**Implementation of Remote Videoconference Hearing**

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| **The First Remote Videoconference Hearing**  **between Seoul Central District Court and Jeju District Court**   * The revised Civil Procedure Act allows implementation of videoconference (VC) hearing of trials from September 30, 2016, enabling witnesses and assessors to provide testimony without making appearance to the courtroom. * The VC hearing can be efficient for witnesses or assessors who have difficulties in making appearance to the courtroom due to long geographical distance or transportation complexities, or who are under difficult situation to face the litigation party in person. However, parties to the trial (plaintiff and defendant) must still be present at the courtroom. * Witnesses who wish to provide testimony via the VC may go to the VC Hearing Room in the nearest court from his/her place of residence. Assessors are allowed to use videoconference equipment with internet connection at the place of his/her office or residence, as well as using the VC Hearing Room of a court. * The information communication network between the trial courtroom and VC Hearing Room of another court or between the courtroom and assessors’ offices allows the trial panel to look at the faces of witness and assessor, and the witness and assessor to watch the trial panel and parties on the VC screen during the proceeding. * Following the revision of the Act, first VC hearing took place on November 16, 2016 between Seoul Central District Court - where the trial was conducted - and Jeju District Court’s VC Hearing Room. * The VC hearing is an exemplary case of effective using the information communication technology (ICT) to overcome the geographical inconvenience of witness living in Jeju Island to appear in the courtroom in Seoul. * The high-performance VC hearing system enabled: (1) a realistic presence of the witness through instant two-way communication, creating an ambience as if the hearing took place in the same courtroom; (2) the trial panel to check the facial expressions on the witness with high-definition video transmission; and (3) to check the authenticity of documents shared through the record viewer on e-Court system. * The Korean courts plans to promote the use of videoconference hearing to reduce socioeconomic cost for witnesses living in remote locations to appear in courtrooms and to facilitate obtaining oral statements from professionals such as medical doctors and architects who are too busy to appear in courtrooms and preferred providing written statements. |

* **Purposes**

As there have been many witnesses who can hardly appear at courtrooms for witness examination due to health and occupational issues, trial courts were faced with difficulties in summoning witnesses for examinations, causing delays in setting hearing dates for many witness examinations. There also were no legal backgrounds to individually examine civil case witnesses in separation from the litigation parties unlike criminal case defendants. Thus, the Civil Procedure Act was revised and came into effect on September 30, 2016 to provide legal grounds and procedures to hold remote videoconference hearings for witnesses and assessors.

* **Expected Outcome**

The remote videoconference hearing system is expected to effectively produce the following outcomes:

1. Contribute to having comprehensive fact-finding proceedings through effective and thorough evidence examinations by preventing delays or postponements in setting trial dates;
2. Provide appropriate support measures for witnesses who face difficulties to appear in courtrooms or need to be examined in separation from the parties, and reduce socioeconomic cost on witness’s long distance trip to the courthouse; and
3. Reflect the opinions from dominant experts residing in foreign countries, based on effective judicial cooperation between the Korean and foreign judiciaries.