meeting Seoul, 19-21 September 2022**

## **Final programme**

### **Monday 19 September 2022**

Time	Programme
17:30 – 18:30	Debriefing session with the HoD
19:00 – 21:00	Reception with EU Member States Ambassadors, DKOR+ITRE MEPs, Korean guests

### **Tuesday 20 September 2022**

**Seoul**

Time	Programme
09:00 – 10:00	Meeting with North Korea CSOs
11:00 – 11:45	Meeting with Kim Jin-pyo, Speaker of the National Assembly
12:00 – 13:20	Luncheon Meeting with Kim Young Joo, Deputy Speaker of the National Assembly  Participants Lawmaker Lee Jae Jung Lawmaker Lawmaker Kim Kyung hyup Choi Wong Shik, Chief Secretary of Deputy Speaker
13:30 – 14:30	Meeting with Yun Jaeok Chair of Foreign Affairs & Unification Committee  Participants Lawmaker Lee Jae Jung Lawmaker Kim Seokki
14:30 – 16:00	Inter-parliamentary Meeting Free discussion on agendas  Participants Lawmaker Lee Sang Min Lawmaker Her Euna Lawmaker Park Sooyoung
16:00 – 17:00	Transfer to Hyundai Motor Studio
17:00 – 19:30	Visit to Hyundai Motor Studio and Dinner Reception with ITRE Programme

- 17:00-18:00 Hyundai Motor Studio tour
- 18:00-19:30 Welcoming Reception by high-levels

## Wednesday 21 September 2022

Time	Programme
08:00 – 09:30	<b>Seoul → JSA area</b>
09:30 – 11:00	Briefing by the United Nations Military Armistice Commission (UNCMAC) and tour of the Joint Security Area border zone
10:30 – 11:00	Transport to Prime Minister Office
11:00 – 12:00	<b>Meeting with Prime Minister Han Duck-soo with FVP KARAS, DKOR Chair &amp; vice-chair, ITRE Chair</b>
12:30 – 14:30	<b>Lunch with European Chamber of Commerce in Korea (ECCK) and ITRE</b>  <b>Participants from ECCK:</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Dirk Lukat, ECCK Chairperson, President and CEO of DB Schenker</li> <li>2. Christoph Heider, ECCK President</li> <li>3. Sukhee Cho, Chemical Committee Chairperson, Korea GPS Director, P&amp;G Korea</li> <li>4. Goyoung Moon, Energy and Environment Committee Chairperson, Country Chair, RWE Renewables Korea</li> <li>5. Andrew Hongjoong Kim, Passenger Vehicles Committee Chairperson, Director of External Affairs, Mercedes-Benz Korea</li> </ol> <b>Programme:</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Opening Speech by HoD</li> <li>- Introduction by DKOR Chair MANDL</li> <li>- Introduction by ITRE Chair BUSOI</li> <li>- Introduction of ECCK by Mr Dirk Lukat, ECCK Chairperson</li> <li>- Introduction of respective committees (chemical, energy &amp; environment, and passenger vehicles) + market environment, 5 to 10 minutes</li> <li>- Free discussion &amp; Q&amp;A</li> </ul>
15:30 – 16:30	<b>Meeting with Minister of Unification</b>
17:00 – 17:30	<b>Meeting with Minister of Defense</b>
17:30 – 18.45	Free time (dinner)
19:30 – 21:30	<b>Visit Gyungbukgung Palace at night with ITRE</b>
21.30 –	End of Programme

Green: with ITRE

Annex 2



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# FINAL AGENDA

## 22nd EU-Republic of Korea (RoK) Inter-Parliamentary Meeting

Seoul, 20 September 2022

### 0. Opening session

- Opening remarks by the Chair of the EU-RoK Parliamentary Diplomacy Forum and by Mr Lukas Mandl, Head of the Delegation for Relations with the Korean Peninsula
- Adoption of agenda
- Adoption of the minutes of the 21<sup>st</sup> EU-RoK Joint Meeting (tentative)

### 1. Political and Economic Situation of the EU and the RoK

- RoK: Political trend in the RoK including the presidential and regional elections
- EU: Political and economic situation of the EU including impact of sanctions against Russia and gradual recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic

### 2. Situation on the Korean Peninsula and of the International Community

- Efforts made by the RoK to establish peace on the Korean Peninsula and stabilise the conditions in neighbouring regions
- EU's Indo-Pacific Strategy
- Role of the international community including the EU and the RoK regarding the war in Ukraine

### 3. Cooperation between the EU and the RoK

- Areas such as economy, trade, climate change, connectivity, security and cybersecurity

### 4. Closing session

- Set the time and venue for the next joint meeting

Annex 3



## Statement

### **Mission of the Delegation for relations with the Korean Peninsula to the Republic of Korea, 19-21 September 2022**

The [Delegation for relations with the Korean Peninsula](#) of the European Parliament (DKOR) had a fruitful three-day visit in Seoul, South Korea (19-21 September 2022). DKOR and the National Assembly of Korea held the 22nd Inter-Parliamentary Meeting, the first one since the start of the pandemic (previous one was held in 2019, in Brussels). The Members of the European Parliament met with the Speaker and the deputy-Speaker of the National Assembly, as well as with key Ministers. The Bureau of DKOR had the opportunity to meet with the Prime Minister of South Korea.

In this context, the Chair of the delegation, Mr [Lukas MANDL](#) (EPP, AT) underlined the unwavering support of the European Parliament for the EU-South Korea strategic partnership and the determination to further reinforce inter-parliamentary cooperation.

“The European Union and South Korea are close partners, which share a like-minded approach to democracy, freedom and human rights. In a challenging international and regional environment, it is high time to reinforce cooperation and understanding between democracies. Parliamentary diplomacy has a key role to play in this respect.” declared the Chair.

Underlining the significant consequences of the Russian war in Ukraine on European and global security, the Chair welcomed South Korea’s support for Ukraine, for freedom and peace in Europe. “South Korea has a lot of experience in dealing with conventional military threats as well as with hybrid threats. Due to the Russian aggression both kinds of threats form the dominant challenges on European soil these days. I highly appreciate the clear stance of South Korea for freedom and peace” said Mr Mandl.

The Chair equally emphasized “that DKOR is closely following developments and engaging with the Republic of Korea, but also, whenever possible, with the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea, and is therefore ready to contribute to peace in the Peninsula”.

The Vice-Chair of DKOR, Mr [César LUENA](#) (S&D, ES) declared: “EU and South Korea are key partners and we were happy to see that following the presidential elections and change of power in South Korea, the country’s vibrant democracy and debates among parties are as active as before. We welcome the adoption of sanctions against Russia by South Korea”.

The Members of the European Parliament had constructive exchanges with their interlocutors on numerous topics, such as the recent developments in the trade relations, including market access for European beef, while “always being aware the outstanding and even unique mutual success of the Free Trade Agreement for both South Korea and the EU”, underlined the Chair, Mr Mandl. EU’s and South Korea’s efforts in combating climate change and in facilitating the energy transition have also been discussed, as well as gender equality and the progress in the ratification of the ILO conventions by South Korea. The human rights situation in North Korea has been a matter of particular concern for the delegation.

The Chair of DKOR, Mr Mandl, equally emphasized “the importance for the EU and South Korea to strengthen cooperation in the fields of security and defence in order to positively contribute to peace and to the respect of global rules”.