

‘7 million overseas Koreans are not recipients of charity but valued partners of ROK’

Strengthening 24-hour communication through DongpoON; launching data-driven, tailored policies

‘We are overhauling our entire policy framework with aim to realize inclusive overseas Korean policies without discrimination by country of origin’



OKA Commissioner Kim Kyung-hyup emphasizes, “We will fundamentally overhaul our entire overseas compatriot policy to ensure the state responsibly responds to the voices of our compatriots, aiming to realize an inclusive compatriot policy free from discrimination based on country of origin.”

Overseas Koreans Agency Commissioner Kim Kyung-hyup expressed high expectations for the 24-hour YouTube platform DongpoON, which connects 7 million overseas Koreans worldwide, during a New Year interview with Yonhap News Agency at the main office in Songdo, Incheon, on Jan. 9. Marking its first month since launch, DongpoON is establishing itself as a “one-stop content hub” encompassing overseas Korean policies, Korean language education and K-culture. Kim announced plans to “overhaul the platform in March, marking its 100th day of service, incorporating feedback from all sectors,” signaling the development of a more sophisticated communication channel.

The core task the OKA is most focused on this year is “establishing a sophisticated, data-driven policy system.”

“Until now, limitations in policy formulation stemmed from a lack of foundational data,” Kim diagnosed. “By building a reliable foundational database for overseas Koreans, we will design and implement tailored policies based on the lives of overseas Koreans, not just administrative convenience centered on providers.”

He particularly emphasized, “We will fundamentally reorganize the entire overseas Koreans policy framework to ensure the state responsibly responds to the voices of our compatriots, aiming to realize inclusive policies without discrimination based on country of origin.”

Additionally, there are plans to significantly increase registration rates by simplifying the overseas citizen registration process. Alongside this will be introduced a new Overseas Korean Certification System for compatriots holding foreign nationality.

“We will actively work with relevant ministries to resolve long-standing aspirations of the overseas Korean community, such as guaranteeing voting rights for overseas citizens, strengthening Korean identity and lowering the age for allowing dual citizenship,” Kim said. “We will concentrate all our capabilities on enhancing the Republic of Korea’s national competitiveness by unifying domestic and international networks.”

Another challenge in compatriot policy is efficiently consolidating tasks currently dispersed across multiple ministries.

To deal with these problems, Kim said, “We will swiftly organize pending issues spanning multiple ministries, such as nationality, military service and welfare, through a consultative body with relevant ministries.”

Kim highlighted the transfer of approximately 8 billion won from the Ministry of Health and Welfare’s “Support Budget for Sakhalin Compatriots’ Permanent Return” to the OKA this year as a major achievement. This marks the first instance of centralizing compatriot affairs previously scattered across ministries and is expected to serve as a milestone in establishing the agency as a true “policy control tower.”

This reflects the changed policy status since the launch of the OKA. With overseas Korean policies now officially included in recent presidential briefings and key national agenda items, analysis suggests these policies are beginning to establish themselves as a pillar of national strategy.

Inclusion policies for the 860,000 repatriated compatriots residing domestically will also be strengthened. Domestic compatriots constitute a significant proportion, accounting for 32 percent of all foreigners (approximately 2.65 million). In an era of population decline and regional depopulation, their stable settlement is emerging as a national challenge.

The newly established Department for Settlement Support of Returning Compatriots will provide comprehensive support for employment and education. Particularly for groups with historical specificity, such as Sakhalin Koreans and Koryoin, the plan is to implement “warm settlement support” that goes beyond simple residency management. A blueprint was also presented to create a virtuous cycle structure, connecting education to regional settlement through the “Project to Attract Young Compatriot Talent.”

The current budget for the OKA is insufficient when measured against the scale and expectations of the 7 million-strong overseas Korean community.

“During next year’s budget formulation process, we will strive to faithfully plan and operationalize the contents of the presidential briefing from the initial stages to ensure they are reflected in the government budget,” Kim pledged.

A notable aspect of Kim’s administrative philosophy is the “restoration of the overseas Korean community’s autonomy.”

“We must move beyond the model where compatriots merely attend events prepared by the government,” he asserted.

The declaration by Korean association presidents at last year’s World Korean Association Conference to host the event themselves marks the starting point.

Kim emphasized, “Such changes will lay the foundation for respecting the autonomy of the compatriot community and strengthening its cohesion.”

Alongside this, the OKA will establish the inaugural World Korean Congress this year, integrating events previously held separately by the Korean business associations, Korean Associations, professional organizations and next-generation groups. The plan is



OKA Commissioner Kim Kyung-hyup speaks during an interview with Yonhap News Agency.

to hold the World Korean Association Conference, the World Korean Next Generation Conference and the World Korean Business Association Conference simultaneously, creating a massive platform for exchange that transcends generations, professions and regions.

Kim emphasized that overseas Korean policies are not benefits for a specific group but are directly linked to the nation’s future competitiveness.

“Even to address the issue of a shrinking working-age population, a shift in public perception toward overseas Koreans is urgently needed,” he said.

“Overseas Koreans are pioneers of South Korea’s export markets and private diplomats. We will pursue policies from a partnership standpoint so that our compatriots can build bridges first in places where the government finds it difficult to reach,” he said.

To realize this vision, the OKA plans to clearly define the division of roles with the private sector. The government will establish policies and infrastructure, while a road map enabling the private sector to take charge of suitable areas is scheduled for completion within the year.

Regarding the need to integrate Overseas Koreans Cooperation Centers, he said, “We are comprehensively reviewing legislative amendments, the effectiveness of policy implementation and budget efficiency.

“We will establish transparent governance where compatriots directly participate in policymaking processes, creating an OKA that resonates with both citizens and compatriots alike.” 장