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Republic of Korea Demonstrates Robust Health Security Capacity Through WHO Joint External Evaluation

- Korea's preparedness and response capacity for all-hazard health risks was comprehensively assessed. These risks include infectious disease outbreaks, medical response, food safety-related issues, chemical accidents, and radiation-related health hazards.
- 93% of indicators received the highest score of 5 on the JEE scale, showing improvement across all areas compared to the evaluation in 2017.
- Korea earned high praise for its whole-of-government COVID-19 response, legal framework, and response training efforts.

Osong, 2 September 2025 –The Korea Disease Control and Prevention Agency (KDCA) announced that the Republic of Korea's health security system was recognized as robust and sustainable in the second Joint External Evaluation (JEE) led by the World Health Organization (WHO).

The WHO JEE team visited KDCA in Osong, and completed a week-long evaluation from Monday, August 25, to Friday, August 29.

In addition, throughout the visit, the team conducted on-site inspections at key sites to assess Korea's response capacity. They also reviewed collaboration mechanisms between central ministries and between the central and local governments.

Key sites visited included the KDCA Emergency Operations Center (EOC), diagnostic laboratories, Biosafety Level 3 training facilities, the Seoul Metropolitan Government Research Institute of Public Health and Environment, Cheonan Seobuk-gu Public Health Center, the Animal and Plant Quarantine Agency, Gimhae National Airport Quarantine Station, Seoul National University Bundang Hospital, and the National Stockpile Center for Disease Control Supplies.

Evaluation results showed that, out of 56 indicators across 19 technical areas, 52 indicators (93%) received the top score of 5, while the remaining 4 indicators rated 4. This reflects an improvement or maintenance of capacity across all indicators compared to the first evaluation in 2017.

* 2025 Evaluation: 52 indicators (93%) scored 5; 4 indicators (7%) scored 4.
2017 Evaluation: 29 indicators (61%) scored 5; 15 indicators (31%) scored 4; 4 indicators (8%) scored 3.

The JEE uses a five-level scoring system, with the highest score 5 indicating that a country has established and sustained capacity.

Following the evaluation across all 19 areas, the WHO team presented six key recommendations to further strengthen and sustain Korea's public health emergency response capacity.

Key recommendations included establishing dedicated, long term funding mechanisms for global health security and pandemic preparedness and response, including vaccine and therapeutic stockpiles and addressing the needs of vulnerable populations into health security planning, considering emerging societal changes, including climate change impacts (e.g., heatwaves) and population aging.

Additionally, the team urged the designation of a National IHR Authority to coordinate policies across the entire government and relevant social sectors, supporting the smooth implementation of the amended International Health Regulations (IHR). They also recommended developing and implementing a multisectoral national action plan for health security.

Commissioner Dr. Seung-kwan Lim stated, "The results of this WHO JEE will serve as a critical foundation for strengthening international cooperation and guiding policy priorities amid the increasingly complex global health emergency landscape in the post-COVID-19 era." He added, "We will continue to reinforce our public health emergency preparedness and response system, including legal,

financial, and operational frameworks, to more systematically prepare for future health threats. At the same time, we will share best practices with vulnerable countries, expanding Korea's role in the global community.”

The final WHO JEE report will be made publicly available worldwide on the WHO website around November.

* Evaluation results will be posted on the WHO website:
<https://www.who.int/emergencies/operations/international-health-regulations-monitoring-evaluation-framework/joint-external-evaluations>