

Joint Media Release

Fourth KORUS Global Vaccine Partnership Expert Group Meeting

On February 10, 2022, the ROK Deputy Minister of Health and Welfare LEE Kangho and U.S. Assistant Secretary of Department of Health and Human Services Loyce Pace met virtually to co-chair the fourth meeting of the KORUS Global Vaccine Partnership Expert Group. The Expert Group was launched at the U.S. and the ROK leaders' summit on May 2021 to strengthen joint response capabilities for infectious diseases through U.S. and ROK vaccine cooperation.

At today's meeting, the U.S. and the ROK discussed aligning the ROK's New Southern Policy and the U.S. vision for a free and open Indo-Pacific in the field of vaccine cooperation, scientific exchanges and collaboration on infectious disease research and development, and shared experiences on COVID-19 response. From the US side, attendees included the U.S. Department of State, Health and Human Services, and the White House, and from ROK side, attendees included the ROK Ministry of Health and Welfare, the Blue House, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and the National Institute of Infectious Diseases.

- The U.S. and the ROK identified ways to strengthen cooperation on supply of vaccines and medical essentials and to expand on visiting scientist programs in the Indo-Pacific region. The U.S. and the ROK discussed initiating subject matter expert exchange programs between researchers in the ROK and the U.S. and establishing groundwork to promote joint research.
- The U.S. and the ROK shared what they have learned in responding to the COVID-19 pandemic over the past two years and the policy implications. The U.S. presented humanitarian and regulatory perspectives on its vaccine dose-sharing experience, and offered ongoing technical assistance as the ROK pursues its own donations. The ROK announced its global workforce training plan including biomanufacturing workforce training of low and lower middle-income countries (LMICs), which will start in June 2022 for 300 trainees.

Since the KORUS Global Vaccine Partnership Expert Group was launched in June 2021, the U.S. and the ROK have continued discussing various ways of cooperation on responding to COVID-19 Pandemic.

- At the first and second meetings, held with the launch of the KORUS Global Vaccine Partnership Expert Group in June 2021, discussion was focused on securing and strengthening the supply chain of raw materials for vaccines. The U.S. and the ROK discussed possible solutions to relieve supply constraints. In follow-up discussion, the U.S. and the ROK agreed to use the COVAX Marketplace as one solution.
- In September 2021, the third meeting was held to discuss R&D cooperation on infectious diseases. The U.S. and the ROK shared their respective interests on joint research in the field of clinical research, genomic sequencing, vaccine/therapeutics development, basic research on infectious disease, and development of new pharmaceuticals. Experts from the ROK National Institute of Infectious Diseases, Korea Research Institute of Bioscience and Biotechnology, Korea Health Industry Development Institute, and the US National Institutes of Health participated in this meeting.

- In September 2021, during the UN General Assembly in New York, two events showcased the Global Vaccine partnership between the U.S. and the ROK. In a KORUS Global Vaccine Partnership MOU Signing Ceremony, Cytiva, one of the largest global suppliers of raw materials for vaccine, rendered its intention to invest 52.5 million USD in Korea. In addition, eight MOUs were signed on future cooperation between the U.S. and ROK companies, research institutes, and universities. In the KORUS Global Vaccine Business Round Table, vaccine related companies and research institutes gathered together to discuss future cooperation in development, manufacturing, and R&D on vaccine and related consumables. These two events embody cooperation between the ROK and the U.S. vaccine companies and research institutes to jointly respond to the global health crisis through the KORUS Global Vaccine Partnership framework.

The U.S. and the ROK will continue to strengthen cooperation on responding to the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond, and will contribute to betterment of the global community by utilizing the KORUS Global Vaccine Partnership expert group as a shared platform. The U.S. and the ROK will broaden and deepen their bilateral cooperation on manufacturing and vaccine supply and other ancillary supplies, securing the supply chain of raw materials, and continuing research and development (R&D) related to COVID-19 and other emerging infectious diseases.