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Urgent Appeal for Reconsideration of 2025 World Environment Day Venue Due
to Inadequate Environmental Policies in Korea

Dear Executive Director Andersen,

We represent environmental organizations and citizen groups in Korea, actively leading a popular environmental movement to address the global issue of plastic pollution and effect change in Korea's waste policies. In particular, we have significantly influenced the legislative process for Korea to adopt the world's first single-use cup deposit return system. We have organized several 'Cup Attack' performances and press conferences in the capital, Seoul, with thousands of takeaway cup litter collected nationwide through Plogging, exerting pressure on the government, political circles, and industrial sectors.

We express our deep concern about the recent significant regression in the Korean government's policy on managing single-use products. Given this domestic context, hosting the 2025 World Environment Day event in Korea is highly inappropriate and akin to deceiving the global community.

Last September, Environment Minister Han Hwa-jin, during a meeting with you at the United Nations Headquarters in New York, professed Korea's commitment to lead the efforts against plastic pollution as the host for the 2025 World Environment Day. However, in the same month, an announcement was made that effectively negated the pilot operation of the single-use cup deposit return system. The Ministry of Environment delayed

the nationwide implementation of this system, which should have commenced in June 2022 under the Resource Recycling Act, to December, limiting its scope to only Sejong and Jeju regions. This decision, which deviated from the original plan, was criticized by the Board of Audit and Inspection. The Board of Audit and Inspection notified the Ministry of Environment to implement the disposable cup deposit system nationwide in accordance with the purpose of the law. However, the Ministry of Environment intends to nullify the system by leaving it to the discretion of municipalities. According to the Ministry of Environment, Korea consumes about 29.4 billion disposable cups per year, of which only 5% are recycled. The Ministry of Environment's abandonment of regulations on the use of disposable cups, even to the extent of violating current laws, following the change of government, is an action that rightfully deserves international criticism.

Furthermore, on November 7, just days before INC-3, the Ministry of Environment announced plans to abolish the impending regulations on disposable products, set to commence on November 24. This abrupt reversal included canceling the restrictions on using paper cups and plastic straws in eateries and cafes, as well as the ban on plastic bags in retail stores. The ministry shifted from imposing fines to encouraging voluntary participation for paper cup regulations, and indefinitely extended the grace period for straw and plastic bag restrictions. The abolition of indoor disposable cup use regulations by the Ministry of Environment has effectively sounded the death knell for the single-use cup deposit return system.

World Environment Day is a day for the international community to pledge its interest and efforts in environmental conservation. Particularly, the 2025 World Environment Day event is set to focus on the theme of ending global plastic pollution, coinciding with the enforcement of the Plastic Treaty. The recent withdrawal of plastic and single-use item regulations by the Korean government runs counter to the efforts of UNEP and the International Plastic Treaty. Hence, Korea has no credentials to host the 2025 World Environment Day.

We earnestly request you and UNEP to reconsider the venue for the 2025 World Environment Day event. The recent actions of the Korean government do not align with the international community's efforts towards environmental protection and sustainable development. As citizens of the Republic of Korea and waste campaigners, we are eager to welcome hosting such a significant environmental event in our country. However, we cannot overlook the Korean government's potential use of this event for greenwashing. In the absence of Korea's sincere efforts towards ending plastic pollution, we believe UNEP should consider other hosting countries.

We earnestly urge you and UNEP to make a wise and thoughtful decision on this matter.

Yours sincerely,

Almang Market, An so ri, Autumn Book Club, Ayangro99, Babibachae, Babisalangbang, Baramgage, Beanttang, Better things, Blue dot store, Busan Federation for Environmental Movement, Change Gimcheon, Cheongju Zero-waste Civic Gathering, Chorok-byul store, Choroksoup store, Citizens Seriously Against Disposable Waste, CupGuardians, Do Gage, Dreamdotory Coop: Gamtan Store, Earth Citizen Organization, Eco-parents 365, Ecobuddy Incheon, Ecosophia Lab, EECC, Eundarang, Evergreen, Extinction Rebellion Catholic, Gimpo Ssumdam, Goldroot, Gongneung Dream Coop, Gumi Climate Action, Gwang Myeong YMCA, Hand for Earth Zero-waste Shop, Heemangsam Humanities Planning Group, Hello Cooperative, Hi_earth_store, Hongsi Life, Jaju Gallery, Jebi Mart, Jejariro, Jigusallim.ter, Jinasum, King Cherry Coop, Korea Federation for Environmental Movement Seoul, Korean Teacher's Organization for Ecological Education and Activity, Light Day, Mankeum, Mari N House, MInjokmunjeyenguso North Gyeonggi-do, Minus Plus Store, Namwon Plastic-zero Store, Neulmigok, Neurin Gonggan, No-plastic Cafe, Ploving Korea, Political Mamas, Rid Inn, Sallimgage, Salrim House, Sanzero Coop, Shining Soop.soap.shop, Sojunghan Everything, Soonhwan_Jigu, Sooplue Zero-waste, Space Sum, Sseujubin, Suncheon YMCA, SunMoonStar Zero-waste Shop, Suwon Energy Co, The-sseulmo Social Coop, Together Slowly, Together&Tomorrow Zero-waste Shop, Upcyclean, Wondo, Woorijigoo Zero-waste Shop, Your Step, Zac-Lab, Zero Waste Home, Zero-waste Studio Kkotsamwol