Foreign Investment Ombudsman

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The Office of the Foreign Investment Ombudsman, an organization that provides tailored post-investment and grievance-settlement services, has worked to resolve the grievances of foreign investors doing business in Korea since 1999. Appointed by the President of the Republic of Korea, the Foreign Investment Ombudsman works in cooperation with his Home Doctors—specialists in fields including finance, accounting, law, construction, tax, and labor—to resolve grievances.

Since its establishment, the Office of the Foreign Investment Ombudsman has handled about 5,400 cases, preventing potential disputes and taking a proactive approach to creating a better business environment for foreign investors.

Korea’s Foreign Investment Ombudsman System has been lauded by such international organizations as UNCTAD and APEC as a best practice for promoting cross-border investment and avoiding investor-state disputes. It has also been benchmarked by many countries around the world, Russia and Kazakhstan have already introduced the system and Brazil, Mongolia and Vietnam are considering introducing it.

I encourage you to contact our office whenever you encounter difficulties doing business in Korea. We are committed to removing obstacles to your success.

Thank you.

Foreign Investment Ombudsman

Inchul Kim

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**Customer Testimonials**

**The Office of the Foreign Investment Ombudsman is a trustworthy partner of foreign-invested companies.**

**AMY JACKSON**
President, American Chamber of Commerce in Korea

I would like to extend my sincere appreciation to the Office of the Foreign Investment Ombudsman for its continuous support for the foreign business community in Korea. At times of challenge, the Office has provided essential information and advice through which we could work together to achieve mutual benefits and further growth of the economy. As Korea continues to expand its extensive FTA network, we believe the continuous support of the Office will help many more companies who wish to extend their investment and business here.

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**THILO HALTER**
President, European Chamber of Commerce in Korea

We appreciate that the Foreign Investment Ombudsman has made a continuous effort to provide a fair and satisfying business environment for foreign investors. Thanks to concerted practices by the Ombudsman, with the support of the Korean government, improvements could be achieved. Furthermore, the European business community is optimistic that, with augmented government support for the Foreign Investment Ombudsman’s office, Korea’s investment climate will continue to improve, which, we believe, will lead to more operations, business and investment in Korea.

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**MICHAEL REED**
Chairman, British Chamber of Commerce in Korea

The Korean business environment has improved greatly over the past few years and, for foreign companies operating in Korea, has improved even faster. This is due to the good practices, enlightened business culture and environment encouraged by the Korean government and numerous affiliated organizations, especially KOTRA. We have faith in the Foreign Investment Ombudsman to continue leading this important role for both the benefit of the Korean economy and foreign investors in Korea.

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**DAVID-PIERRE JALICON**
Chairman, French-Korean Chamber of Commerce and Industry

Having been here more than 15 years, I have seen the continuous and tremendous efforts of the Office of the Foreign Investment Ombudsman to renew and strengthen its services to the foreign investor communities, not only in terms of facilities, but as well in terms of mutual cultural understanding, a key point of success.

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**THOMAS GEYER**
President, Korean-German Chamber of Commerce and Industry

Korea, a renowned powerhouse in East Asia, offers strategic advantages to domestic and foreign-invested companies. Beside a welcoming society and business culture, the Korean government and Korea’s associations, like KOTRA, have always shown great interest in an active participation of and exchange with the foreign business community. The collaboration with the Office of the Foreign Investment Ombudsman has proven to be a reliable partnership by offering a platform for open discussions and active support.

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**ATSUYUKI MIKI**
Chairman, Seoul Japan Club

We would like to extend our deep gratitude to the Office of the Foreign Investment Ombudsman for making the utmost efforts to improve the investment climate for foreign-invested companies in Korea. We have received extensive support from your Office not only for the investment of Japanese companies to Korea, but also for cooperation between Japanese companies and their Korean counterparts in a third country. The Seoul Japan Club will continue to strengthen our relations with your Office for economic growth and the success of the companies of both Japan and Korea.
HELPING YOU SUCCEED!

The OMBUDSMAN is here to help you resolve grievances and achieve continued success. Our Home Doctors, expert consultants, provide one-on-one service to present the best SOLUTIONS.

Who We Are

In accordance with Article 15 of the Foreign Investment Promotion Act, the Office of the Foreign Investment Ombudsman was established within KOTRA in 1999 for the purpose of supporting the affairs of grievance settlement for foreign investors and foreign-invested companies operating in Korea.

Legal Basis for the Foreign Investment Ombudsman System

The Foreign Investment Ombudsman was established under the Foreign Investment Promotion Act for the purpose of settling the grievances of foreign investors and foreign-invested companies and of providing support for their business.

Legal Basis for the Function of the Office of the Foreign Investment Ombudsman

The Office of the Foreign Investment Ombudsman is established to receive and handle grievances of foreign investors and foreign-invested companies.

① For the purpose of supporting the affairs of grievance settlement for foreign-capital invested companies, the Foreign Investment Ombudsman is commissioned from among persons of abundant learning and experience in foreign-invested business.
② The Foreign Investment Ombudsman, under paragraph ① (hereinafter referred to as “Foreign Investment Ombudsman”) shall be commissioned by the President by the recommendation of the Minister of Knowledge Economy after deliberation by the Foreign Investment Committee.
③ The Korea Trade-Investment Promotion Agency shall establish a grievance committee under its jurisdiction in order to support the business of the Foreign Investment Ombudsman.
④ If necessary for settling the grievances of foreign investors and foreign-capital invested companies, any Foreign Investment Ombudsman may request that the head of a relevant administrative agency and foreign-investment related agency (hereinafter referred to as “relevant administrative agency, etc.”) render necessary cooperation in the following subparagraphs. In such cases, the head of the relevant administrative agency, etc. in receipt of such request shall comply therewith, unless externalizing circumstances exist.
① Stating an explanation to a relevant administrative agency, etc. or submitting data in accordance with the standards prescribed by Presidential Decree;
② Stating the opinions of related employees, interested persons, etc.;
③ Rendering cooperation for site visits
④ Where necessary according to the results of resolving the grievances of foreign investors and foreign-capital invested companies, any Foreign Investment Ombudsman may recommend that the heads of relevant administrative agencies and public agencies take corrective measures on related affairs.
⑤ The heads of relevant administrative agencies and public agencies who have received recommendations to take corrective measures in accordance with paragraph ④ shall notify the Foreign Investment Ombudsman of the grievance-handling results in writing within a period as prescribed by Presidential Decree. (Newly Inserted, December 11, 2012)
⑥ If the heads of relevant administrative agencies and public agencies do not implement recommendations to take corrective measures made under paragraph ④, the Foreign Investment Ombudsman may request that the Foreign Investment Committee introduce matters related to the recommendations as an agenda.
(Newly Inserted, December 11, 2012)
What We Do

The grievance settlement body, headed by the Foreign Investment Ombudsman within KOTRA, supports grievance resolution in close cooperation with the Investment Consulting Center.

FAQ

The Office of the Foreign Investment Ombudsman provides a one-stop service that aims to improve the investment environment and resolve difficulties related to daily life.

1. **Which company can use the Foreign Investment Ombudsman system?**
   - A. Foreign investors and all companies registered as foreign-invested companies in Korea.

2. **How can a foreign-invested company file its grievance with the Office of the Foreign Investment Ombudsman?**
   - A. Through any convenient means, including e-mail, the Ombudsman’s website, phone, fax, Twitter and in person. Companies can also receive on-site assistance from consultants of the Office of Foreign Investment Ombudsman.

3. **How much does grievance resolution cost?**
   - A. Nothing. The entire grievance resolution process, including consultation and assistance, is free.

4. **In what areas can grievance resolution be applied?**
   - A. All fields, ranging from corporate management to the living environment of foreign investors. Exceptions include private disputes between companies, sales of individual companies, requests that contradict global standards and matters that unfairly influence other companies or industries.

5. **Will a consultation with the Ombudsman’s Office be kept confidential?**
   - A. Other than for the purpose of resolving the problem, all grievances filed are kept strictly confidential and not revealed to any third party, pursuant to Paragraph 5, Article 15-2 of the Foreign Investment Promotion Act.

6. **Could a filing company be at a disadvantage with government authorities or local government agencies for filing a grievance?**
   - A. Absolutely not. The Ombudsman’s Office seeks to resolve grievances from the foreign investor’s point of view. Also, cases involving government agencies can be handled anonymously at the request of the filing company or if deemed necessary.

7. **How can a filing company check the status of the grievance resolution process?**
   - A. A Home Doctor will keep the company informed through every step of the resolution process and receive other inquiries at any time.
At the 12th annual World Investment Conference held in 2007 by the World Association of Investment Promotion Agencies (WAIPA), an organization of 250 investment promotion agencies from 150 economies, KOTRA’s Foreign Investment Ombudsman system received the WAIPA Award 2007 jointly with UNCTAD for its excellence in facilitating cross-border trade and investment.

The prestigious WAIPA Award 2007 is presented to investment promotion agencies that generate best practices in grievance settlement and investment aftercare.
We are always here to troubleshoot on your behalf.

Network | Korea Business Center

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Diplomatic Missions in 83 countries, and 42 of our offices are devoted to investment.