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Opening of the 15th Conference of the Contracting Parties to the Ramsar Convention

- “Protecting Wetlands for Our Common Future” to be discussed in Zimbabwe from July 23 to 31
- New strategic plan outlining Ramsar Convention goals through 2034 to be adopted

The Ministry of Environment announced that the 15th meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties to the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands (Ramsar COP15)* will be held from July 24 to 31 in Victoria Falls, Zimbabwe.

* The Ramsar Convention is an international environmental treaty adopted in 1971 to prevent the loss and degradation of wetlands, which hold high ecological, social, economic, and cultural value. South Korea joined the convention in 1997 and hosted the 10th meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties in Changwon in 2008.

The Ramsar COP15 will be attended by representatives from 172 member countries and experts from international organizations. South Korea will be represented by a government delegation composed of officials from the Ministry of Environment and other relevant agencies, as well as experts.

The upcoming Ramsar COP15 will be held under the theme “Protecting Wetlands for Our Common Future,” highlighting the vital role of wetlands in addressing the three major environmental crises: biodiversity loss, pollution, and climate change. The conference will seek to build global solidarity to prevent the loss of wetlands and ensure their protection.

On July 24, the host country Zimbabwe will hold a high-level discussion on topics such as international cooperation for wetland conservation and strengthening local livelihoods through wetland preservation. The goal is to unite the commitment of the contracting parties and adopt the “Victoria Declaration.”

The conference will also include the presentation of reports from the Ramsar Convention Secretariat on the implementation status of the convention. Key agenda items include discussions on the “Ramsar Strategic Plan 2025–2034,” the convention’s mid- to long-term roadmap, as well as draft resolutions proposed by member countries for wetland protection.

The “Ramsar Strategic Plan 2025–2034” outlines specific implementation goals for the convention through 2034. Based on this plan, member countries will be required to submit national reports detailing their implementation progress. As a result, intense negotiations are expected among the parties, particularly on contentious issues such as mobilizing financial resources for developing countries.

A key agenda item at this conference will be the draft resolution on “Vulnerability Assessment of Wetlands,” led and proposed by South Korea. The resolution emphasizes the need to assess the vulnerability of wetlands to factors that negatively impact their ecological characteristics, such as climate change. It calls on contracting parties to incorporate assessments of ecological vulnerability into their wetland monitoring efforts.

During the conference, a key event will be the certification ceremony for newly designated Wetland Cities, scheduled for July 24 from 3:00 to 4:00 p.m. local time. This year, South Korea’s cities of Mungyeong and Gimhae have been newly designated and will receive official certification. In

connection with this, the Wetland City Forum will be held to introduce the new Wetland Cities and share experiences from existing ones. The forum will take place in two parts: Part 1 on July 24 from 4:00 to 5:00 p.m., and Part 2 on July 25 from 3:00 to 6:00 p.m. local time.

※ The Wetland City Accreditation system was established through a resolution proposed by South Korea and Tunisia, which was adopted at the Ramsar COP12 in 2015 to strengthen wetland conservation at the local community level. This year, 31 new Wetland Cities and 18 re-accredited cities have been designated, bringing the total to 74 Wetland Cities across 27 countries.

Jung Eun-hae, Director General for International Cooperation Bureau at the Ministry of Environment, stated, “In this era of climate crisis, the importance of wetlands as carbon sinks will be highlighted once again.” She added, “Through this conference, we will work to more closely align South Korea’s wetland conservation policies with the international community.”