

Adverse Climate that Harbors Corruption in Local Governments: Its Costs, Consequences and Prevention Measures

지방정부의 부패 유발현상에 대한 역설적 풍토에 관한 연구 : 부패의 비용, 결과, 그리고 방지 방안을 중심으로

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ABSTRACT

이 논문은 풀 뿌리 민주주의 진화과정에서 예상치 아니하게 유발된 지방정부의 부패현상의 내면에 잠복되어 있는 부패관련 주요변수의 환경요인에 대하여 연구 하고 있다. 지방정부의 부패유발은 정치, 경제적, 사회, 혹은 문화적인 요인 등 다양하다. 근원적으로 통제되지 아니한 부패에 관한 변수가 지방정부의 부패의 중요한 유발요인이 되고 있으며 이러한 것은 지방정부의 민주적 발전을 오히려 침체시키는 증거가 되기도 한다. 이 연구는 지방정부의 부패에 대한 근원과 그 영향, 그리고 방지 전략을 통하여 지방분권의 의미를 재검토하는 시점에서 시작되었다. 지방정부의 부패는 공직자의 지나친 권위, 부패행위에 대한 책임감의 결여, 공직자들의 유인효과의 부족, 연고주의, 지방재정의 취약, 토착 형 연결구조, 그리고 반 부패행위에 대한 공직자 자신들의 인지의 부족 등에서 연유하고 있다고 할 수 있다. 이러한 요인의 분석을 통하여 부패의 취약점에 대한 적절한 반 부패전략을 제시 하고 있다.

Key words: corruption in local government(지방정부부패), poor accountability mechanism(빈약한 책임역학구조), nepotism(연고주의)

I. Introduction

The persistence of corruption in diverse forms throughout different parts of the world has caused the phenomenon to be perceived as a universal one. Anti-corruption enforcements and investigations reveal the efforts of numerous

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countries to control the phenomenon. Regardless of the economic, political or social structure of a country, signs of corruption recur in different forms among various settings, including democratic societies and military dictatorships alike, where corruption materializes in wide range of forms.

Uncontrolled variables of corruption can attribute to hazardous corrupt environment in local governments. There is also strong evidence that the cost of wide spread corruption is devastating on the economy. Corruption poses an obstacle to local and national development and undermines democracy as well. Not only that, corruption also increases cost of business and deters investment and economic growth of a nation. It is often the case where a developed country is also a country with less corruption and greater transparency. Corruption further tarnishes the country's image, which can hinder the economic development by making foreign investors hesitant to invest in the nation's market.

This paper examines corruption in local governments specific to the sources, impact and prevention measures. Part 2 offers conceptual understanding of decentralization of local governments and corruption. In part 3, evidence of the impact of economy on local government is discussed. Next, in part 4, sources of corruption in local governments includes excessive authority of public officials, poor accountability mechanisms for corrupt behavior, inadequate incentives provided for public officials, financial strain on local governments, insufficient education toward costs of corruption and excessively strong interpersonal ties. Finally, part 5 offers preventive measures against corruption in local governments.

II. Conceptual Understanding of Decentralization and Corruption

Attempt to define corruption by academics, institutions and various organizations, in order to offer understanding of corruption has been myriad. Academics, institutions, and international organizations have all made attempts to capture the corruption phenomenon, including definitions, causation and effects. In an effort to fight corruption, the World Bank offers strategies intended to increase transparency and governance. The World Bank, for example, offers its conceptual framework of corruption. According to the World Bank, corruption is "abuse of public office for private gain" that "hampers economic growth, discourages public and private investment, and worsens poverty." The authors have also settled for a description of corruption as a concept originated from the analysis of mal-adjustment among

political and/or administrative systems, and its inter-relationship between political, administrative, socio-cultural environment, and politicians or bureaucrats' behavior (Kim, 2001). Common occurrence of the phenomenon and the ill-effect of corruption have often led the phenomenon to be described as a "social disease" or "cancer" that can bring dysfunction in political and administrative systems. The corruption phenomenon can spread rapidly in a society. In other words, this definition reflects "the state-society relation, where the individuals who have been bestowed authority to act on behalf of the state misuse it for private benefit. This, of course, includes politicians, civil servants, and bureaucrats." (Kim, 2005)

The concept of decentralization refers to the systematic and rational dispersal of power or authority from the center to the periphery and from the top to lower levels. In the context of the government, it involves dispersal of power to lower tiers within the structure. Moreover, different amount of decentralization can occur depending on the extent of power dispersed among lateral relationships where this type of governance is often applied in political, administrative or economic settings as well.

Myriad reasons can be given for undertaking a decentralized system but it can be summarized as twofold. First, expedited decision-making is possible through a decentralized system. Contrary to the centralized system where decision-making are limited to central authorities and decision are enforced from top-to-bottom tiers, in a relatively decentralized system decisions-making is possible by lower tiers in an organization. This produces an effect of less involvement of multiple tiers within an organizational structure in order for a decision or policy to be enforced, thereby reducing unnecessary red tape. Second, through a decentralized system, increasing citizen participation and empowering lower tiers of government allows free flow of ideas between tiers, which enable an open and democratic government.¹⁾

Though effective decentralization schemes can improve the corruption level and decentralization of government possesses positive features as mentioned above, ironically, decentralization also contributes to increasing corruption as well. In this paper, we define public officials' corruption is an expression to denote an array of fraudulent schemes, corruption and commercial offenses perpetrated by con-men, businessmen and public officials alike. Meanwhile, public officials' corruption in local government refers to a complex and administrative phenomena of public officials, or

1) The detail refers to the following source: Alex B. Brillantes, Decentralized Democratic Governance Under the Local Government Code: A Government Perspective, Philippines Journal of Public Administration, Vol.XLII, Nos. 1& 2(Jan, April 1998), 38-57.

related citizens' deviant behavior resulting from violation of socio-cultural norms, political, and administrative expectations, especially in local government setting.

III. Consequences of Corruption in Local Government: Environmental Analysis of the Hazards of Corruption in the Local Government

Environmental hazards of corruption in local government are ample, including economical and political consequences. Despite some impressive economic growth rates achieved among Asian countries in recent decades, for instances, there has been a growing concern over the widespread corruption in many countries within the region. Such concern is relatively reasonable since one of the most costly consequences of corruption is its negative impact on economic growth and development, and the distortion of the allocation process. Corruption may distort the allocation of resources and the performance of the government in many ways. This section discusses the impact of corruption in local governments.

Korea, along with many developing countries, altered its centralized government joined the trend of decentralization in the beginning of the 1990s. The advance toward a decentralized government, however, has caused corruption to occur at higher volumes. Though many authors' opinion differs on the precise effect of decentralization government on corruption, a decentralized government easily harbors a climate for corruption. The initial intent of decentralization of the central government was to promote the grass-root development of democratization of the national government within a relatively short time frame. The hope was that the self governing providences would reinforce the development of the national government. This expectation was overly optimistic, however. Greater autonomy of the local government produced an unfortunate result of rampant corruption. Rather than producing national development, it resulted in a hinderance to growth since corruption in local governments has been considered as a costly setback of national and local development.

Indications of corruption increase at local government level after decentralization is also supportive. Public officials and CEOs of local government exemplify higher number of offenses than previous years. [Table 1], for instance, show instances of charges brought against public officials in local government for various offenses including bribery, violations of Election Laws or political fund Laws(An, 2007).

[Table 1] Indictment against Local Government CEOs²⁾

City or Province	Total			Violations of Election Laws or Political Fund Laws			Bribery			Miscellaneous Offenses		
	1T	2T	3T	1T	2T	3T	1T	2T	3T	1T	2T	3T
Total	23	60	78	4	24	49	16	33	24	3	3	5
Seoul	4	4	8		3	7	3	1	1			
Pusan	1	2	3		1	1	1	1	2			
Taegu	2	1	6			5	2	1				1
Incheon		3	2		1	1		2	1			
Kwangju		1	1						1		1	
Daejeon			2			1						1
Ulsan	1	2	3		2	1				1		2
Kyunggi	3	10	12		1	8	3		4			
Kwangwon	3	2	3			1	3		2			
Choongbuk	2	3	3	1	2	2			1			
Choongnam	1	4	4		2	3			1			
Cheonbuk	2		5		2	3			2	1	1	
Cheonnam	1		9		2	8	1		1			
Kyungbuk	4	5	8	3	4	4	1		4			
Kyungnam	1	5	8		4	4	1		4			
Jeju	1	2	1				1				1	1

Sources: An, Kwang Hyun(2007), A Study on the Corruption Perception of Local Government CEOs in Korea(Ph.D. Dissertation), Seoul: Soongsil University, 67.

2) 'T' refers to term.

Not only does corruption among public officials of local government increase due to decentralization of the government, but corruption increase is evident in the private sector of local governments. CEOs within the local government were indicted for corruption in greater [Table 1] demonstrates. [Table 1] reveals a rapid increase of corruption incidences in local government as the terms pass. For instance, a total of 23 CEOs(9.3%) were indicted in the first term of local government, while a 60 CEOs(24.2%), in total, were indicted in the second term. In the third term, however, a total of 78 CEOs(31.5%) were indicted. Thereby, a total of 248 CEOs were indicted since the local government system started in the beginning of 1990s. This is ironical in a sense in Korea since the grass democracy got strong challenge against corruption evils. The figures reflect an ironical result: though grass-root development of democracy was to promote national development, in actuality, the occurrences of corruption retarded the process of advancement.

Other instances of rampant corruption are demonstrated in recent reports as well.¹³⁾ The survey by Transparency International (TI) reveals that over a majority of Koreans interviewed distrust the government's anti-corruption policies and measures. According to the agency's 'Global Corruption Barometer 2009,' only 16 percent of those surveyed perceived the government's anti-corruption measures as effective.

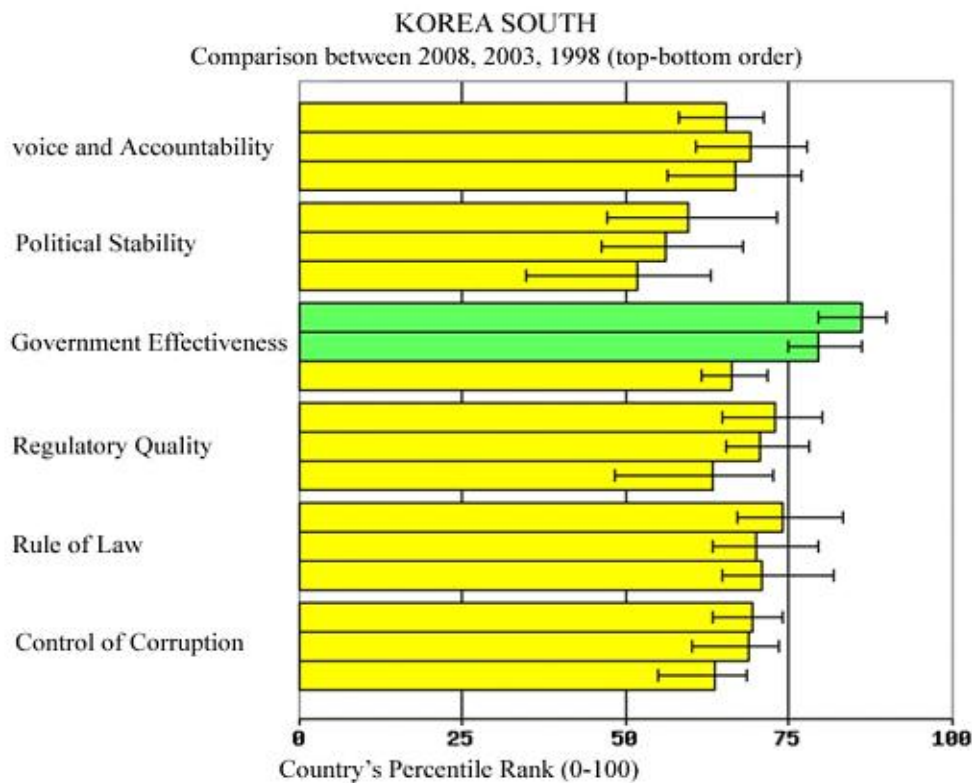
IV. Causation of Corruption: Sources of Corruption in Local Government Setting

Understanding the causes of corruption enables appropriate responses to control and to prevent corruption. Sources of corruption are manifold. In reality, analyzing the causes of public officials' corruption in local government, especially in Korea, is quite complex. Like many other types of corruption, certain factors contributing to corruption is not easy to differentiate. Corruption may vary among the local government and interrelated complicated nature of corruption. In addition, corruption can be conducted in various forms, and some forms of corruption may not be so obvious. Yet, the impact of corruption is undoubtedly damaging.

13) http://www.transparency.org/policy_research/surveys_indices/gcb/2009 (Accessed August 2, 2009) and Korea Times (June 3, 2009). The survey was conducted on 73,132 participants from 69 countries, including 700 Koreans over 16.

Regarding the causes of corruption, World Bank uses worldwide governance indicators since 1996 which is related to corruption control. Those refer to voice and accountability, political stability, government effectiveness, regulatory quality, rule of law, and control of corruption. In fact, five variables are closely related to causes and consequences of corruption as well. For example, if people do not respect or keep the principle of rule of law cannot expect ideal democratic country, resulting in corrupted country. Therefore, good governance refers to clean and transparent government. In this context, the World Bank WB data show very interesting implication. [Figure 1] shows the case of Korea as the following⁴⁾

[Figure 1] Worldwide Governance Indicators (1996-2008)



Source: Kaufmann D., a Kraay, and M. Mastruzzi 2009: Governance Matters VIII : Governance Indicators for 1996-2008

Note : The governance indicators presented here aggregate the views on the quality of governance provided by a large number of enterprise, citizen and expert survey respondents in industrial and developing countries. These data are gathered from a number of survey institutes, think tanks, non-governmental organizations, and

4) www.info.worldbank.org/governance/wgi/sc_chart.asp(Accessed on July 27, 2009)

international organizations. The WGI do not reflect the official views of the World Bank, its Executive Directors, or the countries they represent. The WGI are not used by World Bank Group to allocate resources.

According to this report, control of corruption in Korea still seems very weak and decreasing, indicating 50-75 percentile rank since 1996. In particular, political stability is also decreasing during the period. Definitely, if corruption control mechanism does not work well, as a result the political stability also become going down. This cause refers to local government corruption as well.

As previously discussed, many factors come to play in occurrences of corruption. This means that considerations for understanding causes of corruption is an intricate task that will have to take into account multiple factors. Primary causes of corruption in local governments can be summarized as the following:

- Excessive Authority of Public Officials
- Poor Accountability Mechanisms
- Inadequate Incentives for Public Officials
- Financial Strain on Local Governments
- Insufficient Education toward Costs of Corruption
- Nepotism

Excessive Authority of Public Officials

The opportunity for corruption(WB, 1998), generally, is a function of the size of the rents under the control of a public official, the discretion that an official has in allocating these rents and the practical accountability that an official faces for his decisions. The formula(Bottelier, 1998), $\text{Corruption} = \text{Monopoly} + \text{Discretion} - \text{Accountability}$, shows when corruption can easily occur. As this formula suggest, public officials' excessive authority(or discretion) is a sources of corruption. As public officials, especially from local governments, possess greater discretion and authority, corruption is facilitated in greater level. When public officials create regulation excessively, transparency decreases in turn.

Poor Accountability Mechanisms

Another cause of corruption is due to poor accountability mechanisms. "Basic standards of accountability spring to mind when considering what is expected of a good leader" (Chaffee, 1993). Accountability mechanisms should provide they exist or lack effectiveness. Furthermore, A low levels of accountability of corruption increases risk that corruption will take place. Public accountability covers the spectrea of approaches and practices used by governments to ensure that activities and output to meet intended goals and standards (UNDP, 1997). Also, affea an effective preventive measure, improving integrity, or developing and implementing strategies for the prevention or control of corruption, is an integral part of ensuring accountability (UNDP, 1997).

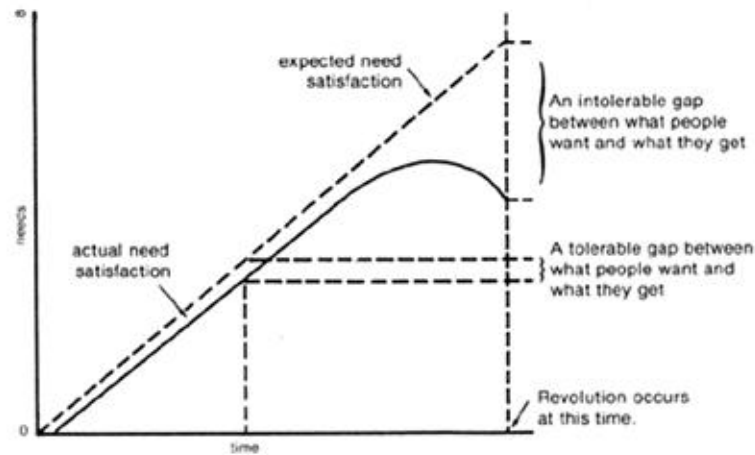
Inadequate Incentives for Public Officials

Gap between needs and satisfaction of public officials can also result in corruption. Incentives can include competitive wages, commendation rewards, and other ways to improve public officials' personal satisfaction. When expectations are not fulfilled through legitimate means, corrupt activity is a possible way to gain their satisfaction. Huntington points out that corruption is related to the imbalance between economic and political development.⁵⁾ When expected needs and satisfactions are greater than the actual needs being fulfilled, this causes corruption to occur. It is a gap between the needs and satisfaction where the individual accepts bribes to achieve its expectations. Sociologist Davies discusses the talks about relationship between satisfaction and revolution. Furthermore, Huntington points out the imbalance of economic development and social mobility or political development. In case of above-mentioned cases corruption occurs so rampant. As a result instability of society will be extremely higher, revolution may occur in the long run. Davies' theory is illustrated in [Figure 2] refers to figure 2 as follows:⁶⁾

5) Refer to reference, Young Jong Kim(2001), New Korean Public Administration and Corruption Studies Seoul: Hyung Seoul Publishing Co., 110-111.

6) Refer to the following reference, James C. Davies(1962), "Towards a Theory of Revolution," American Sociological Review, Vol, XXVII, 5-18.

Figure2. Davies's need satisfaction and revolution



Sources: James C. Davies(1962), "Towards a Theory of Revolution," American Sociological Review, Vol. XXVII, 5-18.

Financial Strain on Local Governments

Financial strain is another factor that causes corruption on local governments. Local governments as a self-government often implies revenue autonomy to a certain degree. This strain on local governments creates a harbor for corruption, encouraging public officials to engage in corruption. Also, competition among local governments to exceed other governments in development may promote corruption.

Insufficient Understanding toward Costs of Corruption

Lack of awareness toward consequences and costs of corruption can also contribute to corruption. Without proper understanding of corruption hindering development of local governments, the risk of public officials engaging in corruption is higher. Needless to say, local government officials' insufficient understanding regarding dysfunction and cost of corruption should be one of important causes of local government corruption because it finally erodes local government development in the process of grass-root democracy.

Nepotism

Historic residues of Korean history also impact corruption. Residues deeply rooted in Korean culture include submission to authority, hierarchical view of life, collectively passivity, centralization of administration, tradition or custom oriented, ritual oriented, and loyalty to others.⁷⁾ Jung, meaning 'us' in the English language, is closely knitted ties among people from diverse backgrounds according to education and region. To Koreans, Jung, is a togetherness of another that results in compassion, inclusion and total involvement.⁸⁾ In local governments, stronger ties among people in the same region encourage corruption to take place. It is often the case that personal ties also relate to the established political culture. Over all, nepotism in the political culture of local governments are a three tier barricade that harbors corruption and is hard to tear down.

V. Framework for Preventing Corruption in Local Government

Past and present efforts to combat corruption are numerous. Strategies by academia and institutions suggest tackling corruption using diverse tactics. For example, the World Bank, known for helping countries to fight corruption, suggests its own strategy to prevent corruption.⁹⁾ Yet, an effective prevention strategy addressing corruption must tackle the fundamental causes of the corruption phenomenon. Without handling the source of corruption, a measure that is effective enough to reduce corruption cannot be produced. In addition, any anti-corruption strategy should include reform of the economic policy. In general, by drastically deregulating and liberalizing the economy, increase in a competitive market will reduce the climate for corruption. Financial sector reforms are critical to allocate scarce capital through market forces than by bribery-influenced political and bureaucratic intervention. Improving market competitiveness is the key to securing a corruption-free society.

The following preventive measures are suggested based on causes of corruption

7) Young Jong Kim (2001), *op.cit*, 20.

8) Wan Ki Paik (1997), *Political Culture and Corruption, Korean Corruption Studies Review*, Vol 1,1-15

9) Alexander M. Abboud(Dec, 2006) "Transforming the Culture of Corruption" in *Issues of Democracy* , 6-11.

in local government. Above all, there should be drastic deregulation and liberalization of the economy. Where there is less government regulation, there is less scope for corruption. Simultaneously, a drastic government downsizing is called for with a much smaller civil service force. With the saving in the personnel costs, the salary levels of the civil servants should be made comparable to those in the private sector as in Singapore. Also, strong measures need to be taken to enhance the business transparency and to improve corporate governance in local government, thereby promoting the competitiveness of business firms through effective management rather than through political patronage. Also, a drastic political reform is essential to lessen the need for politicians to depend upon huge political contributions, often provided in the form of bribery from the business sector. For example, the current political recommendation system of political party for CEO candidates to run at local government election should be reconsidered or innovated because majority of people do not support this current system which might cause the opportunities of local political corruption.

In short, the system for controlling corruption of the local government in Korea should be innovated on the basis of efficient mechanism. For example, the World Bank suggests the anti-corruption measures and effective system.¹⁰⁾

According to the World Bank, corruption can generally be described as the abuse of public power for private benefit. Types of corruption include grand corruption, which involves corruption that pervades the highest level of national government, to petty corruption, the exchange of very small amounts of money or the granting of minor favors by those in minor positions. Regardless of the scope of the corruption, such acts undermine the development of civil society and exacerbate poverty, especially when public resources that would have been used to finance people's aspirations for a better life are mismanaged or abused by public officials. In recent years, through a series of international agreements, a global framework for combating corruption has begun to emerge. Individual countries can now make their anticorruption efforts more effective by vigorously implementing anticorruption measures and relying on international cooperation to support them.

One of the sources of corruption previously mentioned is excessive authority of public officials. The extent authority given to public officials correlates to abusing

10) *Ibid*

public power. This means: greater authority of public officials will likely cause corruption. In order to reduce the possibility, authority of public officials should be limited to a certain extent. In this respect, this may require a reform. It may well take place by limiting authority of public officials through privatization, competitive public sector, and effective decentralization.

Other aspect of source of corruption, discussed previously, is poor accountability mechanisms. Strengthening accountability of local governments should take priority in implementing anti-corruption measures. When public officials perceive the risk of corruption and detection of corrupt defiances, this will influence corruption levels. In other words, this means as public officials perceive the risk of corruption detection high, reduction of corruption levels will occur. More specifically, increasing accountability through mechanisms such as judicial sanctions, whistle-blower system, and establishing anti-corruption agencies is possible. As for inadequate incentives for public officials providing satisfaction is key to help fight corruption. Incentives for public officials should adopt monetary or non-monetary means as well. For monetary incentives, competitive wages and benefits for local public officials creates incentives. In particular, it should be important to emphasize rebuilding of the infrastructure of moral and ethical standards of local government officials focusing on strengthening the level of fairness, transparency, and accountability(Ra, 2009)

As for insufficient understanding toward costs of corruption as source of corruption in local governments, efforts need to address changing attitudes of corruption. This means creating anti-corruption schemes to educate public officials and other groups in the local government arena. Another area that needs efforts to change attitudes is personal ties. Excessively strong interpersonal ties between those in the locality induces ineffective government and harbors climate for corruption.

VI. Conclusion

As observed, many factors increase corruption occurrences. With respect to the ample causations of corruption, preventive strategies should respond to the each causation respectively. Such being the case, facilitating a corruption-free environment should be persistent.

Corruption causes in local government demonstrate the difficulty of reducing the

impact and volume of occurrences. Similarly, grass root democracy in Korea cannot sustain if the corruption phenomena continually increase under the local government system. The desired reduction of corruption in local governments should start from the public sector. Purging corrupt public officials and rectifying structural loopholes in the local government system also need to be addressed. Similarly, lowering corruption occurs only when support and changes of attitudes along with institutional reform takes place. Impartiality of officials in the administration must be emphasized. Merits, not personal consideration from parochial sectarian interests, must be upheld as the criteria. Only this will ensure the democratic process to harmonize with social order and discipline.

Another effective cure for solving corruption problem is to have the local community and the local government to set a high moral standard for holders of public officials in Korea. Public service achievements should include honesty, awareness of public services and neutrality in performing duties with efficiency. In addition, these individuals are usually from the leading groups of the region who should set examples for others.

We trust that an absolute majority of public officials are steadfastly committed to their vocations. The hope is that this profound sense of devotion will raise awareness to the few corrupt officials—helping them realize their role in undertaking the civil service. To this end, a righteous yardstick should be provided to separate the wheat from the chaff.

As previously discussed, preventive measures should also include educational program. Attitudes of residents and public officials in the area can change through raising awareness of corruption. It should be pointed out that corruption is pointed out not just a problem of the government but the private sector must also be actively involved in combating corruption, and the private sector is the proof of the problem as well as the proof of the solution to the problem. With constant efforts, attaining reduction of corruption is possible.

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