

Republic of Korea



Kang Kyung-wha

Candidate for Director-General of the International Labour Organization

CURRICULUM VITAE

Kyung-wha (given name) Kang (surname) served as the 38th and the first female Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Korea from June 2017 to February 2021. Throughout her career in Seoul, Geneva, and New York, she has been a steadfast advocate for human rights and women's advancement. Her footprints demonstrate her suitability for the position of Director-General of the ILO, which requires a clear vision on the importance of ensuring human-centered approach and respecting diversity and human rights in the World of Work.

During her ministerial tenure, Dr. Kang effectively steered a structural reform of the Ministry under the Organization-wide Innovation Plan to strengthen the diplomatic capacity, while promoting efficiency and inclusion in the policy-making process. During her tenure, she also actively participated in various multilateral discussions on universal human rights, including labour rights.

Also, as a member of the Cabinet, Dr. Kang took part in the formation and implementation of the government's policies for income-led growth, which was modeled after the ILO's work in wage-led growth. She successfully collaborated with the relevant Ministers and members of the National Assembly for the ratification of three core ILO conventions amidst the pandemic crisis.

Joining the Foreign Ministry in 1998, Dr. Kang specialized in UN affairs. She consequently served as Deputy Director-General for International Organizations, and was dispatched to the Permanent Mission of the Republic of Korea to the UN in New York in 2001.

Later, serving as Director-General for International Organizations in 2005-2006, Dr. Kang tirelessly engaged in negotiations at the UN General Assembly on various issues including the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD).

Furthermore, Dr. Kang played a crucial role in successfully convening the 14th Asian Regional Meeting of the ILO in 2006, which aimed to shape an agenda to address a wide range of employment and workplaces issues in the region. In early 2007, Dr. Kang joined the UN following her appointment in late 2006 to the post of Deputy High Commissioner for Human Rights by then Secretary-General Kofi Annan. For over six years in the position, she supported and complemented the leadership of High Commissioners Louise Arbour and Navi Pillay on human rights issues.

In April 2013, Dr. Kang was appointed by then Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon to the post of Deputy Emergency Relief Coordinator (DERC) and Assistant Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs. Supporting and complementing the leadership of the Emergency Relief Coordinator, Dr. Kang continued to give focused attention to vulnerable people and sought to advance their presence and voice in the humanitarian and human rights sector.

After resigning from the DERC post in October 2016, Dr. Kang served as Chief of the Transition Team of the Secretary-General-Elect. Then, as Senior Advisor on Policy to Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, she spearheaded his initiative to realize gender parity in his appointments and facilitated discussion on the restructuring of the peace architecture in the Secretariat.

Dr. Kang graduated from Yonsei University in Seoul, Korea, with a Bachelor of Arts degree in political science and diplomacy. She received MA and PhD degrees from the University of Massachusetts, Amherst in the United States. Her doctorate work was in the field of international/intercultural communication. Dr. Kang is fluent in Korean and English, and speaks basic-level French. She is married with two daughters and one son.
