

‘I will go beyond connecting with overseas Korean community to strengthening solidarity’

I previously sponsored the introduction of the Basic Act on Overseas Koreans, which centered around the establishment of the Overseas Koreans Agency. Eight years later, standing here as the head of the OKA is a moment of profound emotion. At the same time, I feel a profound sense of duty and responsibility as the first head of the OKA under a sovereign government of the people.

First, I would like to take this opportunity to express my deepest respect and gratitude to the former commissioner and all staff members who dedicated themselves to building this new agency on a solid foundation.

We are currently in an era of profound transformation, both internally and externally. Externally, we face rapid changes, such as intensifying competition between the United States and China, the restructuring of global supply chains, and AI technological innovations. Internally, we face complex domestic and international crises, such as population decline and the disappearance of rural communities.

Amid this rapid uncertainty, I intend to focus my efforts on the following four areas.

First, I will go beyond connection to strengthen solidarity with the compatriot community. The globalization of the Korean Wave and the Republic of Korea's standing in the global economy were not achieved solely through government efforts. These achievements are possible thanks to the tireless dedication of our compatriots, who have played roles no less valuable than diplomats in their respective countries.

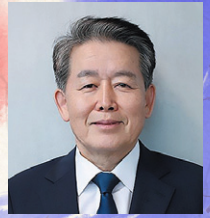
I will actively connect the experience, knowledge and global networks of the compatriot community with our society. The government will support the private diplomacy activities of our compatriots and establish a solidarity platform where compatriot experts in various fields, including science and technology, culture and arts, economics and education, can collaborate with the homeland.

Second, we will actively strive to foster the identity of overseas Koreans. Korean identity does not stem solely from blood ties or nationality. It stems from language, history, culture and mutual understanding.

Among these, Korean language education is the most effective means of strengthening the roots of the next generation of Koreans and fostering a sense of national unity between Koreans at home and abroad. We will significantly expand support for Hangeul schools and systematize the Korean language curriculum for the next generation of Koreans.

Third, we will expand customized support for overseas Koreans, befitting our nation's status. With the rapidly changing global situation, many Koreans are exposed to various threats, including political and legal instability and discrimination. In this context, the OKA must serve as a strong foundation for our compatriots abroad. We will strengthen support

Commissioner Kim Kyung-hyup
of the Overseas Koreans Agency



for Koreans in crisis and other difficult situations at home and abroad, establishing a detailed and robust support system.

Furthermore, we will carefully develop policies to ensure that people from diverse backgrounds, including children from multicultural families, adoptees and those with historically special ancestry, can feel a sense of belonging as members of the Korean people.

Fourth, I will strengthen support for the growing number of diaspora residing in Korea. South Korea faces a national sustainability crisis due to population decline and the disappearance of provincial communities. In rural areas, the simultaneous exodus of young people and the aging population threaten the very existence of local communities.

In this context, the continued influx of foreign national compatriots into Korea represents the most effective and realistic solution. They possess a strong understanding of Korean language and culture, and possess strong ties to their homeland, making them highly likely to settle into local communities.

We must now recognize compatriots residing in Korea not as mere returnees but as members of a community committed to building a shared future. We must systematize Korean language education, housing and employment support, and local community integration programs to ensure their stable integration into our society.

Furthermore, by attracting and supporting the settlement of young compatriots residing abroad, we will actively leverage the capabilities of Koreans from around the world and contribute to securing a future growth engine for South Korea.

I have heard that our agency is staffed by members with diverse careers and backgrounds. Just as overseas Korean communities around the world, despite living in regions with different languages, cultures and historical backgrounds, are connected by their shared Korean roots and demonstrate their strength, the diverse experiences and perspectives of our employees will serve as strengths that enable us to develop more in-depth policies for our overseas Korean community and view our compatriot communities from a broader perspective.

Strengthening solidarity between compatriots and our homeland begins with our own solidarity. Organizations and societies that are only competitive and lack cooperation will eventually collapse or even perish. In football, I value and praise players who excel at assists more than those who score goals.

Let's create an organizational culture of mutual respect, trust and cooperation, and work together to achieve the national goal of "strengthening solidarity with the overseas Korean community." 