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Korea collaborates with World Bank to share global efforts in promoting mental health

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Release of joint policy report titled "Reducing Mental Health-Related Stigma and Discrimination: A Global Overview"



The Ministry of Health and Welfare (MoHW) in South Korea and the World Bank recently co-hosted the Global Mental Health Promotion Forum in Seoul under the theme "Hidden in Plain Sight: The Global Mental Health Crisis."

Following discussions between President Yoon Suk Yeol and, and World Bank President Ajay Banga at the G20 Summit in September about cooperation on mental health policies, the MoHW and the World Bank have been working closely together. In June, they exchanged insights on various countries' efforts to eliminate stigma and discrimination against mental illnesses and began promoting the joint development of a policy report in the field of mental health.

In the first part of the forum, the MoHW and the World Bank presented a joint policy report titled "Reducing Mental Health-Related Stigma and Discrimination: A Global Overview." During his keynote address, renowned British psychiatrist Sir Graham Thornicroft emphasised that the global economic cost of mental illnesses surpasses that of cancer, diabetes, and chronic respiratory diseases combined. He also introduced evidence-based mental health promotion guidelines established by the World Health Organization (WHO).

Shin Young-chul, Chairman of the Presidential Committee on Mental Health Policy Innovation, then introduced the current state of Korea's mental health policies, highlighting efforts to make mental health a national agenda for the first time in the country's history and to drive innovation in the field, before moderating the panel discussion.

The following panel discussion featured participants from Korea, Kenya, and Denmark, who shared personal experience of overcoming mental illness and discussed effective strategies to address the common challenges of mental illness-related stigma and lack of awareness faced by various countries.

In the second part of the forum, the former Norwegian Prime Minister Kjell Magne Bondevik delivered a keynote speech, sharing his experience of overcoming depression during his tenure and successfully securing re-election three years later.

The subsequent panel discussion focused on specific approaches to improving mental health, including the use of digital tools such as artificial intelligence (AI) to enhance access to mental health services at reduced costs, workplace mental health investment and its impact, and evidence-based psychological services.