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### **Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Ministry of SMEs and Startups Convene First Policy Council Meeting**

SEJONG – The Ministry of SMEs and Startups (MSS) and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA) held the inaugural “Policy Council Meeting between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of SMEs and Startups” on December 17, 2024, at the MOFA building in Seoul.

The meeting followed the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) in April 2024 aimed at supporting the global expansion of SMEs and startups. Attendees included deputy ministers from both ministries, alongside key representatives from the Korea International Cooperation Agency (KOICA), the Korea SMEs and Startups Agency (KOSME), and the Korea Institute of Startup & Entrepreneurship Development (KISED).

Participants highlighted key successes achieved in 2024 through efforts by various institutions to support the global expansion of SMEs and startups. They also discussed strategic plans for 2025, focusing on enhancing support for Korean SMEs and startups seeking to enter global markets.

MOFA shared the outcomes of its Support Council of Diplomatic Missions for SMEs and Startups, established under the MOU. Over the past year, the Council held 46 meetings across 17 countries, tackling export challenges and offering tailored support to Korean companies. By November 30, 2024, MOFA had facilitated 241 on-site support cases and provided 401 instances of local market information.

MOFA highlighted the case of POEN, a battery remanufacturing company, which faced difficulties in securing a site and obtaining permits for its factory in Germany. To address these challenges, the Consulate General sought cooperation from the Baden-Württemberg state and local governments, ultimately helping POEN obtain the necessary permits.

Simultaneously, KOSME provided administrative assistance with visa issuance and corporate

establishment, while the Frankfurt Trade Office arranged consultations with local companies to facilitate site leasing. Thanks to these coordinated efforts, POEN is set to begin operations at its factory in the first half of 2025.

MSS unveiled the “Global Expansion Project Based on Proposals from Diplomatic Missions,” set to launch in 2025. This initiative aims to utilize diplomatic missions as strategic export support hubs. Under the program, diplomatic missions will propose tailored support models aligned with local market conditions. MSS called for active collaboration from these missions to strengthen the Council’s role and accelerate the global expansion of domestic SMEs

KOICA and KISED also introduced their Global Expansion Support Project linked with CTS and TIPS”. The initiative seeks to address challenges in international development cooperation by integrating KOICA’s expertise in development support with KISED’s proficiency in identifying exceptional startups. This collaboration aims to create new opportunities for small businesses to engage in ODA projects. In October 2024, three innovative startups were selected for the first phase, and they will receive customized support aligned with KOICA’s international development programs. KOICA and KISED plan to extend this support through 2027.

Participants exchanged tailored support cases that addressed the economic characteristics and industrial environments of various countries, leveraging the unique expertise and strengths of each institution. They also affirmed their commitment to further refining these cooperation models and achieving greater outcomes in 2025.

LEE Dae-hee, Deputy Minister for the Office of Planning and Coordination at MSS, stated, “The global expansion of SMEs and startups will serve as a new growth engine for the Korean economy.” He further emphasized, “We will continue to broaden areas of cooperation to maximize the global achievements of SMEs through this policy council meeting.”

KIM Hee-sang, Deputy Minister for Political Affairs at MOFA, stated, “The Council serves as a central hub for harnessing the capabilities of various public institutions operating locally.” He further noted, “Building on the achievements of 2024, we will enhance collaboration with relevant institutions to provide more efficient and systematic support for small and venture businesses abroad.”

MOFA and MSS plan to support the global expansion of SMEs and startups and ensure the sustainability of their cooperation projects by institutionalizing the Policy Council. They reaffirmed their shared commitment to protecting SME exports from external challenges and strengthening Korea’s external economic growth.