

Acceptance Speech
by
The Honourable Dr. AHN, Myoung-Ock
Member of the National Assembly
Republic of Korea

Madame President,
WIN board of members,
My fellow colleagues at WIN who are making the best efforts for the development of the nuclear industry as we speak,
Ladies and gentlemen,

I first would like to thank you all for giving me this prestigious award. It is such a great honour to be here today. If you allow, I would like to take this opportunity to share with you my experiences and perspectives as a female scientist. But before I proceed further, let me assure you that I, as a woman nuclear professional, will do my best to be worthy of the honour you've bestowed upon me.

Women nuclear professionals from around the world!

Before I entered politics, I had worked as a scientist, doctor, and health expert just like you. Even after I became a parliamentarian, I have always committed to keeping my perspective as a scientist and policy expert in my political activities.

As a scientist-turned-politician, I realized that a country's science and technology policies are so important that it can even affect the co-prosperity and peace in the international community. Thus, I have been placed top priority on the improvement of such policies including nuclear energy policies throughout my political career.

Dear colleagues,

In the past, few Korean women participated in social activities, not to mention in the field of science and technology, including the nuclear profession. Particularly, politics was thought to be the domain of men and women were not given chances to unfold their potential. However, with social progress and change in the perception of gender roles, Korean women are now standing tall in politics, economy, society, culture and every other field as CEO, presidential candidate, cabinet member, and head of public office.

As of 2006, women accounted for 23 percent of public servants, 33 percent of first-year prosecutors, and 26.6 percent of first-year judges. Female parliamentarians increased from three percent of the 16th National Assembly to 14 percent in the current 17th National Assembly. Primary school teachers are so dominated by females that some even say that there needs to be a gender quota for men in this profession.

Female leaders in science and technology, however, have not been recognized well enough when compared to women leaders in other parts due to a lingering gender stereotyping and lack of

awareness. Against this backdrop, Korean women scientists are getting together to address the challenge.

At the centre of the efforts is the Women In Nuclear-Korea (WIN Korea). Korean women in science and technology are sharing information and enhancing their leadership by networking together with an aim to lead scientific breakthroughs not only in Korea but also in the world. I'm confident that it would not be long before WIN Korea becomes one of the most leading scientists' groups around the world, if it keeps up the good work as it has done. I would like to ask for your continued interests in the dynamic activities and contribution made by Korean female scientists.

Colleagues!

Now, nuclear energy is not just an energy source that provides electricity to homes. It is entwined in every walk of our daily lives. The potential utility of the energy is indefinite and can be maximized depending on policy making directions.

With this in mind, I co-hosted a forum on food safety improvement utilizing radiation technologies with WIN-Korea at the National Assembly in 2006 where many policy makers including officials from the administration and National Assembly members expressed positive views on the technology.

Radiation technology is now widely used for surgical instruments, cancer diagnosis, and sterilization of medical supplies such as syringes. As the use of radiation increases, more concrete safety measures, which are a necessary and sufficient condition for the full utilization of nuclear energy, shall be put in place.

Against this backdrop, I urged the government to check radiation exposure among radiologists at hospitals and come up with proper measures to enhance their safety. Fortunately, the government renewed safety standards immediately and they recently came into effect.

Women nuclear professionals!

As a country depending on imports for 97 percent of its energy demand, Korea has been deeply interested in and worked on the development of next generation energy sources. In particular, with an increasing recognition of the advantages of nuclear energy, efforts are made to ensure a safe and effective deployment of the energy source. However, the general public still harbours myths about the risk of nuclear energy, even though the safety and utility of nuclear energy have been clearly proven in food, medical and other fields in our lives. This is why we nuclear professionals have to promote public understanding about the energy and bring it closer to the people.

In this line, I would like to take this honourable opportunity to reaffirm the commitment of the members of WIN Korea including myself, to raising awareness of nuclear energy. We will also be working actively to strengthen the influence as well as expertise of female nuclear professionals.

I myself would also make the most of my sensitivity and meticulousness as a woman scientist and policy maker to contribute to the prosperity and peace of my country and beyond.

In closing, I wish the WIN Global, WIN Korea and all the members the best of luck and success. Thank you.