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# Korean Responses to Environmental Challenges: Origin, Drivers and Impacts of Green Growth on Development

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- ❖ **Introduction**
- ❖ **Korean Background**
- ❖ **Dynamics of the Major Env. Policies in Korea**
- ❖ **Low Carbon Green Growth Policy & Responses to Climate Change**
- ❖ **Implications for Developing Countries**
- ❖ **Conclusion**



# Introduction

- **Korean environmental issues & responses in the historical & contemporary contexts**, and implications for developing countries
- **To provide an overview of Korean initiatives, policies and programs** that address environmental concerns and emerging climate change issues
- **To discuss what other developing countries can learn** from Korean experiences of dealing with the environmental issues



# Korean Background

- **Economic development system ('development dictatorship')**
  - between the mid '60s and late '80s
  - 'the strong state', superior in the power relationship
  - the social structure producing irrationalism in terms of balancing economic growth and environmental conservation
  
- **Public awareness & Democratization process raised**
  - environment movement: pre-history ('60s-'70s), era of the anti-pollution ('80s)  
era of new environment movement (since '90s)
  - grassroots level movement, participation & politicisation



- **Sustainable Development & Governance approach**
  - encompassing the economic, social, and environmental sectors
  - allowing increased participation of the private & voluntary sectors
  - Presidential Commission on SD kicked off
  
- **Response to Climate Change & Establishment of PCGG**
  - Green Growth project driven by the Lee Myung-Bak gov.
  - Presidential Committee of GG (since '08) carrying out a range of policies and programmes in the fields of Climate Change



# Dynamics of the Major Env. Policies in Korea

- rapid industrialisation & urbanisation
- serious environmental problems appeared from the '70s
- **Economic growth and environmental degradation ('60s to '80s)**
  - **Environmental Pollution Prevention Act** in 1963 focusing on sanitary issues
  - Not resulting into effective implementation of environment policies
  - **Exceptional environmental policy: Green Belt** since 1971
    - 5.45% of the national territory & 37% of the urban area
    - to hide a range of military facilities for Seoul
    - to reduce rapid growth in population & industrial concentration



- **Effects of Green Belt policy**

- **protection** of agricultural land, environmental & natural resource
- **pressure** to greenbelt landowners & developers
- Since '97, greenbelt **released for development purposes**

- **Relationship between per capita income & env. indicators**

- 'inverted U-shaped relationship': in '80s, 10 % of the average annual growth rate, industrial waste 90% & CO2 75% increased

- **In '80s, precautionary approach developed**

- economic incentive, environmental effects evaluation



- **Social and Political Responses and Transition in the Globalisation era ('80s to early '00s)**
  - **'environmental right'** article enacted in the constitution
    - civic awareness & civil environmental movement enhanced
  - '90s as the era of **new environmental movement**
    - **1992 Rio World Summit, Local Agenda 21**
  - Raised to the status of gov. dept. → **Ministry of Env. in 1994**
    - plural environmental laws system
  - **Economic inducements:** volume-rate garbage disposal system, burden charges, deposit-refund systems
  - **Environment Monitoring & information systems**





- **Since '00s, the transition of environmental policy**
  - **constitution of PCSD & preparations for the global CC response**
  - PCSD to create a national strategy & policies on SD
  - **policy integration** between the economy, society & environment
  - on the basis of **governance practices for SD**
    - principles of **multi-stakeholder participation & participatory decision-making** between gov. & non-gov. actors
    - distinguished from the existing command/control mechanism, economic incentives for enterprises



# Low Carbon Green Growth Policy & Response to Climate Change – since the 2000s

- **GG to create a win-win synergy between env. protection & economic growth**
  - the GG initiative Lee Myung Park gov. since '08
  - weight on experts regarding specific issues
- **In 1992 joined UNFCCC, in 2002 Kyoto Protocol**
  - **Non Annex I country**, increasing international expectation of Korea
  - mitigation & adaptation policies of CC carried out
- **GG National Strategy & Five-Year Plan**
- **Basic Act on Low Carbon GG & Four-River Restoration Project**



## ● Limits of GG policy: going forward of backward?

- **In the adversarial relationship with civic env. groups**
  - lack of a range of discussions, no attention to the factors of SD
  - growth strategies to secure profits of the industry & business
  
- **Much weight on Green New Deal & Four-River Restoration**
  - facing a backlash from a number of civic groups → ‘helter-skelter’ mater plan, a trigger for the Great Canal Construction Project
  
- **Failed to earn social consensus**
  - biased human constitution of the head committee
  
- **Re-focus on social equality as an over-arching plan for SD required**



# Implication for Developing Countries

- Korean experiences offer useful insights
- **Importance of early and preventive action**
- **The democratization process and people's participation**
- **Awareness-raising, interest groups, research, NGOs, engagement of intellectuals and media – environmental movement**
- **Facilitate the participation of and cooperation among people, communities, civil society, NGOs, the business and the gov.**



- **Green belt policy**
- **Application of the environmental improvement charges system and a range of technologies and information systems**
- **Significant fiscal allocations**
- **Leadership in developing a national strategy for GG**
- **International cooperation, aid and mutual knowledge transfer are necessary**
- **Debate between green growth and sustainable development**



## Conclusions

- ❖ Korean society has **unitedly stood up against the environmental degradation** and been able to **create effective pressure on the government and the business sector** to change their policies and programs to appropriately respond to growing environmental concerns
- ❖ Demonstrated **leadership, initiative, significant fiscal allocations and attempted to mobilise** all sectors together to address the common cause



# Conclusions

- ❖ Achieving a **balance between economic growth, environmental sustainability and people's wellbeing** will remain as an ongoing challenge for many countries
- ❖ While adapting Korean experiences, developing countries need to **focus on their own innovations and local solutions**



**Thank you**