

## **Leading Global Cooperation to End Plastic Pollution: Korea Presents Action Plan for Circular Economy to the International Community**

- Shifting from simple aid-based cooperation to a problem-solving collaboration system
- Addressing complex plastic pollution issues with tailored projects
- High-level delegations from 20 partner countries, international organizations like UNEP, and multilateral development banks in attendance

The Ministry of Environment (Minister Kim Wansup) will introduce the ‘Action for Circular Economy Initiative’ (ACE Initiative), a new international cooperation plan to end plastic pollution through circular economy efforts, at the 2025 World Environment Day ceremony held on June 5 at the International Convention Center Jeju (located in Seogwipo, Jeju).

Plastic pollution stems from complex causes linked to economic conditions, societal characteristics, and cultural backgrounds. Solutions are also entangled with factors such as legal and institutional frameworks, technological capacity, expertise, and public awareness, making effective resolution challenging. Plastic waste discharged by individual countries crosses borders and severely affects marine ecosystems, making it a growing international environmental issue.

The Ministry of Environment determined that past international cooperation projects, often carried out as one-off initiatives in response to partner countries’ requests, were limited in effectively solving actual problems. As a result, in 2023, the Ministry shifted its approach to local diagnostic projects,

including assessments of waste management in Colombia and drinking water management in Indonesia.

The newly announced ACE Initiative integrates and expands these previous efforts. It begins with a comprehensive analysis of each partner country's plastic pollution challenges.

Experts in circular economy from Korea, partner countries, international organizations, and multilateral development banks form a joint task force that visits the target country to assess not only the scale of plastic pollution but also the institutional, cultural, and technological conditions on the ground.

Based on these findings, tailored cooperation projects will be developed to address plastic pollution in each country. These will be implemented through various means, including grant assistance and Public-Private Partnership (PPP) projects, aiming to offer practical solutions to global plastic pollution.

This initiative represents a shift from basic cooperation projects to Korea-led, problem-solving international partnerships specifically targeting plastic pollution. For domestic circular economy businesses that have so far focused on the domestic market, the initiative offers opportunities to develop technologies tailored to diverse international conditions, expanding their chances for overseas expansion.

The ACE Initiative will also be presented during the Ministerial Roundtable held on the morning of June 5 at The Shilla Jeju.

Meanwhile, the World Environment Day ceremony will be attended by high-level representatives and ambassadors to Korea from 20 countries, including Laos, Bangladesh, and Japan, as well as senior officials from the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), and the World Bank.

Jeong Eun-hae, Director General for International Cooperation Bureau at the Ministry of Environment, stated, “Starting in the second half of this year, we will begin assessing interest from potential partner countries through embassies in Korea and form joint task forces to begin local diagnostics from next year.” She added, “We will do our utmost to ensure that the Korea-led ACE Initiative delivers tangible results in ending plastic pollution through collaboration with international organizations and multilateral development banks.”