



환경부



외교부

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4th Korea-U.S. Environmental Affairs Council and Environmental Cooperation Commission Held... Firm Commitment to Bilateral Environmental Cooperation

- Confirmed the firm commitment to actively cooperate in recent, intensifying multilateral discussions on trade and carbon

The Ministry of Environment (Minister Han Wha-jin) and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Minister Cho Tae-yul) held the 4th Korea-U.S. Environmental Affairs Council (EAC) and Environmental Cooperation Commission (ECC) from July 11 for two days at the Government Complex –Seoul Annex. They reviewed the progress of environmental policies of both countries, discussed the priorities of cooperation programs, and communicated with the public through an open session.

The Korea-U.S. Environmental Affairs Council is a high-level consultative body based on Chapter 20: Environment of the Korea-U.S. Free Trade Agreement (KORUS). Since its implementation in 2012, it has been held every 3-5 years to review and address the implementation of the Environment Chapter by both countries, focusing on 1) enhancing the level of environmental protection, 2) enforcing environmental laws, 3) implementing multilateral environmental agreements, and 4) public participation.

At the Environmental Affairs Council, Lee Youngseok, Director General of Climate Change and International Cooperation Bureau at the Ministry of Environment of Korea, and Kelly Milton, Assistant U.S. Trade Representative

(USTR), attended as chief representatives. At the Environmental Cooperation Commission, Han Minyoung, Deputy Director-General of the Climate Change, Energy, Environment, and Scientific Affairs Bureau at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and Jennifer Littlejohn, Acting Assistant Secretary in the Bureau of Oceans and International Environmental and Scientific Affairs at the U.S. Department of State, attended as chief representatives. In addition, representatives from the Ministry of Trade, Industry and Energy, the Ministry of Oceans and Fisheries, the U.S. Department of State, and the U.S. Embassy in Korea also attended.

< Significance and Background of the 4th Environmental Affairs Council and Environmental Cooperation Commission >

The Environmental Affairs Council, based on the KORUS Environment Chapter (Chapter 20), is held every 3-5 years to review whether the environmental policies of both countries 1) strengthen the level of environmental protection, 2) implement multilateral environmental agreements, 3) ensure the enforcement of environmental laws, and 4) promote public participation in policy-making.

In addition, the Environmental Cooperation Commission, based on the Korea-U.S. Environmental Cooperation Agreement (concluded in 2012), is held to adopt work programs for environmental cooperation between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Korea and the U.S. Department of State, review the implementation of existing cooperation measures, and discuss future cooperation plans.

< Results of the Discussions at the 4th Environmental Affairs Council>

The Ministry of Environment of Korea and the U.S. Trade Representative agreed that the 4th Environmental Affairs Council was an important opportunity to confirm their commitment to environmental protection and the

sustainable use of natural resources, while also strengthening the long-standing relationship between the two countries.

The governments of both countries focused on improving the level of environmental protection, ensuring effective enforcement of environmental laws, implementing multilateral environmental agreements, and promoting public participation in policy-making. They shared an overview of the measures taken so far and exchanged updates on the status of each other's policy implementations.

The Korean government introduced to the U.S. the institutional improvements and ongoing measures in seven key areas that have been a focus in the climate and environment sectors: 1) Carbon neutrality legislation, 2) Strengthening the climate adaptation system, 3) Accelerating the green transition, 4) Circular economy, 5) Biodiversity conservation, 6) Air quality improvement, and 7) Implementation of multilateral environmental agreements.

In particular, the Korean government emphasized that, following the declaration of carbon neutrality, it has established an institutional framework through legal adjustments and is making efforts to transition to a carbon-neutral society by promoting policies that effectively address climate change and mutually drive a sustainable economy.

In addition, it was explained that the Korean government is also striving to enhance public participation in policy-making by establishing pan-governmental consultative bodies and collecting public opinions multiple times during the decision-making process for national strategies and other policies.

The U.S. side explained that they are strengthening measures to expand clean energy and renewable energy, promote decarbonization, and reduce greenhouse gases in accordance with the Inflation Reduction Act and the

Bipartisan Infrastructure Act.

In addition, they introduced various environmental measures including conservation, marine debris removal, and the restoration and protection of domestic lands and waters. They also noted that various agencies, including the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), and the Department of Justice, are collectively enforcing these environmental measures.

Furthermore, both Korean and U.S. sides shared their respective positions on the topics and current progress of carbon and environmental discussions taking place in multilateral forums such as the World Trade Organization (WTO), the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the Group of Twenty (G20), and the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC).

The U.S. side requested Korea's cooperation and support, emphasizing the need to activate environment-based trade discussions within the World Trade Organization (WTO). In response, the Korean government emphasized the necessity for Korea-U.S. cooperation to be mutually beneficial and expressed hope for identifying specific areas of cooperation, ensuring discussions that can make a substantial contribution to addressing climate and environmental issues within multilateral organizations.

In addition, during the 4th Environmental Affairs Council, Korea and the U.S. reaffirmed their mutual commitments and responsibilities to conserve and protect the environment as stipulated in the KORUS Environment Chapter, as well as their ongoing cooperation.

< Results of the Discussions at the 4th Environmental Cooperation Commission >

In this meeting, Korea and the U.S. reviewed the environmental cooperation

pursued under the 2019-2022 and 2023-2026 work programs and discussed future areas of cooperation.

The Korean side appreciated the inclusion of climate change response and circular economy/plastic pollution prevention in the 2023-2026 work program and introduced the close cooperation activities between the two countries in the areas of air quality, ocean color satellites, and water treatment technologies.

The U.S. side emphasized the cooperative activities with Korea in the areas of air quality, water resource management, marine threat response, and reduction of plastic and mercury pollution.

Additionally, both sides had in-depth discussions on ways to strengthen future cooperation in five priority areas: illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing, climate change, plastic pollution response, air quality, and water resource management.

The Korean side introduced the Carbon-Free Energy (CFE) initiative being promoted for climate change response and clean energy transition, as well as the ‘World Climate Industry Expo,’ which will be held in Busan this September under the theme “Opening the Age of Carbon-Free Energy (CFE) through Climate Technology,” and requested U.S. participation. In addition, regarding the Fifth Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee (INC-5) meeting for the UN Plastics Pollution Treaty, scheduled to be held in Busan this November, our side emphasized the intention to actively contribute to the successful drafting of the treaty and requested active cooperation from the U.S. side.

< Open Session >

Both countries held a public session at 10 a.m. on July 12 at the

Government Complex–Seoul Annex, where they transparently presented the results of the discussions from the Environmental Affairs Council and the Environmental Cooperation Commission held the previous day to the attendees and conducted a Q&A session.

In response to a question regarding the positions of Korea and the U.S. on the World Trade Organization (WTO) Agreement on Fisheries Subsidies, USTR Assistant Milton and Deputy Director-General Han Minyoung replied that both countries have been closely cooperating, such as by depositing their instruments of acceptance for the Protocol of Amendment for the Agreement on Fisheries Subsidies with the WTO.

Regarding the inquiry on improving public participation in environmental policy, Lee Youngseok, Director General of Climate Change and International Cooperation Bureau at the Ministry of Environment, responded that public participation in environmental policy-making is very important. He emphasized the continuous efforts to increase participation opportunities and the commitment to not only expand the quantity of legally guaranteed public participation but also enhance the depth and quality of communication.

In addition, there were Q&A sessions on topics such as Korea's strengthened climate adaptation measures, the US' detailed policies related to green transition and clean energy, and the relationship between eco-labeling systems and environmental protection.

Lee Youngseok, Director General of Climate Change and International Cooperation Bureau, stated, "I am pleased to be able to directly share and communicate the results of the Korea-U.S. policy discussions with the public." He added, "In this 4th Environmental Affairs Council, in addition to reviewing each country's environmental laws and policy improvements, extensive exchanges took place between the two countries, including discussions on

climate change responses and reaffirming cooperation in multilateral organizations such as the World Trade Organization (WTO).”

Han Minyoung, Deputy Director-General at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, stated, “It is meaningful to review the current status of environmental cooperation between Korea and the U.S. and discuss ways to strengthen future cooperation through this meeting.” She added, “Particularly, it is significant that we had the opportunity to explain the meeting results to the public and listen to various opinions through the public session.”

Kelly Milton, Assistant U.S. Trade Representative (USTR), stated, “The 4th Korea-U.S. Environmental Affairs Council was a great opportunity to confirm the implementation efforts of both countries in addressing trade-related environmental issues. I hope we will continue to pursue bilateral, multilateral, and regional cooperation in the future.”

Jennifer Littlejohn, Acting Assistant Secretary of the U.S. Department of State, stated, “I am pleased that Korea and the U.S. have closely cooperated in responding to environmental issues.” She added, “Through this meeting, we reaffirmed that both countries share a common understanding of the need to address the climate crisis and protect the environment, and we plan to continue strengthening our cooperation in the future.”