

OKA Commissioner Lee Sang-duk: ‘We strive to strengthen the capacity of the Korean community as a whole’

New Year’s address resolves to support overseas compatriots in Korea, contribute to economic livelihoods, strengthen networks

Overseas Koreans Agency Commissioner Lee Sang-duk said he will continue to work to “expand the collective capacity of the Korean community.”

“The political stature of the Korean diaspora in their countries of residence is increasing, with 15 Korean compatriots elected in the 2024 U.S. congressional and state legislative elections,” Lee said in his New Year’s address. “As the OKA, we will make further efforts to mobilize the capabilities of the Korean diaspora and strengthen support for them to build a stable foundation in their countries of residence and enter mainstream society.”

In particular, he noted the agency will actively seek ways to improve the multiple-citizenship system in close consultation with relevant organizations in order to respond to the declining birthrate and aging population facing Korean society and also to attract global talent, and will develop various policies to ensure that the competencies and human resources of overseas compatriots help the development of Korea.

Lee said that last year, the OKA enacted and revised the Enforcement and Implementation Guidelines of the Overseas Migration Act, the Sakhalin Compatriots Act and the Guidelines on Supporting Overseas Koreans in Distress, as well as established the Basic Plan and Implementation Plan for Overseas Korean Policy.

He also reported on overhauling the compatriot support system, expanding and diversifying the integrated civil service support system, establishing a digital consular consultation system, increasing the budget for Hangeul schools and expanding projects to foster the next generation of compatriots.

Actively seeking ways to improve the multiple-citizenship system

He also emphasized the successful hosting of the World Korean Association Conference and the World Korean Business Convention strengthened networks and contributed to shared



OKA Commissioner Lee Sang-duk (6th in front row) and other participants cheer during the pilot service launch of the Overseas Korean Authentication Center at Diplomatic Town in Seocho-gu, Seoul, on Nov. 16, 2024.



OKA Commissioner Lee Sang-duk (6th from R, first row) takes a commemorative photo with participants at a meeting of overseas Koreans in Tokyo on Nov. 29, 2024.

growth among domestic Korean SMEs and compatriot businesses.

Based on these achievements, he said that in the new year, the OKA will continue to ▲ Provide comprehensive and practical support for compatriots in Korea, ▲ Promote policies for compatriots that contribute to economic livelihoods and ▲ Internalize support to foster the overseas Korean identity and strengthen the global Korean network.

“In the new year, we will continue to listen to the advice and constructive opinions of our compatriots and make every effort to become an organization that lives and breathes alongside you,” Lee said.

Full text of OKA commissioner's New Year's address

Dear overseas compatriots, welcome to the new year of 2025.

In the past year, we believe the Overseas Koreans Agency has accomplished a great deal thanks to the interest and support of the 7 million overseas Koreans.

Based on various inputs from the field, we laid the institutional foundation for supporting overseas Koreans. We enacted and revised the Enforcement and Implementation Guidelines of the Overseas Migration Act, the Sakhalin Diaspora Act and the Guidelines on Assistance to Overseas Koreans in Distress, as well as established the Basic Plan and Implementation Plan for Overseas Korean Policy.

We have reorganized our support system for compatriots as befits our national standing. Throughout the year, we provided support for the permanent return and resettlement of Sakhalin Koreans (pro bono legal services), ran an Understanding Korea course for our Koryo compatriots, supported the resettlement of Korean children of returnee women from Vietnam, and provided support for atomic bomb victims and padok workers (workers dispatched to Germany). We also began to study how to improve the multiple-citizenship system and conducted a survey on the status of overseas adopted Koreans in the United States who have not obtained U.S. citizenship.

Expanding and diversifying integrated civil support services

We have been working hard to improve the accessibility and convenience of various civil support services for overseas Koreans. We have implemented door-to-door integrated civil support services and diversified our call center channels (KakaoTalk consultation, web call, web chat). In addition, we have established an online identity verification and digital consular service system to expand one-stop digital civil services, and even opened a branch of the OKA at Incheon International Airport.

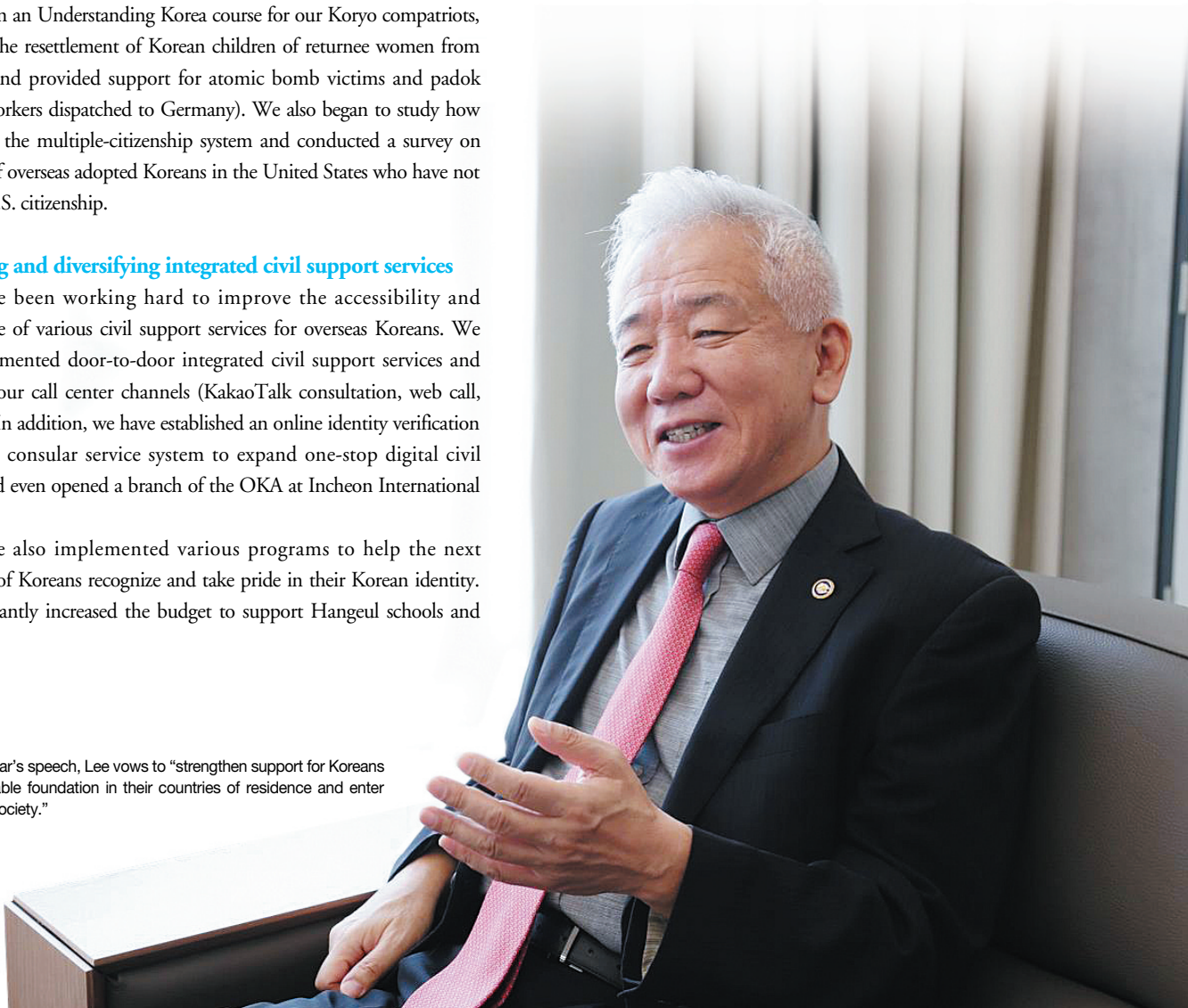
We have also implemented various programs to help the next generation of Koreans recognize and take pride in their Korean identity. We significantly increased the budget to support Hangeul schools and

actively implemented programs to foster the next generation of Koreans, such as the Korean Youth and College Students' Motherland Training Program, the World Next-Generation Korean Youth Congress and the Korean Youth Internship Program.

Efforts to strengthen the global Korean network, support small and medium-sized enterprises, and expand youth employment continued. The World Korean Association Conference was successfully held, strengthening the network among different Korean compatriot communities and the ties between the overseas compatriot community and Korea.

The World Korean Business Convention held in Jeonju achieved groundbreaking results, including more than 20,000 export consultations, \$630 million worth of consultations and \$58 million

In his New Year's speech, Lee vows to "strengthen support for Koreans to build a stable foundation in their countries of residence and enter mainstream society."





"In the new year, we will continue to listen to the advice and constructive opinions of our compatriots, and make every effort to become an organization that lives and breathes alongside you," Lee says.

worth of export contracts. The 2024 event in Jeonju is significant in that it was the first time that overseas Korean entrepreneurs and merchants and domestic Korean SMEs were able to cooperate and connect with each other. The internship program, which allows young Koreans to gain work experience at overseas Korean companies, was also popular.

Based on these achievements and taking into account the changing policy environment, we will promote a more robust overseas Korean policy in 2025.

Continuing comprehensive support for compatriots residing in Korea

First, we will continue to strive to expand the collective capacity of the Korean community. The political stature of the Korean diaspora in their countries of residence is increasing, with 15 Korean Americans elected in the 2024 U.S. congressional and state legislative elections. As the OKA, we will make further efforts to mobilize the capabilities of these communities and strengthen support for them to build a stable foundation in their countries of residence and enter mainstream society there. In particular, we will actively seek ways to improve the multiple-citizenship system in close consultation with relevant organizations in response to the declining birth rate and aging population, and in order to

attract global talent. We will also develop various policies to ensure that the capabilities and human resources of overseas Koreans can contribute to the development of the Republic of Korea.

Second, we will continue to provide comprehensive and practical support for overseas compatriots living in Korea. We will continue to provide customized support to help the ever-increasing number of Korean diaspora successfully resettle in Korea and become contributing members of society while also working to foster positive and inclusive perceptions of them among the Korean public.

Third, we will continue to promote the compatriots contributing to the economic livelihoods' policy. We will work to increase the government's efforts to restore economic livelihoods by promoting overseas Korean businesses' investment in Korea, expanding links between overseas Korean businesses and domestic SMEs, and promoting overseas employment for Korean youth. The World Korean Business Convention, which will be held in April in Atlanta, U.S., will also be organized with this awareness and goal in mind.

Internalize support systems to strengthen global Korean network

Fourth, we will internalize support for fostering the overseas Korean identity and strengthening the global Korean network. We will strengthen support for various activities promoted by the overseas Korean community, such as supporting Hangeul schools and diaspora organizations, and operate annual events, such as the World Korean Association Conference, World Korean Business Convention, Global Korean Politicians Council, World Next-Generation Korean Youth Congress, Overseas Korean Adoptees Gathering, and overseas Korean youth and university students' home country training, to contribute to fostering the overseas Korean identity and strengthening their ties with Korea.

In the new year of 2025, we will continue to listen to the advice and constructive comments of our compatriots, and make every effort to become an organization that lives and breathes alongside you.

In the Year of the Blue Snake, I sincerely hope that your homes will be filled with happiness and that all your resolutions will be fulfilled. Happy New Year! 🎊