

REPUBLIC OF KOREA

TERRITORIAL ORGANIZATION

The Republic of Korea is a unitary state with a two-tiered local government system with no hierarchical link, made up of 17 regional entities and 226 municipalities. Regional governments comprise 8 provinces (*do*), one special self-governing province (*Jeju*), 6 metropolitan cities (*gwangyeoksi*), one special city (Seoul Metropolitan City) and, since 2012, a special self-governing city (Sejong), which both have a special status. The lower-level of local government includes cities (*si*), counties (*gun*) and autonomous districts (*gu*).¹



Unless otherwise indicated, all the information in this profile is taken from the previously published Voluntary National Review (VNR).²

1. NATIONAL STRATEGIES FOR SDG IMPLEMENTATION

Based on the second National Strategy and Five-Year Plan for Green Growth, in 2016 the Ministry of Environment released the **Third Sustainable Development Fundamental Plan (2016-2020)**, which is aligned with the SDGs.

1.1 NATIONAL COORDINATION MECHANISMS

The **Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA)** was nominated as the lead agency in charge of coordinating the implementation of the SDGs. SDG coordination is also the responsibility of the **Commission on Sustainable Development**, led by the Ministry of Environment. It includes civil society organizations and academia, the Office for Government Policy Coordination and the **Committee for International Development Cooperation (CIDC)** for international policies, which is led by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.³

1.2 VNR ELABORATION PROCESS

In order to prepare the 2016 VNR, the **Ministry of Foreign Affairs** held a series of meetings that were joined by different government bodies, including the Office for Government Policy Coordination (OGPC), the Ministry of Environment (MOE) and the National Statistical Office. For drafting and completing the report, experts were invited from the Hankuk University of Foreign Studies (Seoul, Republic of Korea) and the United Nations Research Institute for Social Development (UNRISD) (Geneva, Switzerland). They contributed to the report's preparation by undertaking interviews with key stakeholders, collecting statistical data, producing a background paper and providing editorial support. The VNR also reflects inputs from civil society organizations.

1.3 MONITORING

Statistics Korea has already established three mid- and long-term tasks for the implementation of the SDGs: the development of a framework for monitoring nationally relevant SDGs, research on methodologies to improve SDGs indicators in terms of scope, and the provision of technical support for other government agencies to enhance their statistical capacity. Progress toward the policy targets of the Third Plan is evaluated biennially by the **Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD)**.

1. See: https://www.sng-wofi.org/reports/SNGWOFI_2019_report_country_profiles_DEC2019_UPDATES.pdf

2. See: [https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/10632National%20Voluntary%20Review%20Report%20\(rev_final\).pdf](https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/10632National%20Voluntary%20Review%20Report%20(rev_final).pdf) (2016)

3. UCLG, 2019, GOLD V Report, <https://www.gold.uclg.org/sites/default/files/ENG-GOLD-V-2020.pdf>

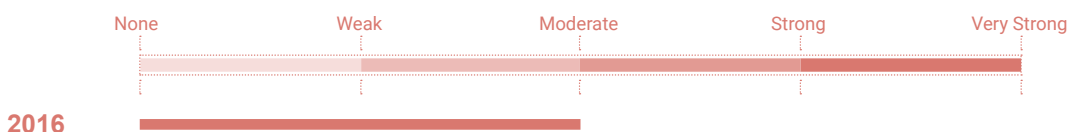
2. LRGs INVOLVEMENT IN SDG LOCALIZATION

Based on the experience of the Agenda 21 and the **Local Councils for Sustainable Development** (created in the 1990's),⁴ LRGs have taken the lead in promoting sustainable development. Local governments and NGOs have developed actions within the frame of the **Local Sustainability Alliance of Korea (LSAK)**.⁵ A number of local governments, for instance, those of **Seoul, Gwangju, Jeonju, Cheongju, Suwon, and Bupyeong District** have voluntarily established implementation strategies for sustainable development at the local level and have drafted evaluation reports to measure their progress since 2010, which provides a strong basis for the implementation of the SDGs by local governments. Also, an increasing number of local governments are joining international networks of local governments interested in issues such as climate change, environment, cultural heritages, and human rights.

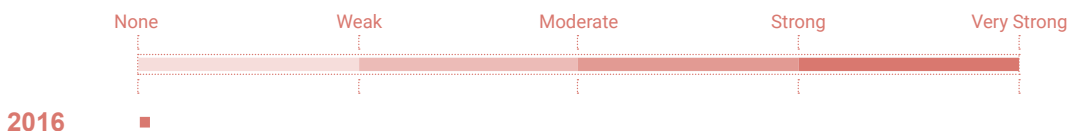
The city of **Seoul** participated partially in the 2016 VNR process, but no direct participation in the national SDG coordination mechanisms is reported.⁶

2.1 LRGs PARTICIPATION

► In the VNR process



► In national coordination mechanisms for SDG implementation



This assessment is based on the information collected in the VNR and in the Global Taskforce of Local and Regional Governments' annual survey on the localization of the SDGs.

2.2 VNR REFERENCES

There is a subsection in the 2016 VNR dedicated to local governments, acknowledging their role "in the dissemination of information and knowledge to local residents" (see VNR, 2016, p. 5).

2.3 SPECIFIC PROJECTS AND CASES

► In **Changwon**, the 2020 Environmental Capital initiative launched in 2008 planted millions of trees and reduced air pollution, urban noise and average summer temperatures by about 3 to 7 degrees celsius.

► The province of **Jeju** has committed to preserving the custom of haenyeo (women divers) as an eco-friendly sustainable fishing practice, rooted in traditional knowledge.

► Inspired by the spirit of the Asia Human Rights Charter, local governments such as **Gwangju** have carried out extensive memorial and human rights education programmes with a view to promoting peace, culture and human rights in both the city and its regions.

► Democratic reforms in South Korea in the 1990s led to the first mayoral election in **Seoul** in 1995. Seoul is pursuing sustainable development through key initiatives based on participatory urban planning and governance processes. It is the only metropolitan area in the Asia-Pacific region to attempt to address all 17 SDGs (but not all targets).⁷

4. In 1995, civil society movements led to the establishment of the Local Councils for Sustainable Development (LCSDs), a wide network of local governments and civil society organizations that has launched various campaigns related to environmental and governance issues. As of 2016, 100 out of 243 local governments had established LCSDs. LCSDs are now implementing policies directly related to the SDGs at the local level by analyzing and aligning existent projects in the context of the SDGs. As local partnership organizations composed of governments and multi-stakeholders, the LCSDs are a notable example of multi-stakeholder partnership for the implementation of the SDGs at the local level.

5. Established in 2000 as a nation-wide network of LCSDs, the LSAK has been a vital institutional platform to ensure the participation of LCSDs in policy dialogues for the SDGs at national level. The LSAK has also played a significant role in building the capacity of LCSDs in policy and implementation of sustainable development. UCLG, 2019, GOLD V Report, <https://www.gold.uclg.org/sites/default/files/ENG-GOLD-V-2020.pdf>

6. UCLG, 2019, GOLD V Report, <https://www.gold.uclg.org/sites/default/files/ENG-GOLD-V-2020.pdf>

7. The 5 examples mentioned above, including this one, are extracted from UCLG, 2019, GOLD V Report, <https://www.gold.uclg.org/sites/default/files/ENG-GOLD-V-2020.pdf>

2.4 VOLUNTARY SUBNATIONAL AND/OR LOCAL REVIEWS (VSRs / VLRs)

Not applicable.

2.5 MEANS OF IMPLEMENTATION

The 2016 VNR stresses that the national government is making efforts to strengthen domestic resource mobilization by expanding government revenue, so as to secure the financial means for SDG implementation.

3. RELEVANT INFORMATION

General comments: In 2018, the government launched a five-year Urban Regeneration New Deal with the aim of strengthening collaboration between local and national governments. In 2018 as well, a new **Presidential Committee on Autonomy and Decentralization** was set up. A revised bill, the Special Act on Autonomy and Decentralization and Local Administration, was promulgated in March 2018.⁸

3.1 WOMEN PARTICIPATION

No reference.

3.2 COVID 19

Not applicable.

4. SDG INDICATORS⁹

5.5.1. (b) Proportion of seats held by women (%) in local governments		28.3 (2018)
6.1.1. Proportion of population using safely managed drinking water services (%)	Urban	-
	Rural	-
6.2.1. (a) Proportion of population using safely managed sanitation services (%)	Urban	-
	Rural	-
11.1.1. Proportion of population living in slums, informal settlements or inadequate housing (%)		-
11.6.1. Proportion of municipal solid waste collected and managed (%)		-
11.6.2. Air pollution – annual means of particulate matter in cities (population weighted)		26.4 (2016)
11.b.2. Proportion of local governments that have adopted local disaster risk reduction strategies in line with national strategies (%)		100 (2019)

8. UCLG, 2019, GOLD V Report, <https://www.gold.uclg.org/sites/default/files/ENG-GOLD-V-2020.pdf>

9. The data used for this table come from the UN SDG Indicators Database. See: <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/UNSDG/IndDatabasePage>. More information on the country's progress towards the SDGs here: <https://country-profiles.unstatshub.org/kor>