



MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT
REPUBLIC OF KOREA

Government Complex Gwacheon, 88 Gwanmoonro, Gwacheon-si, Gyeonggi-do, 427-729, Republic of Korea
Tel. 82-2-2110-6549 Fax. 82-2-504-9206 <http://eng.me.go.kr>

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Ecorea is a compound of the prefix “Eco,” which suggests an ecologically sound and comfortable environment, and the name of the nation, “Korea.”



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The Minister's Message

Under the national vision of “Low Carbon, Green Growth,” Korea has set an ambitious GHG reduction target of 30% below BAU level by 2020.



Since the industrial revolution, people have pursued a lifestyle of convenience and abundance based on mass production and mass consumption. As a result, the world is faced with environmental challenges that range from air and water pollution to excessive generation of waste and chemical substances. Moreover, we are witnessing global climate change and extreme weather patterns caused by greenhouse gases emitted and accumulated from industrial activities. Loss of biodiversity is a new threat to the very survival of mankind.

Having gone through a process of full-scale industrialization and urbanization that began only in the 1960s, Korea has faced all the environmental challenges that industrialized countries experienced, in a compressed period of time. In order to cope with such challenges, the Korean Government launched the Environment Agency in 1980 and began to implement environmental policies. In 1990, this Agency was upgraded to become the Ministry of Environment.

Since that time, the scope of environmental policy has expanded from traditional concerns such as air pollution, water pollution and waste management, to environmental health, climate change, biodiversity and other global environmental problems.

From the ashes of the Korean War in the 1950s, Korea has constructed and developed its economy, industry, education, science and technology to a level where it is now a donor of official development assistance (ODA). Environmental policies have also evolved and developed according to the needs of the time.



Currently, Korea is making efforts to cope with climate change, the most pressing issue facing the world. Under the national vision of “Low Carbon, Green Growth,” Korea has set an ambitious GHG reduction target of 30% below BAU level by 2020. Korea plays an important role in bridging developed and developing countries by actively participating in the negotiations of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, in which, for example, the NAMA registry was finally adopted at the Cancun Conference. Korea has also established the Global Green Growth Institute (GGGI) in order to promote Green Growth across the world.

The publication of ECOREA has the purpose of sharing information about the state of the environment in Korea and its environmental policy. The first chapter provides an overview of Korea. The current status and recent trends in environmental quality are then portrayed in the second chapter. In chapter three specific environmental concerns and the measures taken to deal with them are explained. Chapter four explains current policies such as the Green Card system, the Four Major Rivers Restoration Project, the Green City Pilot Project in Gangneung and the eco-friendly food culture. In chapter five, subsidiary organizations and affiliated agencies under the Ministry of Environment are introduced.

I sincerely hope that the publication of ECOREA contributes not only to a better understanding of the status of Korea’s environment and related policies amongst global partners, but also to environmental cooperation between Korea and the international community.

November 2011
Yoo, Young Sook
Minister of Environment

유영숙



01 Overview of Korea

General

Country Name: Republic of Korea
Capital City: Seoul (10.4 million) (2010)
National Flag: Taegeukgi
National Flower: Mugunghwa (Rose of Sharon)
Currency: won (\$ 1 = 1,156,3 KRW) (2010)
Language: Korean (Writing system: Hangeul)

Geography

Location: Strategically located at the Center of Northeast Asia. Korea lies between China, the Russian Far East and Japan
Territory: 223,343km² (South Korea: 100,210km²)
Major Cities: Seoul (10.4 million), Busan (3.6 million), Incheon (2.7 million), Daegu (2.5 million), Daejeon (1.5 million), Gwangju (1.4 million), Ulsan (1.1 million) (2010)
Climate: Temperate with four distinct seasons

People

Population: 48.87 million (2010) *Foreign residents: 1.2 million
Population Growth Rate: 0.26% (2010)
Life Expectancy: Male, 77 years; female, 83.8 years (2009)
Religion: A 2005 census showed one half of the population actively practices religion. Among them, 10,726,463 Buddhist, 8,616,438 Protestants and 5,146,147 Catholics comprise the three dominant religions.

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