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Sent: Friday, March 6, 2020 10:52 AM
To: Nadine Slocum
Subject: Korean Government's Efforts to Fight COVID-19

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Nelson Mullins represents the Embassy of the Republic of Korea in Washington, D.C.

Please kindly follow the link here to find up-to-date information provided by the Embassy on the COVID-19 situation in Korea and the Korean Government's capabilities and efforts to address the outbreak.

Thank you,

Chris Cushing

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Additional information is available at the Department of Justice, Washington, D.C.

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Embassy of the Republic of Korea in the USA

COVID-19 Situation in Korea

1. Unique Characteristics of the COVID-19 Situation in Korea

- The current COVID-19 situation in Korea is uniquely characterized by confirmed cases originating from a specific regional cluster and a single religious group, Shincheonji Church.
- The COVID-19 outbreak in these clusters appears to have begun early February, and has spread rapidly among the members of the Shincheonji Church in Daegu, which is estimated to have 9,300 members. All have been and will be tested under self-quarantine. Furthermore, all members of the Church around the country are being tracked and questioned, and tested when they report symptoms.
 - As of March 3rd, 56.1% of confirmed cases are linked to Shincheonji Church and 89% are residents in Daegu/North Gyeongsang Province.
- The number of confirmed cases in regions outside Daegu/North Gyeongsang Province remains relatively low at around 500, well within our disease control capacity.

2. Korean Government's Quarantine Capability

- The recent increase in the number of confirmed cases in Korea is due to ▲our government's capacity to run up to 15,000 diagnostic tests per day and ▲our intensive epidemiological analysis of high-risk groups. Paradoxically, the spike in the recent number of confirmed cases in Korea is a testament of our government's thorough diagnostic screening and quarantine response that aims to 'pursue and track down' possible confirmed cases by intensively focusing our capabilities to specific high-risk groups.

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- **(Diagnostic Screening Capability)** As of March 1st, the cumulative number of diagnostic tests conducted in Korea has reached 109,591. This means that 1 out of around 470 people in Korea have been tested, an overwhelmingly high ratio compared to other affected countries.
- **(Monitoring of Close Contacts)** Our Government is undertaking all possible measures to track and test those who had been in close contact with confirmed cases, even deploying police resources if necessary to utilize phone data and CCTV footage.
 - Our extensive screening goes so far as to conduct postmortem diagnostic tests on deaths with unknown causes if the deceased had shown symptoms of pneumonia or other possible markers that point to COVID-19 infection. When confirmed, we track and monitor all those who had been in close contact with the deceased before death.
- **(Concentrated Testing on High-risk Groups)** As early symptoms of the COVID-19 infection is nearly indistinguishable from those of the common cold, the Government has expanded testing protocols to include those displaying symptoms of the common cold within Daegu, a high-risk region, regardless of whether they had contact with confirmed cases.
- At the same time, our Government is focusing on speedy recovery of those infected with COVID-19 through our advanced medical care.
 - All of the COVID-19 related deaths in Korea have been either among the elderly or those with existing medical conditions. The mortality rate of COVID-19 in Korea is among the lowest in countries with more than a hundred confirmed cases.
- The number of confirmed cases in Korea is bound to increase for some time, but this is inevitable as our robust diagnostic capabilities continue to screen those with symptoms among the members of the Shincheonji Church and the Daegu/North Gyeongsang Province. Once these have all been tested, the number of new cases is likely to drop significantly.

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3. Korean Government's Prevention of the COVID-19 Inflow from Abroad

■ Even without a full entry ban on those visiting from China the Korean government has effectively blocked inflow of infection through comprehensive and watertight quarantine measures.

● In the early stages of the COVID-19 situation in January, the number of foreign nationals entering Korea from China had amounted to around 20,000 per day. Currently, that number has fallen to around 1,000 per day, a 95% decrease. The total number of foreign nationals entering Korea from China in February has decreased 78% compared to that in January.

● The huge drop is the result of various measures the Korean government has taken, such as an ▲entry ban against Hubei Province, ▲Special Entry Procedures for travelers from China including Hong Kong and Macau, ▲suspension of visas issued by our Consulate General in Wuhan, ▲tightening of visa issuance procedures, ▲suspension of visa-free entry to Jeju Island, ▲suspension of visa-free transit to third countries vis-à-vis foreigners originating from China, and ▲reduction in flights and ferry services. The Chinese Government's banning of Chinese nationals' group tour abroad and limiting individual travel have also contributed to the reduction.

※ The number of visas issued to Chinese nationals in February was 2,805, a 98% reduction from the 148,311 issued in January.

● **(Special Entry Procedure)** The Special Entry Procedure introduced on February 4th has been highly effective in monitoring all inbound travelers from China for 14 days after their arrival in Korea.

- First of all, the Korean Government has designated a separate entry hall for all travelers, both Korean and foreign nationals, from not only mainland China but Hong Kong and Macau, the hubs of Asia, and is conducting disinfection as well as fever checks on them.

- All travelers are required to submit a Health Questionnaire and a Special Travel Record Declaration, which records their contact information and address in Korea and whether they have recently visited Hubei Province. Our

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immigration officials check, on site, whether the travelers can be reached via the phone number provided. Entry is denied if they do not provide a reachable phone number.

- **(Self-Diagnosis Mobile App)** The travelers are also required to install the Self Diagnosis App on their smartphones and submit their health status every day on the app for 14 days. If they show symptoms of early COVID-19 infection for more than two consecutive days, the Korea Center for Disease Control and local authorities will follow up to take measures. Those who neglect to submit their health status is tracked down by the government to identify their location and health status.

- ※ Self-Diagnosis Mobile App statistics as of February 28 (accumulated since February 12):
△installation rate 89.3%, △health status submission rate 85.1%

- ※ Currently, 106 suspected cases detected via the App have been tested. Among those, 99 have tested negative and 7 are awaiting results.

- ※ Those unable to download the app on their phones (the elderly, 2G phone) are reached and monitored through a call center for 14 days.

- Considering that universities in both Korea and China are starting their school year soon, the respective Ministries of Education have jointly declared to recommend students currently in their home country to refrain from entering their country of study as a preemptive measure. The students that do enter their country of study are required to conduct self-quarantine measures for 14 days.

- ※ As of February 29, 15,267 Chinese students enrolled in Korean universities are delaying their return to Korea.

- Since implementing the Special Entry Procedure on February 4th, there have been two confirmed cases (as of March 2nd) among Chinese nationals who entered Korea from China after February 4th. All other confirmed cases among foreigners who entered Korea from China after February 4th have been found to have different sources of transmission such as entry from a third country and etc.

- Considering that the number of newly confirmed cases in China outside Hubei is in steady decline, imposing additional entry restriction vis-à-vis travelers from China would have little effect in preventing the further spread of COVID-19.

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4. Korean Government's Management of Outflow of Virus

- In accordance with our relevant domestic laws (Quarantine Act Clause 24), the Korean government prohibits individuals identified as COVID-19 “contacts*” from exiting Korea during their 14 day self-quarantine regardless of whether they are symptomatic of COVID-19.
 - ※ Persons who have been within 2 meter distance from an infected patient, starting one day before the patient showed symptoms, etc.
- A government official is assigned to each “contact” , who calls twice a day to check their whereabouts and symptoms during the self-quarantine period.
 - ※ Relevant domestic laws have been revised to allow heavier penalties (imprisonment up to one year and/or up to a fine of KRW10,000,000) upon violation of self-quarantine.
- Currently, nearly 15,000 Koreans, identified to have had contact with confirmed cases, have been prohibited from exiting the country.
 - ※ Among 14,517 who are prohibited from leaving the countries, about 13,000 are Shincheonji Church members from Daegu/North Gyeongsang Province.

5. Implications on Global Health Response Preparedness

- The increase in the number of confirmed cases in Korea is centered around a specific religious group (Shincheonji) and specific region (Daegu/North Gyeongsang Province), and Korea's catch-all diagnostic approach to the group and the region which screens not only those that had close contact with confirmed cases, and those that display symptoms of the common cold, but even postmortem cases when the cause of death is unknown and COVID-19 infection is deemed probable.
- It is contrary to reason and scientific evidence to impose entry restrictions against travelers from Korea solely on the basis of the number of confirmed cases when there is a vast difference in the robustness of the diagnostic capabilities and the transparency with which governments have dealt with the disease. On both accounts, Korea has maintained the highest standard by far.
- The 2019 Global Health Index (developed by Johns Hopkins University and the Economist) ranks China 51st, Japan 21st and Korea 9th among 195 countries.

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