

Impact Players

Choi Kyong-lim

By Heajin Kim

Who is he?

Choi Kyong-lim is the representative of Permanent Mission of the Republic of Korea in Geneva, and is the new president of the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) since January 2016.

Previously he was ambassador of headquarters of the ROK Ministry of Foreign Affairs from March to August 2015 before he moved to his position in Geneva on September 2015.



Ambassador Choi's diplomatic career began in 1982. He has held a number of trade and economic-related position, including: deputy minister for trade at the Ministry of Trade, Industry and Energy (March 2013 – February 2015), representative negotiator for free trade agreements at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (MOFAT) (July 2012 – February 2013), director-general of Bureau of Free Trade Agreement Policy at MOFAT (March 2008 – August 2009), director-general of Bureau of Free Trade Agreement at MOFAT (January 2007 – February 2008), first negotiator for free trade agreement negotiations at Bureau of Free Trade Agreement at MOFAT (2005 – 2007), and deputy director of Bureau of World Trade Organization at MOFAT (January 2001 – 2002).

Ambassador Choi's first overseas assignment was as second secretary at the ROK Embassy in the United States in 1987. He then moved to the ROK Embassy in Jamaica in 1995 where he served as the first secretary. In 1997 he served as the first secretary at the Permanent Mission of ROK in Geneva, and then as a counselor in 2002. From September 2009 to July 2012, he served as the ROK ambassador to Brazil.

Ambassador Choi received an M.A. from the University of Connecticut and a B.A. from Seoul National University, both in International Relations.

Why has he been in the news?

Ambassador Choi's official term as the new president of the UNHRC began on January 1, 2016. He was elected earlier on December 7, 2015, to replace Joachim Rucker of Germany for a one-term year. He is the first Korean to be elected for the position, and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs said the United Nations' decision a reflection of the ROK's rapid democratization and improvement of human rights conditions. Furthermore, since 2016 marks the 10th anniversary of the UNHCR, much global attention from the international community will be expected.

What can we expect from him?

In 2016, the ROK will continue to chair the United Nations Economic and Social Council, the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the Financial Action Task Force on Money Laundering, and the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. Since the ROK will engage actively in all of the UN's three biggest missions —peaceful security, development, and human rights—cooperation among each organization is necessary and Ambassador Choi's outstanding organizational experience will prove invaluable. Unlike most of his diplomatic peers he also has experience working at the Ministry of Trade, Industry and Energy. Furthermore, since he has been serving as the representative of Permanent Mission of the Republic of Korea in Geneva, he is well-versed with how the United Nations functions and the ROK's role in the UN. As the global society is challenged with crises and terrors, Ambassador Choi's leadership for promoting and protecting human rights will be more crucial than ever.



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