

62 participants from 26 countries complete 2025 Future Leaders Conference

OKA hosts 27th conference this year with aim of building global talent network
OKA Commissioner Lee to participants: 'You are key players who will lead global network'



Participants take a commemorative photo at the opening ceremony of the 2025 Future Leaders Conference held May 27 at Songdo Convensia in Yeonsu-gu, Incheon, under the slogan "Koreans in a Connected World, Taking Greater Leaps."

The 2025 Future Leaders Conference, which aims to foster identity and strengthen capabilities for young Koreans in various occupational sectors, such as politicians, descendants of independence activists and employees of international organizations, has concluded its four-day schedule from May 27-30.

On May 27, the Overseas Koreans Agency held the opening ceremony of the conference at the Premier Ballroom on the 2nd floor of Songdo Convensia in Yeonsu-gu, Incheon, with the slogan, "Koreans in a Connected World, Taking Greater Leaps."

This year's conference, which is in its 27th year, was attended by 62 next-generation Korean leaders from 26 countries, including the United States, United Kingdom, New Zealand, China, Russia, Argentina and Germany. These participants are actively working in various fields, such as politics, business, law, medicine and art.

Those who visited Korea included David Kim, who served as political director for Kamala Harris' presidential campaign last year and is the lead on

international partnerships and public relations for the city of Seattle, and Min Olga, a fourth-generation Koryo business analyst and descendant of patriot Lee Gwal (1898-1963), who was the Minister for Foreign Affairs for the Provisional Government of the Republic of Korea.

Various professionals, including politicians, professors, lawyers, participated

In addition, Dr. Song Sol Carola, a doctor and assistant professor of pharmacy at the University of Buenos Aires in Argentina; Kang Han-na from a Norwegian financial company, who is fluent in six languages; and Choi Su-ah from the World Food Programme (WFP) Palestine Office in charge of Gaza-related work also came to visit their homeland.

The opening ceremony on this day began with a screening of a topical video, followed by the national anthem, opening remarks by OKA Commissioner Lee Sang-duk, welcoming remarks by Incheon Mayor Yoo Jeong-bok, congratulatory remarks by Secretary of the National Assembly's Foreign Affairs and Unification Committee (People Power Party) Kim Geon, World Korean Democratic Conference (Democratic Party of Korea) Senior Vice Chair Lee Ki-heon and World Korean Lawyers Association President Cho Young-hee, a thank-you speech by a representative of the participants (Song



OKA Commissioner Lee Sang-duk delivers the opening speech at the 2025 Future Leaders Conference.

Sol Carola from Argentina), a commemorative photo session and a welcome dinner.

“I welcome you, the key players who will lead the global network,” OKA Commissioner Lee said at the opening ceremony. “I took office as the head of the OKA at the end of July last year. As a former diplomat, I encountered the overseas Korean community while traveling in the 1980s and 1990s. The first-generation immigrants overcame initial difficulties and, as a result of their hard work and dedication, produced excellent juniors like you.”

Commissioner Lee: ‘Not foreigners but valuable assets to our country’

“You are not foreigners to the Republic of Korea but valuable assets to our country,” Lee said. “You must contribute to your home country and act as collaborators who can lead change. The OKA will sincerely help with these activities.”

Mayor Yoo Jeong-bok of Incheon metropolitan city said in his congratulatory remarks: “Incheon is the starting point of the history of overseas Koreans and the base of overseas Koreans’ activities as the home of the OKA. I hope that our meeting in Incheon will give rise to new opportunities and hope.”

Song Sol Carola, professor of pharmacology at the University of Buenos Aires in Argentina, represented the 62 participants by saying: “I am truly honored to be here representing the participants of the conference. We will grow in our respective fields to become future leaders and hope to discuss various topics during this conference while also immersing ourselves more deeply in Korean culture.”

Spreading best practices to strengthen global Korean network

The People Power Party’s Kim Geon, the floor leader of the ruling party in the National Assembly’s Foreign Affairs and Unification Committee, said: “Please become mentors and leaders for all the next generation in the region. This will be a meaningful opportunity to explore the future of the Republic of Korea together and discover and spread the best policies and practices to strengthen the global Korean network.”

Following this, the Democratic Party’s Lee Ki-heon, senior vice chair of the World Korean Democratic Conference, said, “Please play a role in each country as Korea progresses toward becoming a powerful nation.”

Immediately after the opening ceremony, the documentary musical film “Songs of Love from Hawaii,” which covers the 120-year history of Korean immigration to Hawaii, was screened.

This film by director Lee Jin-young, which was released in Korea late last year, deals with the lives of early overseas Korean immigrants who left Joseon in 1902 for Hawaii and their descendants. On May 28, the participants exchanged opinions on entering mainstream society and establishing the Korean identity, and presented examples of exemplary activities of local next-generation conferences and affiliated organizations. They also participated in a meeting over tea with the vice chair of the National Assembly and a conversation with the OKA commissioner.

Discussion on ‘role of next generation and strategies for network expansion’

On May 29, the third day of the conference, the topic of “next-generation roles and network expansion” was discussed, and participants took a tour of the National Assembly and watched a performance at Namsan Gugakdang.

Following this on May 30, after a comprehensive discussion and group presentations, the closing ceremony was held, and the next meeting was scheduled.

After the event, regional representatives attended the “Future Leaders Conference Representative Meeting” for two days and one night to discuss the composition of the Global Korean Next Generation Summit.

The Future Leaders Conference has been held annually since 1998, from the days of the Overseas Koreans Foundation, in order to seek ways for the next generation of compatriots to enter mainstream society as Korean leaders and to build a next-generation Korean network. This is the third event held since the establishment of the OKA. Over the years, approximately 1,700 next-generation leaders active in various fields have participated. Last year, regional next-generation conferences were held in four regions: the U.S. (New York, Atlanta), the U.K. (London) and Kazakhstan (Almaty). At each conference, current issues in the local compatriot community were shared, and practical measures to resolve them were discussed. 