

Our Work in 2025

“In the service of democracy,
peace and development”

A Peak Into HSF’s Environmental Work

Hanns Seidel Foundation (HSF) Korea supports the process of reconciliation on the Korean Peninsula. In the Republic of Korea (South Korea), this includes regional development, with a special focus on the border region (DMZ). In the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (North Korea), HSF attempts to contribute to peaceful development in the region through activities aiming for international integration and cooperation in the field of environment.

Seminar on International Cooperation for the Mid-Latitude Region

On January 13, HSF Korea participated in a lecture series on climate resilience and sustainable development hosted by the OJeong Resilience Institute (OJERI) at Korea University. Bringing together international experts, the seminar focused on innovative responses to climate challenges in the mid-latitude region. Dr Bernhard Seliger from the Hanns Seidel Foundation Korea contributed with a lecture on “Climate Change and Biodiversity in the Third Pole,” highlighting environmental changes in the Himalayan region.



World Wetlands Day

In February, HSF Korea joined the global celebration of World Wetlands Day, emphasizing this year’s theme, “Protecting Wetlands for Our Common Future.” The foundation highlighted its

long-standing efforts in wetland restoration and, together with local and international partners, continues to strengthen ecological resilience and counter wetland loss.

East Asian-Australasian Flyway Partnership Working Group Black-faced Spoonbills

On 27 February 2025, Dr Choi joined the international workshop of the East Asian–Australasian Flyway Partnership Black-faced Spoonbill Working Group. Experts reviewed the outdated 2010 action plan, assessed current population trends, identified knowledge gaps, and drafted a new 10-year action plan (2026–2036) to support the recovery of the endangered Black-faced Spoonbill, including the situation in the DPRK.



Despite population increases in recent years, the species remains threatened by coastal development and avian disease outbreaks. The updated plan aims to

strengthen regional cooperation among partners in the ROK, DPRK, China, and Japan and align conservation efforts with international frameworks. Dr. Choi contributed updates on the status of the species in the DPRK and participated in discussions on the future direction of the Working Group.

New Research Paper

In March 2025, Dr Hyun-Ah Choi, a senior researcher at HSF Korea, together with 사단법인 에코코리아 Eco Korea, OJERI - OJeong Resilience Institute at Korea University, Kookmin University and Solomon Islands National University, recently published a research paper on the promotion of mangrove conservation in the Solomon Islands. This research utilised the Rapid Assessment of Wetland Ecosystem Services methodology to assess the ecological, economic and social importance of mangroves in the Solomon Islands. We would also like to thank Hyeseon Do, MPhil in Conservation Leadership, Department of Geography, University of Cambridge, for collaborating on this research.

Meetings between K-Water, KIOST and HSS Korea

On 19 March 2025, Hanns Seidel Foundation Korea held meetings with key

partners in water and marine management, K-Water and the Korea Institute of Ocean Science and Technology (KIOST).



Discussions with K-Water focused on current water policy challenges on the Korean Peninsula, while talks with KIOST emphasised the importance of scientific research, policy-oriented conservation strategies and international cooperation in addressing urgent marine environmental challenges.

Samarkand Climate Forum

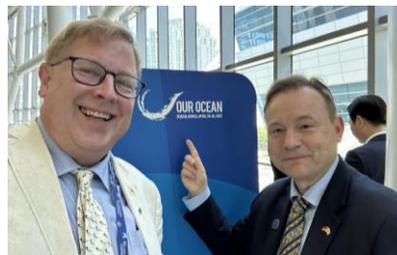


From 3 to 5 April, the first EU–Central Asia Summit and Climate Forum was held in Samarkand, Uzbekistan, focusing on sustainable development, green energy, and environmental initiatives. HSF Korea, implementing a global climate network project (GMACC) to promote the Central Asian Flyway (CAF) Initiative, participated at the invitation of the Embassy of Uzbekistan in Seoul to engage with policymakers, scientists, and environmental experts. The forum combined high-level discussions and thematic sessions on water, green growth, energy, science–policy cooperation, and youth participation. For

HSF’s GMACC project, the exchanges, particularly on habitat and wetland protection, were highly valuable and underscored growing regional commitment to advancing the CAF Initiative.

10th Our Ocean Conference in Busan

From 28 to 30 April 2025, Busan hosted the 10th Our Ocean Conference, an international forum that brought together more than 2,000 delegates from over 100 countries to discuss the sustainable future of the oceans. HSF Korea co-organised a session with UN-ESCAP, IUCN, the Ramsar Regional Center, and EAAFP on protecting the biodiversity of the Yellow Sea, a vital ecosystem and key habitat for migratory birds. While progress has been made, resource overuse and geopolitical tensions continue to challenge regional cooperation. A highlight was the meeting with German Ambassador Georg Schmidt, representing Germany during a period of political transition in Berlin.



Biodiversity in North Korea: New findings from the Rason wetlands

In the new DPRK Journal, a report on the Rason region shows how important North Korea’s wetlands are for global species conservation. Over 300 bird species and rich biodiversity make the reserve a key area for the conservation of biological diversity. It includes several lakes, surrounded by extensive wetlands

and forest areas that provide ideal breeding and resting grounds for migratory birds. The region is also home to diverse mammals, fish, crustaceans and marine species such as harbor and eared seals. Rason’s importance is widely recognized: designated a national reserve in 1995 and a Ramsar site, an internationally protected wetland, since 2018, it remains central to regional and global biodiversity efforts. HSF Korea has actively supported this process by promoting international cooperation, facilitating expert dialogue, and strengthening collaboration with global conservation organizations.

Safeguarding Glaciers: High-Level International Conference on Glaciers’ Preservation

As part of the International Year of Glaciers’ Preservation, the Government of Tajikistan, in partnership with the UN and international organisations, including the HSF, convened global stakeholders to forge joint strategies against rapid glacier loss and toward a climate-resilient future.

Side event: Conference in Dushanbe

At the 2025 High-Level International Conference on Glaciers’ Preservation in Dushanbe, the HSF Korea co-hosted a



side event titled “Glaciers, the 3rd Pole and the Central Asian Flyway of Migratory Birds.” The session drew attention to the rapid glacial melt in the Pamir Mountains and its impact on freshwater reserves and the wetland

habitats essential for migratory birds along the Central Asian Flyway. Moderated by Dr Choi, the event featured opening remarks by H.E. York Schuegraf, Ambassador of Germany to Tajikistan, and contributions from regional flyway and conservation experts. They highlighted the urgent need for coordinated, cross-border efforts to protect glacier-fed wetlands as climate change accelerates.

EAAFP Youth Task Force Meeting

On 12 July 2025, a significant meeting was held to relaunch the Youth Task Force of the East Asian–Australasian Flyway Partnership (EAAFP).



In addition to young representatives from across the region, members of the HSF Korea and the EAAFP Secretariat were also in attendance. The gathering aimed to define shared goals, strengthen networks, and develop a long-term vision for meaningful youth engagement in international conservation. One of the core components of the programme was the review and revision of the Youth Task Force’s Terms of Reference where the participants explored key challenges, future visions, and practical strategies. The meeting concluded with remarks by Dr Choi, who spoke about the role of the HSF and the importance of its strong partnership with EAAFP in empowering the next generation of conservation leaders.

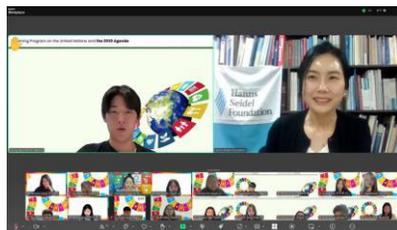
HSF Korea at COP15 in Zimbabwe

From July 23 to 31, 2025, the 15th Conference of the Parties (COP15) to the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands was held in Victoria Falls, Zimbabwe. Centered on the theme “Protecting Wetlands for Our Common Future,” this year’s conference emphasised the essential role wetlands play in biodiversity conservation, climate resilience, and sustainable development. HSF Korea also actively participated in COP15, engaging in discussions and collaborations that emphasised the importance of wetland conservation along the Flyways, including Central Asian Flyway. These wetlands serve as vital stopover and breeding sites for millions of migratory birds, and their preservation is crucial for both biodiversity and international environmental cooperation.



HSF Korea at UN Youth SDG Training

At the 24th UN & 2030 Agenda Youth Training from August 5 to 8, hosted by the Hope to the Future Association, Dr Choi highlighted how science, policy, and grassroots action can unite across



borders to achieve the SDGs. At the heart of this global agenda lies SDG 17 Partnerships for the Goals, which reminds us that sustainable development cannot be achieved in isolation. HSF Korea supports the Youth in becoming co-leaders and connecting globally to achieve the SDGs together.

Securing the Future of the Black-faced Spoonbill

On 8–9 September 2025, Dr Choi joined the Technical Review Meeting on the Draft Revised International Single Species Action Plan for the Black-faced Spoonbill, which was held at the ESCAP East and North-East Asia Office, coordinated by NEASPEC. Recognized as a priority species in 1994, the first ISSAP was launched in 1995, followed by an update in 2010 and the creation of the EAAFP Black-faced Spoonbill Working Group in 2013.



Thanks to decades of international cooperation, the global population has risen from fewer than 300 birds in 1989 to nearly 7,000 in 2024. However, new threats continue to endanger the species. The revised Action Plan (2026–2036) will guide stronger, coordinated conservation actions across North-East Asia.

NEASPEC Senior Officials Meeting in Ulaanbaatar

From September 22 to 24, Dr Bernhard Seliger attended the Northeast Asian Subregional Programme for Environmental Cooperation (NEASPEC) Senior Officials Meeting under

UN-ESCAP in Ulaanbaatar. Representatives from six Northeast Asian countries discussed common environmental challenges, including air pollution, biodiversity, marine ecology, and low-carbon development. Despite political differences, participants reaffirmed their commitment to regional cooperation. The meeting also underscored the long-standing HSF–UN-ESCAP partnership, with a focus on protecting threatened migratory birds, particularly the Black-faced Spoonbill, Hooded Crane, and White-naped Crane.

Global Flyways Workshop in Almaty



On October 14, the workshop “Global Flyways, the Emerging Central Asian Flyway Initiative and Conserving Habitat” took place in Almaty, Kazakhstan. Organized by the HSF Korea under the Global Mitigation and Adaptation to Climate Change (GMACC) program, in collaboration with the Association for the Conservation of Biodiversity of Kazakhstan (ACBK), the workshop focused on the Central Asian Flyway (CAF) and its significance for Kazakhstan. Speakers, including Dr Bernhard Seliger, shared regional perspectives and highlighted the importance of diverse habitats for migratory species. Several sessions focused on Kazakhstan’s critical sites, priority species, and conservation efforts, including initiatives to protect the Steppe Eagle and Sociable Lapwing.

12th EAAFP MOP

Hosted by the Philippine Department of Environment and Natural Resources

(DENR) and the EAAFP Secretariat, the 12th Meeting of Partners (MOP12) was held from 8 to 14 November 2025 in Cebu, Philippines. Under the theme “Weaving Connections: Celebrating Migration, Traditional Knowledge, and Innovation across our Flyway,” the meeting embodies the spirit of uniting diverse communities, fostering scientific innovation, and honoring shared traditional knowledge throughout the Flyway.



12th EAAFP MOP - HSF Side Event

Hanns Seidel Foundation Korea organized a side event of the 12th EAAFP MOP on 10 November titled “Enhancing Cooperation Between the Central Asian and East Asian–Australasian Flyways.” Held in collaboration with GMACC partners, including the CMS Avian Team, WWF–Hong Kong, BNHS, and Dr Mumba, Secretary General of the Convention on Wetlands, the event aimed to strengthen cooperation, promote knowledge exchange, and coordinate future action.



The event shared updates on the proposed Central Asian Flyway Initiative and explored synergies with the EAAFP, highlighting ongoing conservation

efforts across the flyways, the importance of inclusive, people-centered approaches, and opportunities for species- and site-based cooperation.

Swan Goose Citizen Science Roundtable

On 20 November 2025, experts, practitioners, and citizen scientists met in Paju for the Swan Goose Citizen Science Roundtable to discuss the species’ ecological importance, local conservation efforts, and ways to strengthen exchange between researchers and the public.



Co-organized by Eco Korea, the Bookcity Culture Foundation, the Paju Bookcity Corporate Association, and HSF Korea, the event highlighted the Swan Goose as the most symbolic and ecologically important species in the Han River and inter-Korean border region. Despite its global importance, public awareness and research on the Swan Goose in South Korea have remained limited, prompting key questions that this roundtable sought to address. Drawing on regional perspectives, including North Korea’s engagement with the species, discussions focused on the Swan Goose’s significance for conservation and site management in Northeast Asia. Dr Choi presented a case study on Mundok Wetland, underscoring ecological connectivity between Mundok and the Han River estuary. The roundtable concluded that protecting healthy wetland habitats is essential for the Swan Goose’s return.