

Meet Jamie Metzl, an Honorary Ambassador for Korea



Dr. Jamie Metzl, the newest Honorary Ambassador of Foreign Investment for Korea, calls his work helping Korea and strengthening U.S.-Korea relations a “labor of love.”

An expert in Asian economic and political affairs as well as in U.S. foreign policy, he has served as the Executive Vice President of the Asia Society, in the Clinton White House, as Deputy Staff Director of the U.S. Senate Foreign Relations Committee and in other distinguished positions. He

is a partner at the global investment holding company Cranemere Inc. and lives in New York.

We got to know Dr. Metzl during his visit to Korea in December.

How do you feel about being an Honorary Ambassador of Foreign Investment for Korea?

I am extremely honored. I have been coming to Korea for decades and have always been incredibly impressed with the dynamism, creativity and hard work of the Korean people. Additionally, Korea and the United States have been close partners for many decades because we have worked together to keep the relationship vibrant, reciprocal and respectful.

How did you get to know Korea?

I have many close friends in Korea who have helped introduce me to your remarkable country. When I was at the Asia Society, I organized a number of large international conferences in Korea where I had the honor of working with and hosting Korean heroes like former President Kim Dae Jung. I also negotiated the opening of the Asia Society Korea Center, working very closely with Lotte Chairman Shin Dong Bin and former prime minister and ambassador, Lee Hong Koo. I have so much respect for these people and the other Koreans with whom I have worked and it is truly an honor for me to do what I can to help Korea attain the recognition and investments I strongly believe it deserves.

What is Korea's greatest advantage as an investment destination, and what would be the best way to promote it to U.S. investors?

Korea has proven a highly adaptable society and economy. Korean industry, technology and culture have become global standards of excellence. Many Americans already know this, but others do not. I plan to foster constructive dialogue between potential business partners in the United States and Korea. Additionally, the Korea-U.S. Free Trade Agreement creates new opportunities for investment and business collaboration, which I plan to support.

What U.S. sector or industry is most likely to invest in Korea?

Technology and culture are two areas where Korea is incredibly dynamic and where Korean companies are making tremendous inroads into Asia. Korea also has a tremendous opportunity to grow its market for high-quality foods, particularly for export to China.

How do you envision Korea five years from now?

I have unlimited faith in Korea's future. The Korean people are smart, creative and incredibly hard-working, and the government has done an excellent job of creating a positive framework for growth. Five years from now, I see Korea continuing to be a technology, shipbuilding and creative industries powerhouse, and creating greater opportunities for its small- and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) to grow nationally and globally. Everyone knows about Samsung and Hyundai, but I hope five years from now, people will start learning about nascent Korean companies that have the potential to become global equivalents of Google. Long-term investors need to look at human potential and regulatory frameworks when making investment decisions, and I believe Korea is well positioned in both areas.

What can Korea improve, to bring in more investment?

Although Korea has benefited enormously from industrial policy and the strong chaebols, it now needs to rebalance its economy to ensure more oxygen for the SMEs that need to be stronger engines for Korea's growth. Korea will also need to continue to increase women's participation in the workforce and should consider extending the retirement age.

What are you like outside of the office? Hobbies and favorites?

I am a novelist. My first novel, “The Depths of the Sea,” deals with the intersecting lives of different people drawn to the Thai-Cambodian border after the Vietnam War. My new novel, “Genesis Code,” will come out in November. It deals with issues of human genetic enhancement in the context of a future U.S.-China rivalry.

I'm also an endurance athlete (11 Ironman triathlons, 24 marathons and six ultramarathons) and a big skier. My general view is that we all have lots of untapped potential, and, for me, extreme sports helps me push myself to new limits. I also love art and literature, ballet and great food. I keep lists of the most amazing restaurants around the world and am always looking for suggestions and sharing my lists with friends.

Any new year's resolutions?

A friend recently asked me for my big-picture goals. I came up with: to have the greatest positive impact, leave the strongest legacy and be as happy as humanly (or superhumanly) possible. Maybe one of the reasons I'm so drawn to Korea is that so many Koreans share this type of commitment to continuous effort and growth.

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