

## **Memorandum of Understanding with the Korea Environment Corporation**

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International Affairs Department

As announced in the press release on May 18, JS signed a memorandum of understanding with the Korea Environment Corporation (K-eco) on May 25.

Established in 2010, K-eco has its roots in the Korea Environment & Resources Corporation (ENVICO) and the Environmental Management Corporation(EMC), which were established in the 1980s, and its core businesses include climate and air, water and soil, resource recycling, environmental infrastructure, environmental health, and international cooperation. The company has 3,180 employees, 740 of whom are engaged in water-related work. K-eco's mission is to "contribute to the development of an environmentally advanced nation by promoting environmental improvement and resource recycling," and this is very much in line with JS's basic philosophy of "contributing to the creation of a good water environment, safe communities, and a sustainable society by promoting the development of the infrastructure for sewerage systems, including technology, human resources, and information, as a sewerage solution partner."

To the best of my knowledge, JS and K-eco first had direct contact in October 2014. When JS staff members participated in a forum on sewerage asset management held in Seoul, they engaged in discussions and exchanged information with K-eco over two days.

After that, there was no regular exchange, but around last spring, we started to receive occasional contact. This was in the form of requests to visit JS and interest in the WOW TO Japan program. In November of last year, K-eco and JS staff had the opportunity to meet in Osaka for discussions, and following that, the other party proposed the current memorandum.

K-eco and JS were connected by a thin thread, but fate led to the conclusion of this memorandum.

Although the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) signed by the two parties this time does not have any legally binding force, we believe

that it is significant because it confirms their cooperative relationship in a tangible form.

The specific scope of cooperation is as follows

- a) Exchange information on technical development and/or joint research and development related to sewerage
- b) Strengthening global partnerships and networks in the field of sewerage
- c) Expanding areas of cooperation, such as technology and personnel exchange
- d) Developing capacity-building programs such as training and education in the field of sewerage business promotion
- e) Other items agreed upon by both parties

It was decided during the previous year that the signing ceremony would be held in Japan on May 25th. Still, I only started corresponding with the person in charge at the other party in the second week of April. I am very grateful to the department for giving up their already-scheduled meeting room for the signing ceremony and to the PR department for helping me rehearse.

Of course, the preparations for this signing ceremony included the most time spent proofreading the main text of the MOU. After repeated revisions and checks, the final version was the 13th.

Right before the signing ceremony, K-eco proposed one additional item regarding the scope of cooperation for the MOU. Still, it was found to be challenging to accomplish within the available time, so it was decided that it would be discussed in category (e) above after the signing ceremony. There will be more points that need to be revised or added in the future, but I hope that we can continue to hold discussions each time and make the content of the memorandum even more substantial.

At first, we communicated by email, but gradually, both felt it did not work well. When I received a QR code for a messaging app during the process, I sent "Hello." I received a reply of "Konnichiwa" in Japanese, which was a bit of a letdown. The person sending the message was Dr. Jeong, who had received his degree from the Department of Environmental Engineering at Kyoto University. Dr. Jeong kindly offered to serve as an interpreter, and the signing ceremony was conducted entirely in Japanese.

This time, we used email to communicate about important matters, such as the content of the MOU. Still, we could use a messaging app to discuss more casual issues, such as the day's dress code and the contents of the commemorative gifts, which proved very efficient.

As a side note, the first thing I was asked to do using this app was to make restaurant reservations. Ultimately, I arranged all the places they would eat at while they were in Tokyo, and they didn't cancel at the last minute. When they were going to be late for a reservation, they contacted me, so they were a bit like the Japanese people, and I felt a great affinity with them. They were swamped preparing for their presentation before they came to Japan, so I'm glad I was able to help them out in any way I could. At the same time, I felt a little guilty for introducing restaurants I had never been to, so I went to one of them recently, albeit a little late. I'm happy to report that it wasn't bad (but that's probably unnecessary information).

From now on, I would like to continue interacting with K-eco on the occasion of the MOU signing and pursuing our activities so that they lead to concrete results.