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Ministry of Environment Leads International Joint Research on Microplastics in Cooperation with the OECD

- Joint research on the stability and toxicity of microplastics promoted through OECD adoption

The Ministry of Environment (Minister Kim Wansup) announced that it plans to lead an international joint research project in the field of microplastics in cooperation with the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD).

This joint research is the first case of collaborative research in the field of microplastics adopted under the OECD Environment, Health, and Safety (EHS^{*}) programme.

* Environment, Health, and Safety (EHS) Programme: A project operated with the aim of developing policies and tools that emphasize the environmental, health, and safety aspects of chemical substances.

Korea's joint research proposal received unanimous final approval with the active support of member countries such as the United States, the European Union (EU), Australia, and Japan at the 6th meeting of the OECD Chemicals and Biotechnology Committee (CBC^{*}) held in Paris, France, on November 7.

* Chemicals and Biotechnology Committee (CBC): A committee that oversees and approves the activities of working parties in accordance with the Environment, Health, and Safety programme and discusses future direction of activities.

The Ministry of Environment proactively proposed this joint research at the 6th meeting of the OECD Chemical Biotechnology Committee in order to lay the groundwork for establishing microplastics-related policies based on

scientific evidence, amid growing concerns and interest in microplastics pollution in the international community. The Delegation of the Republic of Korea to the OECD is also set to provide a contribution of 30,000 euros to fully support this initiative.

This international joint research will be conducted from 2025 to 2029 and will involve the development of reference materials for microplastics, evaluation of their physicochemical properties, and toxicity testing. Active information sharing and collaborative research among experts from OECD member countries are expected to take place.

Korea (Ministry of Environment / National Institute of Environmental Research) is expected to play a leading role in the international cooperation framework of this joint research by enhancing scientific understanding of the environmental and human impacts of microplastics and developing internationally standardized evaluation methods.

Park Yeon-jae, Director General of the Environmental Health Bureau of the Ministry of Environment, stated, “As the 5th session of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee for the International Plastics Treaty (November 25 - December 1, Busan) is being held in Korea, global cooperation to solve the microplastics problem is crucial.” He added, “This international joint research will contribute to establishing Korea’s presence in international research capabilities and will help in formulating effective environmental policies regarding microplastics in the future.”