



Delegation of the European Union
to the Republic of Korea
주한 유럽연합 대표부



Kingdom of the Netherlands

Press Release

Marine Plastic Pollution in Focus for Team Europe at Our Ocean Conference 2025

Busan, May 2nd, 2025

The Delegation of the European Union to the Republic of Korea and the Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands to the Republic of Korea co-hosted a high-level side event at the 10th Our Ocean Conference focused on tackling marine plastic pollution. The seminar, titled “How the Circular Economy Will End Marine Plastic Pollution: A Joint Effort of Ambitious Policies and Innovative Businesses,” took place on 29 April 2025 at BEXCO, as part of the EU-Korea Green Partnership.

The event brought together international policy makers, including Timmy Dooley TD, Minister of State, Ireland’s Department of Agriculture, Food, Fisheries and the Marine and Sheldon Whitehouse, Senator, The United States Senate Ranking Member of the Senate Environment Committee, as well as leading voices from business and non-governmental organizations, including representatives from LG Chem, NETSPA and The Ocean Cleanup.

On behalf of the Republic of Korea, Haeng-nok Oh, Director-General of Marine Environment Policy Bureau, Ministry of Oceans and Fisheries, set out Korea’s active role in shaping policies to tackle plastic waste.

Representing the European Commission at the Our Ocean Conference, Charlina Vitcheva, Director-General for Maritime Affairs and Fisheries, called for systemic change and global action saying *‘the EU will remain firmly committed to finding a global solution to address plastic pollution. A global plastics treaty is needed more than ever. If business as usual continues, plastic production will triple by 2060.’*

Maria Castillo Fernandez, Ambassador of the European Union to the Republic of Korea, emphasized the instrumental role of the EU-Korea Green Partnership to advance jointly key strategic green agendas: *“We have the Green Partnership with Korea since 2023, and its key elements embrace cooperation towards developing new circular economy models, which are strategic in tackling global marine plastic pollution issues. We need to align our approaches to create a supportive framework for transformative innovation.”*

Peter van der Vliet, Ambassador of the Kingdom of the Netherlands to the Republic of Korea, added: *“Ending marine pollution requires more than just cleaning up the damage done – it means preventing waste at the source. It starts with smarter design, reuse systems, and business models*

that reduce the burden on nature. And this can only be the result of a joint effort of ambitious international policies allowing for innovative businesses to thrive.”

According to the UN Environment Programme, currently 19-23 million tonnes of plastic waste enter aquatic ecosystems annually. Beyond polluting coastlines and open seas, marine plastic pollution disrupts entire ecosystems, drives biodiversity loss, and poses direct risks to human health, livelihoods, and sustainable economic activities.

Despite the immense challenges, there are some encouraging developments. A recent assessment found that marine litter on the EU coastline is down by almost one-third. This achievement is the result of multilateral, national, regional, and citizen efforts triggered by the EU’s Marine Strategy Framework Directive.¹

Contacts

Ms Ahee KIM
Press & Public Information Officer
Delegation of the European Union to the Republic of Korea
delegation-rep-of-korea@eeas.europa.eu

Ms Oriane LEMAIRE
Key Outreach Expert
EU-RoK Green Partnership Programme
oriane.lemaire@gopa.de

¹ https://joint-research-centre.ec.europa.eu/jrc-news-and-updates/marine-litter-eu-coastline-down-almost-one-third-2025-02-04_en