

MUNLawS Position Paper

Committee: Human Rights Council

Delegation: The Republic of Korea

Topic: The Implications of Plastic Pollution on Human Rights



The Republic of Korea asserts that plastic pollution is a global crisis that violates the right to health and bodily¹ integrity as outlined in Article XI of the WHO's constitution.¹ Every stage of the plastic cycle generates plastic pollution that threatens the effective enjoyment of human rights.² Microplastics contaminate air, water, and soil, posing severe health risks, while the improper disposal of plastics disproportionately impacts developing states.³ We hold that the global plastic crisis cannot be viewed solely as an environmental issue, but rather as a matter directly affecting human dignity and equality and supports United Nations Environment Assembly 5/14 22 (UNEA22) resolution to negotiate a legally binding global treaty on plastic pollution.

Multilateralism is difficult, and the Republic of Korea recognizes that limiting plastic production may result in substantial economic disruption, particularly for industries and developing economies dependent on plastic manufacturing and trade. Although the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee (INC-5) in Bussan did not succeed in producing an international legally binding instrument on plastic pollution in 2024, the international community still recognizes the seriousness of this crisis. In 2017 the UN admitted that “the world Nearing Critical Point of No Return”³ during its 73rd session. In the years since the data has only become more alarming. As expressed by UN Secretary-General António Guterres, “by 2050, there could be more plastic than fish in the ocean. Microplastics in our bloodstreams are creating health problems we’re only just beginning to understand”.

We are proud to have hosted, what remains for now, the penultimate round of discussions with the intent to develop an international legally binding instrument on plastic pollution, including in the marine environment.⁴ Furthermore the Republic of Korea supports the integration of the plastic pollution agenda into the Sustainable Development Goals, particularly SDG 14 (Life Below Water).⁵

It is the sincere belief of the Republic of Korea that developed nations both have the ability and duty to limit their reliance on single use plastics. The overproduction and mismanagement of plastics have led to severe environmental degradation and continue against the spirit of

¹ World Health Organization, *Constitution of the World Health Organization: Basic documents, forty-fifth edition, supplement* (2006), <https://www.who.int/docs/default-source/documents/publications/basic-documents-constitution-of-who.pdf>

² Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, *Plastic pollution a global threat to human rights, say UN experts* (November 21, 2024), <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2024/11/plastic-pollution-global-threat-human-rights-say-un-experts>

³ NPR, *Plastic pollution treaty talks Busan, South Korea* (Dec. 2, 2024), <https://www.npr.org/2024/12/02/g-s1-36545/plastic-pollution-treaty-talks-busan-south-korea>

⁴ United Nations News, *Talks begin in South Korea to clinch ‘essential’ deal on plastics pollution* (Nov. 25, 2024), <https://news.un.org/en/story/2024/11/1157426>

⁵ Ministry of Oceans and Fisheries, Republic of Korea, *The Republic of Korea plans to reduce marine plastics in the Seas of East Asia* (#OceanAction 46783), United Nations – Partnerships for the Sustainable Development Goals, <https://sdgs.un.org/partnerships/republic-korea-plans-reduce-marine-plastics-seas-east-asia>

Resolution 48/13, which acknowledges that having a clean, healthy and sustainable environment is a human right.⁶ To that end we have taken sizable action to reduce waste, promote recycling, and invest in the development of biodegradable materials by transitioning to a circular economy with the expectation to reduce plastic waste generation by 20% and achieve a plastic recycling rate of 70% by 2025.⁷ However we acknowledge capping plastic production too abruptly, as was a concern raised during INC-5, could cause significant disruption to industries and labor markets dependent on plastic manufacturing. Nevertheless, we maintain that a gradual transition is both necessary and achievable.

The Republic of Korea commends the continued work of the international community to develop a global framework to end plastic pollution. While INC-5 did not reach a final legally binding instrument in 2024, this outcome should not be regarded as a failure, but rather as a delayed milestone in our collective journey to defend human rights. These discussions progressed the detangling of a highly complex issue which impacts the entirety of the planet. We reaffirm our commitment to working with all member states and international organizations to develop a binding treaty between nations to safeguard our collective future. “This is not about closing a treaty at any cost. It is about closing a wound that we’re leaving open in people’s lungs, in our rivers, in our oceans.”⁸

⁶ European Commission, *UN Human Rights Council regular session | 13 September – 11 October 2021* (Dec. 19, 2021), <https://ec.europa.eu/newsroom/env/items/731544/en>

⁷ *Journal of the Korea Society of Waste Management*, https://journal.kswm.or.kr/past/view.asp?a_key=38944527

⁸ Juan Gómez Head of Panamanian delegation to INC-5.2. GAIA, Ambitious majority countries reject chair’s weak treaty text, fight for plastic production cuts, August 13, 2025, <https://www.no-burn.org/ambitious-majority-countries-reject-chairs-weak-treaty-text-fight-for-plastic-production-cuts/>

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Topic: Countering Disinformation



"With all kinds of fake news, my intention for political change was nowhere to be seen and all that was left was grave scars to my family and myself, and to the honour of the UN, where I spent the past 10 years"¹ (Ban Ki-Moon). By definition the goal of disinformation is to spread malicious intent and cause public harm.² In the digital age its rapid spread has transformed society impacting affects a broad spectrum of human rights. The proliferation of disinformation distorts the democratic processes violating the right to free and fair elections outlined in Article 25 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR). Access to accurate information is essential for ensuring that elections are free and fair. Disinformation intentionally misleads voters about candidates and political issues, thereby influencing electoral behavior.³

The right to protection against discrimination within Articles 20 and 26 of the ICCPR is also undermined. With distressingly increasing frequency disinformation has been used to exploit societal divisions and incite violence against those such as migrants or ethnic minorities. Most recently disinformation challenges the right to health (Article 12 ICCPR) as false information related to vaccines adversely impact persons from making informed decisions to protect their health putting themselves and the public at greater risk.

The emergence of Artificial Intelligence (AI) has continued to distort the democratic processes even further. Fundamental laws against defamation can no longer keep pace with the flood of content published with the intent to mislead the public. We wish to highlight that this technology can lead to civil unrest and encourage hostilities between states.

The Republic of Korea believes disinformation is an evolving threat to the realization of fundamental human rights.⁴ To address this challenge we have implemented a legal framework domestically that gives us the ability to evolve with the threat in order to safeguard these rights. This includes the Public Official Election Act passed in 2024 which prohibits the use of political deepfakes within 90 days of an election.⁵ The Korea Communications Standards Commission (KCSC) has played a central role in collaborating with digital platforms to curb the spread of

¹ (Ban-Ki Moon) Secretary General to the UN Kim, J., & Ju-Min Park. (2017, February 1). *Ex-U.N. chief Ban rules out presidential run in South Korea complaining of "fake news"*. Reuters. <https://www.reuters.com/article/world/ex-un-chief-ban-rules-out-presidential-run-in-south-korea-complaining-of-fake-idUSKBN15G3IS/>

² Global Partners Digital, *Disinformation and human rights explained* (June 1, 2023), <https://www.gp-digital.org/a-human-rights-based-approach-to-disinformation/>

³ Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, *International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights*, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/international-covenant-civil-and-political-rights>

⁴ United Nations Secretary-General, *Countering disinformation for the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms* (Report A/77/287, Aug. 12, 2022), <https://docs.un.org/en/A/77/287> Digital Library

⁵ *90-day ban on deepfake political ads passes parliamentary special committee*, The Korea Times (Dec. 5, 2023), https://www.koreatimes.co.kr/www/nation/2023/12/251_364513.html

disinformation. The KCSC was key to ensuring the fairness of our own 2020 parliamentary elections through partnering with independent actors to remove false claims of voter fraud online.⁶

We support international cooperation in strengthening global information integrity against disinformation campaigns. In line with General Assembly resolution A/RES/76/227, the Republic of Korea calls for enhanced multilateral efforts to promote media literacy and digital education. All forms of disinformation can negatively impact the enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms, as well as the attainment of the Sustainable Development Goals.⁷ Therefore it is our duty to utilize this forum to seek out solutions. In that context, already the partnership between the UN and the Maharat Foundation within Lebanon has proved fruitful in restoring information integrity. Through open communication the program has succeeded in raising awareness related to responsible use of social media, the impact of false narratives on public trust, and the role of media in combating disinformation.⁸

The freedoms at placed at risk by disinformation cannot be addressed by states alone. As stated, disinformation campaigns evolve at an ever-increasing rate and will require active collaboration with International Organizations built on a foundation of multilateral commitments. Therefore, Republic of Korea reaffirms its commitment to upholding the principles within the UDHR and ICCPR in order to confront this threat alongside our fellow member states.

⁶ UNLawS, *Human Rights Council Study Guide*, (Nov, 2025)

https://www.munlaws.com/_files/ugd/b73616_a816d6c534ee42d98454f2df6f1119cc.pdf

⁷ United Nations General Assembly, *Countering disinformation for the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms* (A/RES/76/227, Dec. 24, 2021), <https://docs.un.org/en/A/RES/76/227>

⁸ Office of the United Nations Special Coordinator for Lebanon, *United Nations Lebanon and Maharat Foundation launch second phase of #InformationIntegrity campaign in support of the reform process* (Oct. 31, 2025), <https://unscol.unmissions.org/united-nations-lebanon-and-maharat-foundation-launch-second-phase-informationintegrity-campaign>