

July 12, 2024

Joint Communiqué - United States-Korea Environmental Affairs Council and Environmental Cooperation Commission

*The text of the following statement was released by the Governments of the United States of America and the Republic of Korea on the occasion of meetings of the Fourth Environmental Affairs Council and Fourth Environmental Cooperation Commission.*

*Begin Text*

On July 11 and 12, 2024 in Seoul, Korea, the Governments of the Republic of Korea and the United States of America (the Parties) held the fourth meeting of the Environmental Affairs Council (EAC) under the United States-Korea Free Trade Agreement (KORUS), which entered into force in March 2012, and the fourth meeting of the Environmental Cooperation Commission (ECC) under the United States-Korea Environmental Cooperation Agreement (ECA), which also entered into force in March 2012.

The meetings served as an important opportunity to continue to enhance the longstanding bilateral relationship between the United States and the Republic of Korea and to highlight a shared commitment to environmental protection and the sustainable use of natural resources.

Assistant U.S. Trade Representative for Environment and Natural Resources Kelly Milton and U.S. Department of State Acting Assistant Secretary Jennifer R. Littlejohn, Bureau of Oceans and International Environmental and Scientific Affairs co-chaired the meetings for the United States. Director General of the Climate Change Policy Bureau Young-seok Lee, Ministry of Environment and Acting Director General of the Climate Change, Energy, Environmental, and Scientific Affairs Bureau Min-young Han, Ministry of Foreign Affairs co-chaired the meetings for the Republic of Korea.

During the EAC, the Parties reviewed their respective efforts to implement the KORUS Environment Chapter. The United States and the Republic of Korea outlined actions they have taken to increase levels of environmental protection and ensure effective enforcement of environmental laws. The United States highlighted actions taken under the Bipartisan Infrastructure Act and the Inflation Reduction Act to spur the green energy transition, reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and support a range of other environmental actions, including conservation, marine debris removal and restoring and protecting U.S. lands and waters. The Republic of Korea shared an update on its climate and environmental policies and actions across seven focus areas: carbon neutrality legislation, enhancing climate adaptation systems, accelerating the green transition, circular economy, biodiversity conservation, improving air quality, and implementation of multilateral environmental agreements. The Republic of Korea underscored its efforts to transition to a carbon-neutral society and also shared its actions to increase public participation in decision-making. During the EAC, the Parties also discussed other trade and environment matters, including opportunities to work together and with other trade partners to address the climate crisis, support circular economy approaches, and strengthen environmental protections, including through multilateral and regional

organizations such as the World Trade Organization, Group of 20, Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation, and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development.

During the ECC, the Parties reviewed environmental cooperation activities taken under the 2019-2022 and 2023-2026 Work Programs and discussed priority areas for future cooperation. The United States reviewed ongoing robust bilateral environmental cooperation with the Republic of Korea on topics such as air quality, water management, combatting threats to the world's oceans, and reducing plastic and mercury pollution. The Republic of Korea highlighted the importance of climate change mitigation and the promotion of exchanges on circular economy and preventing plastic pollution through the 2023-2026 Work Program, and underscored the ongoing bilateral cooperation implemented by relevant agencies on the topic of air quality, ocean color satellite, and water technology. During the ECC, the Parties also discussed efforts to address illegal, unreported, and unregulated fishing, shared climate objectives, combatting plastic pollution, and improving air and water quality.

The Parties also held a public session on July 12 with participation from a range of civil society stakeholders, where the Parties provided a summary of the previous day's government-to-government sessions. Members of the public had the opportunity to engage directly with government officials and offer comments and ask questions about implementation of the KORUS Environment Chapter and environmental cooperation activities under the ECA.

During both the EAC and ECC meetings, the United States and the Republic of Korea reaffirmed their commitment to protect and conserve the environment through implementation actions under the KORUS Environment Chapter and the Environmental Cooperation Agreement and to continue their close collaboration.