MODERNISING HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT: THE OECD PERSPECTIVE

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Welcoming Remarks

Good morning, ladies and gentlemen,

On behalf of the OECD, I would like welcome you all to this Conference on Human Resource Management in the Public Sector. My special thanks go to Dr. Kwang-Woong Kim - Chairman of Civil Service Commission, Prof. Young-Pyung Kim - President of Korea Association for Public Administration, and to the Korean Government for hosting this event. In particular, I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate the Civil Service Commission on the occasion of its third anniversary.

This afternoon, I will describe some public management trends in OECD Member countries, focusing on human resource management. And then, I would like to relay some lessons we have learned from other OECD countries’ experience, which might be relevant to the Korean context.

Ten Years of Public Management Reforms in OECD Member Countries

During the past decade, public sector reform has been a major national agenda item in many OECD Member countries. While the problems and objectives underlying those reform initiatives vary from country to country, there has been a common focus on the principles of accountability, responsibility, efficiency and transparency. Specifically:

- There has been an effort to move away from a system operating mainly through centrally determined detailed rules, to a system focusing on the nature and impact of the particular service being offered to the government or to the citizen,

- and, in paying more attention to what public servants do, to leave the public official more space to exercise discretion on how best to deliver that service, in return for stronger accountability for the results of those decisions.
The so-called “New Public Management (NPM)” movement has also spurred efforts for broader public sector reforms. There has been a greater focus on distinguishing between what governments need to do themselves and what should be done by others. This has involved a wider use of market-type mechanisms of various kinds, the adoption of ideas from modern management theory, and an accelerated uptake of IT – all aimed at more efficient and effective delivery of services.

The thirty national governments of the OECD, are all finding that the circumstances in which they operate are changing to the point that substantial public sector reform is needed. To that extent we are floating in the same tide. But our national boats are very different. Some of our Members plunged into reform ten or fifteen years ago, and are now having to pull back in some areas because of unanticipated damage to underlying public sector values. We have other Members who had thought that their governmental system was immune to the new forces–, who are now seriously addressing public sector reform for the first time. We have countries who are reforming because of a legacy of too much State– and others who are trying claw back the collective interest from private hands.

This provides a rich legacy of examples – both good and bad– for a country like Korea. Common to all this experience is that traditional highly centralised bureaucracy, is not a sufficient mode of public service control in modern times. The first phase of public sector reforms has been to inject into that traditional system, the energy and diversity of a market place

**The Resurgence of the “Whole of Government” Perspective**

However, at the dawn of the 21st century, we are facing a new environment and new challenges.

- Globalisation and regionalisation of economic and social forces create a need for new capacities for governmental strategic oversight and control. In particular, the disastrous occurrences in America last year, reminds governments of the need to be better equipped for risk management.

- Greater decentralisation of decision-making can fragment policy responsibilities, posing challenges for policy co-ordination and accountability.