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Supplemental Complaint by "Youth 4 Climate Action"

(Executive Summary)

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3 July 2020

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- **Petitioners filed Supplemental Complaint on 15 May to provide the Constitutional Court with objective analyses on the science and facts behind climate change.**

- **Supplemental Complaint discusses:**

1. Scientific analysis on the causes of climate change and prospects for damage
2. International response to climate change
3. Current status and prospects of climate change in Korea
4. Objective assessment of Korea's greenhouse gas ("GHG") reduction target

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➢ Background Facts about Climate Change

- There is global consensus among scientists that climate is changing due to the increase in GHG emissions from various human activities.
- Korea is an active member of IPCC, implying that the government accepts data on the IPCC reports as an objective scientific fact.
- According to the IPCC, the global temperature increase is expected to reach 2.8 to 4.3°C by the end of the 21st century.

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➢ International Response to Climate Change

- The UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, concluded in 1992 to counter the threat of climate change caused by GHG emissions, is most meaningful in that the international community has reached an agreement on "the stabilization of greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere at a level where the climate system is not subject to dangerous artificial interference."

- The Paris Agreement was reached in 2015 imposing obligations on all parties involved to reduce GHG. Korea also ratified the Paris Agreement, agreeing to establish and implement its Nationally Determined Contributions.

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➢ Current Status and Prospects of Climate Change in Korea

- According to scientific evidence concerning the future of the Korean peninsula presented by the government, Petitioners are at greater risk of disasters in the future than they are now, and they are at greater risk of heatwaves and infectious diseases, and water and food scarcity.

- It is predicted that record heatwaves will become an everyday occurrence.

- More societal resources than ever will need to be poured into GHG reduction efforts to prevent greater climate change and to survive and adapt in a different climate.

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- **Korea's GHG reduction target:** Korea's GHG reduction target is short of meeting the goal of limiting the temperature rise to at most 1.5℃.
  - In 2009, the Korean government set the goal of "reducing 30% of the emission forecast by 2020" (the "2020 Reduction Target") in consideration of the level recommended by the IPCC at the time. However, the government did not reduce GHG emissions at all.
  - In 2015, the government set the goal of "reducing 37% of the emission forecast by 2030" (the "2030 Reduction Target"), which was far behind the 2020 Reduction Target. Furthermore, Korea has effectively abolished the 2020 Reduction Target.
  - As a result, the current GHG reduction target in Korea is evaluated to increase the average temperature by 3~4℃ compared to pre-industrialization.
  - Korea, Mexico, and Turkey are the only countries where GHG emissions continue to rise.

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- **Korea's 2020 Reduction Target**
  - Korean government never achieved the 2020 Reduction Target since its announcement in 2009 in Copenhagen.
  - Unlike the government's plan to reach a record high in 2014 and achieve continuous reductions, GHG emissions had increased almost continuously, especially between 2010 and 2013. Over the years the gap between the planned and actual emissions widened.
  - The government clearly acknowledges this fact in its reports.

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➢ Korea's 2030 Reduction Target

- Against the widening gap between the 2020 Reduction Target and the actual GHG emissions, the government chose to abolish the 2020 Reduction Target and instead set a much more lenient 2030 Reduction Target (i.e., a 30% reduction from the 2020 emission forecast and a 37% reduction from the 2030 emission forecast).
- The government claimed that the 2030 Reduction Target, which estimates emissions at 536 millions tons in 2030, is an "improvement" because the 2020 Reduction Target was 543 million tons. However, the difference between the 2020 Reduction Target and the 2030 Reduction Target is only 1.3% (7 million tons). The 2030 Reduction Target is a mere 10-year deferment of the 2020 Reduction Target.
- The foregoing becomes more obvious when we predict how much emissions would have been made in 2030 if we maintained a reduction path of the 2020 Reduction Target. As the 2020 Reduction Target predicts the nation's GHG emissions to peak in 2014 and then continuously decline, if the government had consistently implemented and maintained the reduction trend per the 2020 Reduction Target, the 2030 Reduction Target should have been around 350 million tons, not 536 million tons.
- If the government had not failed to comply with the 2020 Reduction Target and had not scrapped it completely, it should have been a 60 percent reduction, not a 37 percent reduction, based on the 2030 BAU.

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➢ Assessment of Korea's GHG Reduction Targets

- UN Emissions Gap Report: In order to achieve the temperature increase limit under the Paris Agreement, it is necessary to increase the current reduction target by 27% to 57% on average worldwide. Assuming that the burden is distributed evenly, the 2030 Reduction Target in Korea should fall below the level of 391 million tons (391MtCO2eq), a level that can achieve a temperature limit of at least 2°C. To keep the increase at 1.5°C, the reduction target should go down to as little as 230 million tons.
- UN Environment Program: Korea is not anticipated to meet the 2020 reduction target submitted to the United Na tions Framework Convention on Climate Change in 2010. Korea is predicted to produce levels of GHG exceeding t he 2030 Reduction Target by 15%.
- Climate Action Tracker established by Climate Analytics and New Climate Institute: Korea's 2030 Reduction Target is at a level that causes a temperature rise of 3 – 4°C, which is the second lowest level, "highly insufficient." Furthermore, the level of climate change policy currently being implemented by the Korean government to achieve the goal is "critically insufficient," which can lead to an increase in temperature above 4°C.
- Among the 36 OECD member countries, Korea's GHG reduction target rate ranks 34th.

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Conclusion

- While there is no question that climate change is caused by artificial GHG emissions and that the climate is changing at an unprecedented rate, it is also a scientifically acknowledged fact that it is possible to prevent climate crisis.
- The global community has recognized the “climate emergency” and agreed to reduce GHG emissions quickly to minimize climate change.
- Although the Korean government recognized all these scientific facts and joined the international community's agreement to prevent climate change, it has set a rather passive goal of reducing GHG emissions.
- Korea has been criticized as one of the most “climate-vicious” countries that contribute the most to worsening global climate change.
- Korea’s current GHG reduction target falls short of the minimum level required to protect the basic rights of Petitioners.