09 November 2015
Seoul, Republic of Korea
UNV Executive Coordinator Richard Dictus discusses youth volunteering options with Korean university students. (UNV, 2015)

Youth Volunteering for Development: Forum calls on Korean students to pursue youth volunteering opportunities

100 young Korean students attended the first ever United Nations Volunteer (UNV) programme-Korea Joint Forum on Volunteering for Peace and Development at the Korean Ministry of Foreign Affairs on 8 October. The Forum heard of the overwhelmingly positive contributions young people can make to international development through volunteering.

UNV Executive Coordinator, Mr Richard Dictus, said that in order to achieve the ambitious new Sustainable Development Goals, "we must use the drive, fresh ideas and innovative approaches that young people bring". Mr Dictus noted UNV was engaging with young Koreans to meet development challenges through the Youth UN Volunteers Programme, of which the Korean Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) is a leading supporter.

The win-win of youth volunteering was also highlighted, with speakers describing the positive impacts of youth volunteering on local communities, as well as for the volunteers themselves. An independent 2013 study found that 91 per cent of UN Volunteers felt the volunteer experience had increased their employability. Another 89 per cent said their social skills improved through the volunteer experience.

Former Korean Youth UN Volunteers, Ms Jina Park and Ms Ki Jung Min, spoke of the impact their volunteering experiences had on them. Ms Min noted "if it weren’t for this UN Youth Volunteer programme, I wouldn’t have known what skills I could contribute to the United Nations. And also, the UN might have missed out on my capability and the potential I could share."

Mr Wooyong Chung, Executive Director of the Korean International Cooperation Agency’s (KOICA) World Friends Korea program provided congratulatory remarks at the Forum, and reminded the audience that youth volunteers are "global citizens capable of making a contribution to global development. We need to mobilize the passion of volunteers to overcome development challenges."
Other speakers included Dr Sangmin Nam, Deputy Head, UNESCAP East and North-East Asia Office, and Mr Dirk Hebecker, Representative, UNHCR Korea, who described the unique passion and drive of youth volunteers in global humanitarian efforts.

MOFA is one of UNV’s leading partners, and provided $1.54 million in funding in 2014 for 10 Specialist and 15 Youth UN Volunteers. The Government of the Republic of Korea also supports a new University Youth UN Volunteer Programme through KOICA.

The Youth Forum followed the first Strategic Dialogue between UNV and the Republic of Korea, where senior officials discussed the strategic direction of the long-standing partnership between the two organisations, and shared ideas for potential future collaboration.

- Republic of Korea • Youth Volunteering • KOICA • youth

Sustainable Development Goal: SDG 17: Partnerships for the goals