

OKA Commissioner Lee: 'It is responsibility of government to support domestic settlement of adopted Koreans'

OKA holds first policy meeting to support domestic settlement of adoptees; 60 experts and adopted Korean citizens participate



The first expert policy discussion meeting to seek ways to support the domestic settlement of adoptees is held at the President Hotel in Jung-gu, Seoul, on April 29. Key participants, including OKA Commissioner Lee Sang-duk (6th from L), take a commemorative photo.

The first government-level policy meeting has been held to explore ways to help the 200,000 adopted Koreans around the world settle in Korea.

On April 29, the Overseas Koreans Agency held a meeting at the President Hotel in Jung-gu, Seoul, with government officials and experts from various fields to discuss ways to support adopted people's settlement in Korea. The meeting was held as a follow-up to the opening of the agency's "Dedicated Counseling Center for Adopted Compatriots" in March and was co-organized with the Global Overseas Adoptees' Link (GOAL).

About 60 people participated in the meeting, including OKA Commissioner Lee Sang-duk, Seodaemun-gu District Mayor Lee Sung-heon, Population and Children Policy Lead at the Ministry of Health and Welfare Kim Sang-hee, National Center for the Rights of the Child (NCRC) Director Jung Ik-joong and Global Overseas Adoptees' Link (GOAL) Adviser Yoo Jae-hoon, as well as domestic and foreign adopted children and related experts.

"This meeting is meaningful because it is the first step in bringing together adoptive compatriots and government officials," said Lee Sang-duk in his opening remarks. "The OKA will fulfill its role as a networking platform between adoptive compatriots and the government. According to the Basic Act on Overseas Koreans

enacted in 2023, adopted Koreans are legally considered overseas Koreans, and it is the responsibility of the state to support them and help them settle down. The agency will do its best to play a bridge between adopted Koreans and their homeland."

At the meeting, presentations were made on various topics, such as ▲ The NCRC's Family Search Project, ▲ Examples of the OKA's dedicated adoptee window operations and this year's implementation plans for adopted Koreans, ▲ Examples of Seodaemun-gu District Office's multicultural family settlement support cases and ▲ Operational plans of the Korean Adoptee Education Center. The first topic was presented by Director Ahn Jun-han of the NCRC. Ahn introduced various support projects of the NCRC to help overseas adoptees find their biological families and establish their identities. The main project of the NCRC is the adoption information freedom of information request system. Adoptees can request adoption information disclosure from the NCRC and request information about their adoption records and biological parents. Through this, adoptees can find their roots and establish their identity. As a detailed project, it supports DNA registration procedures for unaccompanied adoptees and alternative family search procedures. It was announced that they are conducting publicity and providing information using online



OKA Commissioner Lee Sang-duk delivers an opening speech at the first expert policy discussion meeting to seek ways to support the domestic settlement of adoptees.

platforms and media and broadcasting media to support adoptees' family search.

The second presentation was given by Kim Chae-young, the head of OKA's Next Generation Compatriots Division. Kim presented on the operation of the dedicated service for adoptees. The dedicated service was opened March 25 for the purpose of providing consultation on domestic and international adoptees' difficulties and concerns, including finding their biological parents and other family members. A total of 119 requests were received over the course of about a month up to April 24, of which 24 were about finding family members, nine were about requesting to view adoption records and add information, and other various requests for information disclosure and DNA registration. Kim shared that the number of inquiries regarding overseas Korean visas (F-4) and whether children can have dual citizenship increased during the month of April.

The announcement that the OKA would conduct a survey on overseas adoptees residing in Korea also attracted attention. The plan is to comprehensively understand the current status and policy needs of overseas adoptees residing in Korea, and use it as basic data for establishing customized settlement support policies.

It was also announced that the World Korean Adoption Convention will be held in Seoul this coming November and that 90 adoptees from around the world will be invited to visit their home country for the first time after adoption. The goal is to foster the identity of adoptees, strengthen solidarity with their home country and build a global network.

The third topic was presented by Do Gyu-ri, director of the Seodaemun-gu District Office Family Center in Seoul, under the title "Support for domestic settlement of adoptee families." The presentation introduced cases of the Seodaemun-gu Office operating Korean language classes divided into basic and advanced classes to support domestic settlement of adoptee families. The office also supports customized job training programs, such as Korean cuisine chef certification courses, to promote social advancement and strengthen self-reliance. In particular, it operates

a whole family support project to ensure stable settlement in the local community, increase capacity of child-rearing skills and improve family relationships. In detail, it introduced cases of operating individual psychological counseling, parenting counseling, family camps and kimchi-making, as well as cultural experience programs for sharing with neighbors.

The fourth topic was a presentation by Kim Oliver, a German adoptee, titled "About the Education Community Center for Overseas Adoptees." He drew attention by arguing that an education community space is necessary to provide various educational services necessary for overseas adoptees to visit and settle in their home countries, as well as to enable communication between overseas adoptees and obtain various materials from their home countries.

He said that if an educational community center for overseas adoptees is established, it will help those who have lost touch with Korean culture and language during their adoption process to visit their homeland or settle and live a stable life, and will be able to provide practical education and information necessary for adoptees to settle in Korea. He also pointed out that there is currently a lack of specialized spaces and educational resources where adoptees can receive basic education on Korean language, Korean history, traditional culture and social systems. Therefore, he emphasized that an education community center for adoptees can help adoptees recover their identity and improve their relationship with Korea, contribute to social integration by forming a healthy community and would hopefully have the effect of allowing adoptees to settle in their home countries stably.

Following the presentations by the four keynote speakers, a panel discussion led by professor Kim Yeon-soo of Baekseok University featured National Assembly Legislative Investigator Jeong Min-jeong, Kosin University professor Kim Hyang-eun and overseas adoptee Amanda Cho, and explored policies to support the domestic settlement of adoptees based on voices from the field.

In the discussion, Jeong focused on the issue of Korean adoptees who have not acquired U.S. citizenship, saying the U.S. government's decision to classify Korean adoptees who have not acquired U.S. citizenship as illegal aliens and deport them from the U.S. is extremely inhumane and humiliating to those who naturally consider the U.S. as their home country. Jeong emphasized that in order to improve the issue of adoptees who have not acquired U.S. citizenship, the Korean government needs to understand the situation and provide legal support so that the 19,000 people who this issue applies to can legally reside in the U.S. and acquire citizenship.

Meanwhile, the OKA also conducted a live YouTube broadcast (www.youtube.com/watch?v=fNtVq3D04qw) for domestic and international adoptees who could not attend the event. 