Resolution Proposal Form

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Your Green Party: Green Party Korea
Country which you are representing: Republic of Korea

Resolutions Title: Unveil the Truth of Sewol Ferry Disaster!
- Call for transparency of information disclosure and enactment of a new “Special Law on the Sewol Disaster,” including an “Act on Penalties on Companies for Major Disasters”

Operative Text:
On April 16, 2014, the Sewol ferry disaster occurred on the southwestern sea of Korea, killing 304 precious lives. Most of the passengers on board were not rescued, and the victims’ families could not but watch this terrible scene. Still, nine missing persons have not been found, while the ferry is lying under the sea. President Park Geun-hye, who is now going through impeachment trial for her misadministration and corruption, was incompetent and irresponsible in responding to the disaster. Her government did nothing but avoiding its responsibility, concealing the truth, or obstructing the families and civil society’s demands for finding the truth, punishing persons in charge, and constructing a safe society. Korean people who experienced the Sewol disaster and their government’s irresponsibility began to ask about raison d'être and function of the state. Although the “Special Law on the Sewol Disaster” was enacted by the request of more than 6.5 million citizens, the “Special Investigation Committee on Sewol Disaster,” which was formed according to the law to unveil the truth, was unconstitutionally disabled and eventually forced to be dismissed. Accordingly, the victims’ families and the 416 Network of supporters formed their own civil investigation committee, but are now struggling while urging the National Assembly to enact a new special law to investigate the disaster.

The sinking of Sewol was a social disaster caused by an unjust government being absorbed in deregulation, companies giving priority to pursuit of profit rather than to life and safety, and poor disaster management system that failed to cope with contemporary “risk society.” Just as in the case of Sewol disaster, the 21st century world shows signs of risk society where the logic of economic growth and pursuit of profit is still maintained. The natural disaster of typhoon Nirgis in Myanmar in 2008 turned out to be a human disaster causing 150,000 casualties, in which the military government ignored expert opinions and declared that there was no problem, meanwhile not engaging on time in either domestic or international relief activities. The explosion of a mine in Soma, Manisa, which occurred in a month after the Sewol ferry disaster had occurred, resulted in 302 casualties. The Turkish government’s manipulation and concealment of the incident, the division of public opinions due to
media distortions, and the back-scratching alliance of government and business are very similar to the case of the Sewol disaster. In 2015, the container explosion in China’s Tianjin Port was a major accident involving 165 deaths, 8 missing persons and about 700 injured, and leaking toxic chemicals. This accident was pointed out to be due to the insufficient safety inspection and management, and to the contract firefighters’ unstable labor in the rapidly industrialized society. The Fukushima nuclear power plant accident in Japan, although caused by earthquake and tsunami, was also due to the capital-oriented social system, where work stress was increased for more profit, and labor became more flexible. These disasters are similar to the case of Sewol in the sense that the problem of social system is the cause.

We, Korean greens, trying to analyze the root cause of Sewol ferry disaster and to propose alternatives, have urged Korean government to prepare an integrated disaster response system between the central and local governments and between the public and private sectors. We have also called for the government to discontinue its indiscreet deregulation that would threaten people’s lives and security. In this context, we have requested enactment of an “Act on Penalties on Companies for Major Disasters” to regulate companies that caused serious social disasters. Against the Blue House, we have filed an administrative lawsuit to require it to disclose information related to the Sewol disaster, and pressed charge against it for refusing to do so. These activities are to ensure transparency and justice in identifying causes of disasters and to preventing further disasters.

Therefore, Global Greens urge Korean government to make a transparent disclosure of information related to the Sewol ferry disaster in order to fully investigate it and to prevent further social disasters in the spirit of solidarity that human life and safety should be secured all the more in risk society. We also urge the Korean National Assembly to enact a new “Special Law on the Sewol Disaster,” including the “Act on Penalties on Companies for Major Disasters” as a necessary measure to achieve the goals.