

## **Korea's efforts to prevent the spread of COVID-19 and SMG's message**

The Republic of Korea, since the outbreak of the first confirmed case of COVID-19 in late January, has ceaselessly conducted COVID-19 containment measures nationwide. The epidemic initially seemed to have been under control with immediate disinfection effort only until the subsequent mass infection linked to a certain religious group broke out. Now, all government agencies – central and municipal – are implementing the comprehensive measures for disease control and prevention.

It is understandable that there are many concerns over the rapid growth of confirmed cases in Korea. However, the big discrepancy in number compared to other countries comes from fast testing of symptomatic patients among a series of measures Korea has taken, and the mortality rate in Korea is also lower than the global average through prompt quarantine and intensive treatment, contact tracing and transparent information sharing.

Already, the efforts of Korea have been recognized by major media outlets around the world saying that Korea is a 'democratic but well-disciplined society' and may offer a practical model of disease control and prevention. The World Health Organization (WHO), referring to drive-through testing stations in Korea, commended Korea's disease control system and at the US House committee hearing, some mentioned that they would like to get tested at the mobile testing site in Korea

The city of Seoul, too, has been taking exhaustive containment measures in fight against COVID-19. Once a confirmed case is reported, the possible contaminated areas are being disinfected, the patient's movement is publicly disclosed to minimize further contact, and those who came into close contact with the carrier are being tested and advised to self-quarantine. Moreover, the Seoul Metropolitan Government continues to closely monitor developments related to the virus in the city under the Virus Prevention Task Force operating around the clock. The SMG has also set up several drive-through test facilities and recently launched a 'social distancing' campaign to encourage citizens to avoid physical contact with others.

Unfortunately, although the efforts of Korea to prevent the virus, some parts of the world continuously witness the imposition of entry bans and quarantine measures on Koreans without legitimate screening processes or reasonable grounds. The SMG kindly asks you and your city, while practicing the city's containment measures, to promote and refer to Korea's virus containment efforts and help counter excessive and groundless restrictions on the Korean people

It is a tough time for everyone, but the SMG is confident that our unified effort will help us win this battle against COVID-19. Finally, the SMG leaves the message which sincerely looks forward to a day when we meet again and greet each other with heartfelt handshakes and warm hugs.