

# Press Release

November 24 (Wed) Morning Edition



2010 World Forum on  
Hansen's Disease

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## 16 million people with Hansen's disease around the world look to Korea!

- Korea convenes the world's first international forum on the restoration of human rights  
and promotion of welfare for people with Hansen's disease worldwide -

The 2010 World Forum on Hansen's Disease is being held under the theme "Isolation to Integration," at COEX, Seoul, and Sorok Island from November 24 (Wed) through 27 (Sat) under the sponsorship of the Ministry of Health and Welfare and the Organizing Committee of the 2010 World Forum on Hansen's Disease (co-chaired by National Assemblyman Kim Choon-jin and President of Hanvit Welfare Association Lee Gil-yong).

At the Forum, Minister of Health and Welfare Chin Soo-hee said that:

- The Korean government decided to hold this forum to present a forward-looking model to countries where people with Hansen's disease still face discrimination;
- This forum would serve as a critical starting point to strengthening international efforts to address HD issues, raise awareness about HD, and improve the quality of life of people affected by Hansen's disease (PAHDs); and
- She called upon global citizens to overcome prejudice against

PAHDs and actively take interest and participate in the efforts to improve their quality of life.

- This Hansen Forum is **the first ever international meeting to focus on restoration of human rights of PAHDs and promotion of their welfare**, breaking away from the previous international meetings intended to address only health and medical issues such as eradication of Hansen's disease.

- **About 40 speakers are attending the meetings** including delegates from countries where HD is endemic, such as India, Cambodia, Ghana, and the Philippines; HD experts from the US, the UK, Norway, and other countries; representatives from international organizations such as WHO; and people from the academia, legal community, and media.

\* About 1,000 people from 17 countries are attending the forum.

- At the opening ceremony held in COEX auditorium on November 24 (Wed),

- **In a videotaped congratulatory message, UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon** said:

“For centuries, people thought there was no cure. Now we know better.”

“The global prevalence of the disease has been cut by 90 percent over the past two decades. We are on the verge of eliminating leprosy as a public health problem. But discrimination continues. Patients are still denied their rights. We have to help them.”

“That is why this Forum is so important and why the very holding of it represents real progress. You will be sharing

experiences on how to empower patients and get solutions."

"People with Hansen's disease know better than anyone else what they need. They should be consulted every step of the way. Working together, we can give every patient the treatment they deserve and protect the right of every person with Hansen's disease to live fully and equally in society. I wish you a most successful forum. The United National, especially the World Health Organization (WHO), will work closely with you now and in the future."

- At the Forum, **former Prime Minister Han Seung-soo and the late Dr. Lee Jong-wook (his wife Leiko Gabraki on his behalf) will be conferred the Hansen Contribution Award.**
- **Shin Young-soo, WHO Regional Director for the Western Pacific, and Kim Moon-soo, Governor of Gyeonggi Province, are expected to deliver keynote speeches.**
- In addition, the "**Seoul Declaration**" on the restoration of human rights and promotion of welfare for PAHDs will be **adopted and proclaimed.**
  - The "Seoul Declaration" consisting of 12 provisions includes recommendations and resolutions to make concerted efforts against the social unfairness and oppression endured by PAHDs.
- The co-chairmen of the Organizing Committee, National Assemblyman Kim Choon-jin and President of Hanvit Welfare Association Lee Gil-yong, said that 16 million PAHDs around the world are taking a great deal of interest in the Hansen Forum in Korea.

- They also hoped that this Forum would present Korea's policy on Hansen's disease as a forward-looking model to the countries with high incidence of HD;
- It also would provide an opportunity to seek measures for international cooperation and build an environment conducive to creating a public consensus regarding Hansen's disease issues; and
- It would further pave the way for helping PAHDs worldwide heal their pain, improve their quality of life, and regain their human dignity by proposing new guidelines on HD policy.

Spokesperson for the Organizing Committee of the 2010 World  
Forum on Hansen's Disease