

LC2021 Japan, August 2: Session I - 2022 Korean Presidential Election

Masayoshi Kajikuri
August 2, 2021



Tokyo, Japan - With the 2022 Korean presidential race in full swing, the first session of UPF-Japan's August-September International Leadership Conference 2021 (ILC2021), convened on August 2, focused on "The South Korean Presidential Election and the Situation in Northeast Asia." Around 100 people attended the webinar hosted by the International Media Association for Peace (IMAP) and co-sponsored by Sekai Nippo newspaper.

The session opened with Mr. Masahiro Kuroki of Sekai Nippo giving remarks on behalf of the organizers. Mr. Kuroki highlighted the importance of the upcoming presidential election, scheduled to be held in March 2022, which is attracting attention in Japan. He said: "The presidential election in South Korea is not just an election to decide the head of a country, but an election that will have a great impact on the future of Northeast Asia and the peace and stability of the world."

Then, several experts from Japan and Korea shared their thoughts on the theme.

Mr. Chang-soo Chin, director of the Sejong Institute's Center for Japan Studies, South Korea, pointed out that welfare and the post-COVID-19 economic recovery will be the main issues in the presidential election, as the opposition party calls for conservative leadership of the country.

Prof. Junya Nishino from Keio University, Japan, observed that the Moon Jae-administration is increasingly losing support from people in their 20s and 30s, who were the driving force behind the election of the president. He underlined: "Which candidate this group will support in [this] presidential election is an important point."

On South Korea's regional diplomacy, Prof. Nishino said that "from the Japanese point of view, South Korea appears to be following China, but that is not the case." He pointed out that "South Korea's perception of China [has] in a way [become] more severe than that of Japan's" due to China's economic retaliation on the country after a missile from the Terminal High Altitude Area Defense (THAAD) was deployed.

Speaking on Japan-Korea relations after the presidential election, Mr. Chin said, "The attitude of interaction (with Japan) will continue," but also cautioned that he does not "foresee any breakthrough," given young people's perception of the history between both countries.

Concerning the threats North Korea's nuclear and missile weapons pose to the region, Prof. Nishino said: "The North Korean issue will not become an issue in the presidential election." And, added, that after the new administration is inaugurated, policies will be implemented in line with the new president's positions on issues.

Mr. Isami Ueda, a correspondent with the Sekai Nippo, served as the moderator.