

# **Congratulatory Remarks**

by

**Namseok Yoo**

**President, Constitutional Court of Korea**

On the occasion of

**The 29<sup>th</sup> IAKL Annual Conference**

Honorable Presidents of the International Association of Korean Lawyers, Korean President Jai Wook Lee and Overseas President Sabina Han, and distinguished members,

Allow me to extend my sincerest congratulations on the opening of the 29<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference of the International Association of Korean Lawyers (IAKL). The 29<sup>th</sup> Conference is all the more meaningful as it is held face-to-face for the first time since the COVID-19 pandemic. It is with genuine pleasure to deliver congratulatory remarks on this very special occasion.

Since the first Conference in 1988, the IAKL has led the way for mutual exchange and cooperation between Korean lawyers around the world and has faithfully played its role as a hub. It also has been engaging in various pro bono activities in and outside of Korea, such as the protection of overseas Korean nationals and support for overseas adoptees. In this regard, I express my deepest respect for the IAKL, which has played a major role in the realization of social justice and public interests by enhancing exchange and bonds between Korean lawyers.

My fellow Korean lawyers,

The world has experienced many changes over the past two years during the pandemic. As our daily lives rapidly shifted to platform-based, the transition into the digital era has been accelerated. With the change in industrial structure, social polarization has worsened. We should also take note of the changes in the global demographic structure. All these new changes and challenges are transforming our way of thinking, lifestyle, and culture. The future we will witness after the pandemic will surely be completely different from the past.

“Resilience,” the topic for this Conference, in this sense, is truly important, and at the same time, timely. For the post-COVID-19 era, we should gather all of our wisdom and strength to recover from the pandemic and prepare for a better future. Based on your expertise and experience as Korean nationals abroad, sharing wisdom and insights in responding to the new environment flexibly will in turn give you invaluable results where everyone in the world can agree on the importance of the mission and role of lawyers in these changing times.

Today, we are entrusted with solving various issues such as the global economic crisis, regional conflicts, climate change, and more. It is now time for us to think deeply about the sense of vocation and responsibilities as lawyers to find a way to the rule of law that wisely copes with global issues that mankind is facing in this hyperconnected era.

As is known, one of the ideals and values of the Constitution is to protect the freedom and rights of the people and achieve social integration. The Constitutional Court of Korea has been doing its best to ensure the fundamental rights of the people and to make sure that the free and democratic order is firmly rooted. As there are more endeavors to advance democracy, ensure human rights, and uphold the rule of law, more opportunities will be created for cross-border exchange and cooperation.

Even the strong changes that we encounter today can serve as a stepping stone if many countries, which have diverse systems and the Constitution, make continuous efforts to harmonize the universality of human rights and the individuality of culture by embodying the universal values of freedom, human rights, equality, and justice. Your

work in upholding and advancing democracy and the rule of law in every corner of the globe will be of great help in shifting from an era of crisis to the new one of harmony and prosperity.

Distinguished members of IAKL,

I hope that there will be a deep discussion on democracy and the rule of law for the new era and environment at today's Conference. I also hope that you share your wisdom and experience in establishing laws to enhance the rights of minorities, including women and vulnerable groups, as well as the role of lawyers in the changing times.

Extending my heartfelt congratulations once again, I wish the development of the IAKL and the best of health and happiness for all the members of the IAKL.

Thank you.