

## ‘I want to be face of a Korea that is open to the world’ Choi Soo-ah of World Food Programme (WFP)

There is someone who is leading the way in saving lives in war and disaster sites, and is traveling the world under the name of a Korean. Choi Soo-ah is an international relief expert working for the United Nations World Food Programme (WFP). She recently finished her work in Ethiopia and was newly assigned to the Gaza Strip in Palestine. She has been working as the hands and feet of the international community in conflict and disaster sites around the world, including emergency relief for Rohingya refugees and response to the Lebanese-Israeli border war.

She briefly returned to Korea to participate in the 2025 Future Leaders Conference.

“I did a working holiday in the U.K. with the intention of finding a way to be happy and traveled the world for two years, and during that process, I met a WFP official, which led me to my current path,” Choi said in an interview with a Yonhap News reporter.

Among the 62 participants in this year’s Future Leaders Conference, she is the only Korean national and said it was a refreshing experience, like breathing “outside air.”

“I felt that my everyday language and worldview were limited within the narrow ecosystem of relief sites and international organizations. That’s why I wanted to meet compatriots from completely different fields and different paths at this conference and mix our worlds. It was a refreshing thought process and an expansion of new perspectives.”

‘Networking starts with whether public square is open’

Meeting the next generation of Koreans from various backgrounds created another layer in her world, and she emphasized that such meetings are the beginning of a network that the government must continuously create.

Regarding the government’s role in building the next-generation network, she said the following: “I think that a network starts with



Choi Soo-ah, an international relief expert working for the United Nations World Food Programme (WFP)

whether the public square is open. If the government provides a place for continuous meetings, whether large or small, I think that various discussions and collaborations can occur spontaneously according to each person’s needs.”

She believes that her contribution is to open the way for more Korean youth to enter the global society. And she believes that small but meaningful activities of sharing her experiences are the first step.

“There are moments when people approach me without hesitation just by me showing my Korean passport in a foreign country and talk to me about wanting to know more about Korea. The fact that we can quickly become close through stories about K-dramas, K-food and K-beauty is the cultural power of Korea today.”

She says that South Korea has become a country that creates “natural affinity and connection” in the world. “It’s like how friends who are good at singing or have a sense of humor are more popular than friends who are rich and powerful. Korea is that kind of friend right now. As a part of that Korea, I want to create more connections.” 