

‘Implement overseas postal voting and lower age for dual citizenship’

‘Capabilities of 7 million overseas Koreans are Korea’s greatest asset and driving force behind national competitiveness’
‘300,000 Koreans in Japan lack political rights; Japanese government must apply principle of reciprocity’

“We must now move beyond our individual regions to become a true global Korean network. The capabilities of the 7 million overseas Koreans, achieved through the wisdom and unity of Korean leaders, are the Republic of Korea’s greatest asset and the very driving force of national competitiveness.”

Jeon Heung-bae, president of the 2025 World Korean Leaders Conference (former president of the Federation General of Korean Associations Japan), shared these reflections after the conference hosted by the Korean International Leaders Conference (KILC, chairman Jung Young-kook).

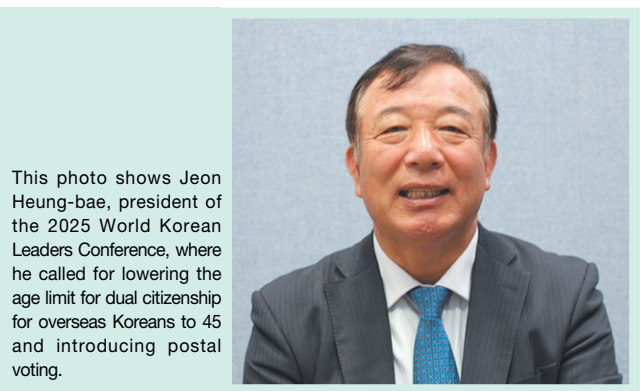
This conference, where Korean leaders worldwide gathered to discuss long-standing issues and future strategies for overseas Korean communities, successfully concluded on Oct. 23 to commemorate the 14th anniversary of the Overseas Koreans Information Center (OKIC).

“The very fact that leaders from around the world attended despite long-distance travel demonstrates the resilience of the Korean people,” Jeon said. “It reaffirmed that they are all major pillars of the Republic of Korea’s development. I hope this conference evolves beyond a simple event into a practical cooperation platform for the global Korean network.”

The slogan of this conference, “Toward a Wider World, Toward a Greater Korean People,” embodies the aspiration of approximately 7 million overseas Koreans to achieve mutual prosperity with their homeland and establish the Republic of Korea as a prominent global presence.

“Overseas Korean leaders must pool their capabilities across business, culture, education and society to form a global community,” Jeon said.

He highlighted as key achievements the focused discussions on lowering the age limit for dual citizenship -- a long-standing aspiration of the overseas Korean community -- and introducing postal and electronic voting systems for overseas citizens.



This photo shows Jeon Heung-bae, president of the 2025 World Korean Leaders Conference, where he called for lowering the age limit for dual citizenship for overseas Koreans to 45 and introducing postal voting.

“Lowering the age for dual citizenship from 65 to 45 would allow compatriots in their 40s and 50s who have completed their military service to freely travel between Korea and overseas while continuing their economic activities,” the former chairman said. “This is also positive for attracting human resources and strengthening national competitiveness.”

Leading gathering of world leaders, presenting vision through Korean diaspora network

“Introducing postal or electronic voting systems would eliminate the need for compatriots to fly hundreds of kilometers and significantly boost voter turnout,” he said. “The government and National Assembly must actively work to enhance the rights and interests of overseas citizens and realize participatory democracy.”

As the immediate past president and current adviser of the Federation General of Korean Associations Japan, Jeon demonstrated strong resolve regarding voting rights issues within Japan.

“The Japanese government does not grant local voting rights to foreigners, leaving Zainichi Koreans bound by institutional



limitations,” he said. “Just as Korea grants voting rights to Japanese citizens, the same rights should be guaranteed to Koreans in Japan based on the principle of reciprocity.

“Currently, approximately 300,000 Zainichi Koreans, including special permanent residents in Japan, are unable to exercise their political rights. Granting them suffrage would mark a new turning point in Korea-Japan relations,” he added.

Jeon mentioned that President Lee Jae Myung delivered separate special messages to overseas Koreans and Zainichi Koreans in his August 15th Liberation Day address, stating, “I hope the new administration will actively review the issue of local voting rights for Koreans.”

Regarding KILC’s future direction, Jeon said: “The organization should be run as a community asset rather than an individual’s. The dedication of Director Jung Young-kook and other leaders is laying a strong foundation. I initially hesitated to participate as president of the conference, but I accepted the position after resonating with Chairman Jung’s sincerity and drive. Ultimately, leaders from various countries united their efforts to create a successful inaugural conference.”

Five-point resolution, including support for successful hosting of APEC Summit

The conference resolution contained five key objectives: ▲ active support for the successful hosting of the 2025 APEC Summit, ▲ full support for the overseas expansion of youth and SMEs, ▲ a call for inter-Korean dialogue for North Korea’s denuclearization and peace settlement, ▲ expansion of the global Korean business community and ▲ commitment to realizing “A Wider World, A Greater Korean People” to achieve Korean culture, prosperity and a just world. Jeon highlighted “Full support for the overseas expansion of youth and SMEs” as the most crucial among these.

“If KILC members leverage their networks in various countries to

provide mentoring, market information and build local partnerships, it will serve as a stepping stone for the younger generation to go global,” Jeon said.

He also emphasized the importance of education and cultural exchanges for the next generation of overseas Koreans.


“We must expand exchange programs where young overseas Koreans learn about Korea, its language and culture, while Korean youth gain overseas experience,” Jeon said. “This is key to preserving Korean identity and strengthening global competitiveness.”

Wang In memorial service and other efforts to strengthen civilian exchanges between Korea and Japan

Jeon, who also serves as a director of the Japan-Korea Friendship Association in Osaka, Japan, is working to increase civilian exchanges between the two nations. Through cultural events, such as the Yeongam County Sister City Festival and the Dr. Wang In memorial service held in Osaka, he is broadening mutual understanding and friendship between Korea and Japan.

Jeon interacts with Japanese individuals who understand Korea, including a chairman who is a former Japanese Diet member. Yeongam County also contributes to enhancing bilateral friendship by hosting a pre-event party and memorial service attended by over 30 participants, including the county mayor and council members.

“Political issues are sensitive, but exchanges in culture and humanity are always possible. Korea and Japan must build a foundation for cooperation for future generations,” Jeon said.

“The unity and leadership of the Korean people must transcend borders. I hope the conference will serve as an opportunity for compatriot leaders worldwide to unite as one network and jointly design the next 100 years of the Republic of Korea.” 



The Scholar Wang In’s Journey to Japan parade in the Insadong area of Jongno-gu, Seoul, reenacts the procession of the Baekje scholar heading to Japan. The parade, featuring residents of Yeongam County, South Jeolla Province, reenacted the most symbolic part of Wang In’s journey -- his crossing to Japan.