

Application for joining the WHO Global Network of
Age-friendly Cities and Communities

Mayor's letter of commitment



GWANGJU CITY

Dear WHO Director-General,

On behalf of the City of Gwangju, the City of Democracy and Human Rights, Mayor Yong-Sup LEE extends our highest respect for you and the WHO for your commitment to the improvements of public health and welfare of the humankind.

The City of Gwangju currently has about 200,000 elderly citizens, occupying 13% of the city population. Though the rate might not exceed that of many other countries and cities, we expect that our city will enter 'aged society' in 2021 and 'super-aged-city' in 2028 because about 400,000 citizens will enter the elderly age group in 10 to 20 years.

So, in preparation of a rapid aging of the city population, we are carrying out policy research and institutional revisions to move toward an 'age-friendly city' so that everyone can participate in the society without any inconveniences regardless age.

We first regulated "The Municipal Ordinance for Creating an Age-Friendly City" for the institutional foundation. This ordinance also bears the meaning of practical commitment to creating an age-friendly city because in this ordinance are incorporated all aspects including public-private cooperation, various items on policy survey and research, and many other considerations relevant to the life of the elderly people such as welfare, social participation, public health, culture, environment, etc.

We then carried out a survey of citizens on age-friendly city and another interview research of welfare institutions workers to solicit the voices of the beneficiaries and the field-workers of the policy. We also shared the purpose and significance of creating an age-friendly city and furthered cooperations within the city administration through a policy workshop among relevant administrative bodies.

From all these bottom-up processes, the City identified the elderly people's policy demand, and set "Happy Gwangju, the City of 100-Year Longevity with No Worry for Aged Life" as the vision through issues evaluation and SWOT analyses, and selected 49 promotion work in the following 4 promotion areas: Jobs & Culture, Care & Human Rights, Health & Medical Service, and Living Environment.

We will submit the completed version of "The City of Gwangju Plan for Creating an Age-Friendly City" after the final examination of the advisory committee for an age-friendly city comprising professionals, relevant workers, and city council members.

The age-friendly city in my mind can be pictured in a simple phrase, "Beyond Welfare." Going beyond welfare does not simply mean the expansion of the policy area, but also the beneficiaries are further identified into preliminary, early, and late elderlies in addition to the beneficiary expansion from vulnerable elderlies to general elderlies.

As the life expectancy exceeds 100 years, we even see the ages of tripple-cropping as well as double-cropping, and living well became more important than living long. For the elderly people to live well, we need to build a socio-physical system where the elderly are healthy and respected with contributions to the local community with their experiences and expertise. For this, Gwangju citizens, professionals, relevant workers and public officials will cooperate, and in addition to this cooperation I will add my strong will to promote so that we will make Genial Gwangju, a city where all citizens including the elderly are happy.

As we show our respect to the commitment of your institution, we sincerely hope that we can go together with the global tendency of shifting the paradigm of policies for the aged by becoming a member of the WHO Internatonal Network of Age-Friendly Cities.

February, 2020

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Yongsup Lee', written in a cursive style.

LEE Yong-sup

Mayor, Gwangju Metropolitan City