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Ending Plastic Pollution: All-Out Action Begins Now

- Ministry of Environment to host 2025 World Environment Day events in Jeju and Seoul from June 4 to 13
- A global platform for environmental cooperation combining policy, diplomacy, and public participation

The Ministry of Environment (Minister Kim Wansup) will host the ‘2025 World Environment Day’ commemorative events from June 4 to 13 in Jeju Island and the Seoul area.

*World Environment Day is an official UN observance established following the 1972 United Nations Conference on the Human Environment.

The 2025 World Environment Day adopts the theme “Beat Plastic Pollution” with the official slogan “Shared Challenge, Collective Action,” emphasizing that addressing plastic pollution is a global responsibility, not limited to any single nation.

The commemorative ceremony will take place on June 5 at the Jeju International Convention Center in Seogwipo, Jeju. Approximately 1,300 participants are expected, including high-level delegations from 20 countries such as Laos, Bangladesh, and Japan, ambassadors to Korea, representatives from international organizations like the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), as well as members of civil society, industry, academia, and youth leaders.

The ceremony will commence with a short play depicting the story of a

grandmother haenyeo (female diver) and her granddaughter striving to preserve the pristine sea for future generations. This will be followed by a video featuring children from around the world, including Miles Kariuki, a young environmental activist from Kenya, highlighting the severity of plastic pollution and the intergenerational responsibility to combat it.

* Clean Up Kenya, a Kenyan environmental NGO, collected 1,000 letters from children across the country demanding action against plastic pollution and sent them to Inger Andersen, Executive Director of UNEP. Andersen presented one of these letters, written by 9-year-old Miles Kariuki, at the fifth session of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee on Plastic Pollution (INC-5) held in Busan in November 2024.

Subsequently, Indonesian environmental activist Gary Benchehib* and South Korean actor Kim Suk-hoon** will share vivid accounts of river cleanup efforts and eco-friendly lifestyle practices. Benchehib notably paddled a kayak made from plastic bottles through polluted Indonesian rivers, documenting the pollution to spur national river cleanup initiatives.

* Gary Benchehib is a young environmental activist from Indonesia and a 2022 Ramon Magsaysay Award recipient.

** Kim Suk-hoon is a prominent public figure known for his environmental activism, earning the nickname ‘Trash Man.’

During the ceremony, the Ministry of Environment will officially announce the ‘Action for Circular Economy (ACE) Initiative,’ a new form of international cooperation project that diagnoses the complex causes of plastic pollution and seeks tailored solutions, differing from existing collaborative efforts. Through this initiative, the ministry aims to enhance the global standing of South Korea’s green industry.

The ceremony will conclude with a celebratory performance by soprano Jo Sumi and a children’s choir, accompanied by a video showcasing domestic and international cleanup activities, including plogging and underwater cleanups.

The event will be broadcast live from 2 p.m. via the official YouTube channels of the Ministry of Environment and UNEP. The ‘2026 World

Environment Day' is scheduled to be held in Baku, Azerbaijan.

Meanwhile, from June 4 to 5, over 20 side events commemorating World Environment Day will take place throughout Seogwipo, Jeju. Notably, on June 4, a ministerial roundtable will be held at The Shilla Jeju, attended by high-level delegations from more than 10 countries, including Japan, Laos, and Azerbaijan. The meeting will provide a platform for ministers to share national statuses on plastic pollution, discuss cooperative measures, and explore solutions for transitioning to a circular economy.

On the same day, the International Convention Center (ICC) Jeju will host a youth environmental forum featuring speakers such as Indonesian environmental activist Gary Benchehib and Dong-Eun Suh, CEO of Repla, a startup specializing in circular economy technologies. Seo will share insights into his motivation for developing technologies aimed at reducing plastic usage.

Following the forum, Han Hwa-jin, Co-Chair of the Presidential Commission on Carbon Neutrality and Green Growth, and Inger Andersen, Executive Director of UNEP, will engage in a dialogue with attending youth participants.

The civil society forum to be held on June 5 at the Booyoung Hotel & Resort Jeju will be held under the subtitle "A Zero Plastic Society Driven by Citizen Action," featuring activists from various organizations such as the Climate Change Center, Zero Waste Shop, and K-POP for Planet, as well as Indonesian environmental activist Aeshnina Azzahra Aqilani*, who will participate via video conference. The event will be broadcast live on the official YouTube channel of the Ministry of Environment starting at 10 a.m. on June 5.

* She sent letters to the embassies of countries exporting waste to Indonesia, urging them to halt waste exports.

In addition, 40 award-winning artworks from an art contest held from

March 24 to April 25 on the theme of ending plastic pollution will be exhibited at the ICC Jeju.

* A total of 2,735 entries were received, with 10 selected from each category: kindergarten, lower elementary, upper elementary, and middle/high school.

Accompanying the exhibition, videos of children and adolescents explaining their artworks will be displayed, conveying the voices of future generations. Furthermore, 12 environmental participation booths involving companies and associations will be operated during the exhibition period.

In conjunction with World Environment Day, the Ministry of Environment will also strengthen green industry cooperation. From June 3 to 7, a green industry market development team, comprising the Korea Environmental Industry Association and 12 green companies, will visit Shanghai and Yancheng in China to promote environmental technologies and expand export opportunities.

* Damyung ESCO, Bluewin, Jena, Techno & Environment, Kinava, HS Technology, Testonic, K-Pack Korea, Dongmin Industrial Cooperative, MicroOne, United Safety Consulting, GG Sensors

Minister of Environment Kim Wansup stated, “The 2025 World Environment Day serves as a meaningful opportunity for the international community to respond to the shared challenge of plastic pollution through solidarity and action.” He added, “South Korea will responsibly transition to a low-carbon circular economy through policies, international cooperation, and public participation.”