The Assembly of the Asian Forest Cooperation Organization (AFoCO),

Recalling that the Assembly has approved the Strategic Plan (2019-2023) by Decision 5-I-18R and has further tasked the Secretariat to elaborate the plan of action and report the progress and output to the Assembly;

Taking note on inputs and comments provided from the Parties and Observers through the Technical Meeting on Strategic Implementation of the Agreement held on 2-4 July 2019; and

Recognizing the value of guidance provided by the 3rd Session of the Assembly held on 28-29 October 2019,

Decides to adopt the revised Plan of Actions (2019-2023) and endorse it as an integral part of the Strategic Plan (2019-2023) as contained in document D-22-1.
Strategic Plan (2019-2023)
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BACKGROUND

Over 30 percent of the Earth’s land area is covered by forests, which is nearly four billion hectares. A quarter of the global population, 1.6 billion people are currently depending on forests for their survival, employment, and income. Healthy, productive and resilient forests under sustainable management are strongly linked to humanity, as they provide vital goods and ecosystem services to people.

In Asia, the forest-based industries and ecosystem services are significant as their contributions to economic, social and environmental development are vital in many countries. National forest policies aim at the enhancement of the forest-based economic, social and environmental benefits, including livelihood improvement of forest-dependent people. Therefore, cooperation, coordination, and synergies on the forest-related issues across all relevant sectors and stakeholders, including among the regional organizations, become important to make a maximum impact at the regional level.

The Asian Forest Cooperation Organization (AFoCO) began its journey with a partnership on forestry cooperation between ASEAN and the Republic of Korea (ROK) in 2012, and the organization has since expanded its membership to other Asian countries. We aim to become a credible and accountable international organization based in Asia, addressing the emerging forestry issues in the interest of our members and the region. Our cooperative actions are directed to contribute to sustainable management of our forests and a greener Asia.

We, as an international organization, will keep in track with global megatrends including Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) and align our priority areas to be delivered for the members in a distinctive and effective manner. In addition to SDG, recent UN strategic plan for forests as well as mitigation and adaptation approaches under the Paris Agreement on climate change have a significant bearing in setting up our priorities. We believe that thematic areas such as reforestation, community forestry and livelihood improvement, forest ecosystems maintenance and biodiversity conservation can be addressed more effectively through an integrated and organizational approach.

As part of our strategic plan development, external and internal factors for AFoCO were studied systematically and reflected in the strategic plan. Three external factors – global megatrends, national policy priorities and regional players in the forestry sector – were studied, and their corresponding opportunities and threats were identified in political, economic, socio-cultural and technological perspectives. On the other hand, three internal factors – key
outcomes from 4-year partnership of ASEAN-ROK Forest Cooperation (2012-2016), organizational analysis, and core competencies of AFoCO – were examined to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the organization. The analytical study has finally resulted in identifying our priority areas, namely reforestation and rehabilitation, forest ecosystems and biodiversity conservation, forests in climate change, community forestry, and public services of forests.

This paper elaborates on core values, mission, objectives, strategic priorities, institutional arrangement, and plan of actions. We expect that this Strategic Plan 2019-2023 will contribute to the collaborative actions and cooperative partnership among the members of AFoCO as well as with other partners to achieve our goals and objectives successfully.

**MISSION**

We are committed to strengthening regional forest cooperation by transforming proven technology and policies into concrete actions in the context of sustainable forest management to address the impact of climate change.

**CORE VALUES**

For planning and delivery of actions under this strategic plan, we will adhere to our core values described below.

**Partnership:** We will work together with all members and stakeholders including external partners to avoid duplication of effort, promote synergy and enhance effective use of fund. Collaboration or partnership will lead to a win-win situation for all stakeholders.

**Member-driven:** We will take actions based on the need of a member or members. Member-driven and need-based activities will enhance ownership and effectiveness.

**Competency:** We will focus on competitive advantages of our members to enhance the uniqueness and integrity of the organization. It would gives a priority to share the best practices, experience, and advantage of one member country to others in need.
**Transparency:** It is one of our important parameters for any cooperation activities to achieve at maximum outcomes. Transparency among all our stakeholders is a prerequisite and essential element of a cooperation project.

**Equity:** We will work for equitable development among the members in the areas of (1) access to information and technology; (2) participation in decision-making process; (3) narrowing development gap; and (4) gender equity.

**Sustainability:** We give high attention to sustaining our actions as we maintain our relevance with global trend and members’ need in an integrated approach. The issue of sustainability will be addressed at all stages of any cooperative activities.

**OBJECTIVES**

The objectives of this strategic plan over the next five years (2019-2023) are to contribute to the member countries in:

1) achieving the global goal of increasing forest cover up to 3% worldwide;
2) implementing Paris Agreement on climate change particularly in pursuit of policy approaches for adaptation in forestry sector; and
3) improving livelihood and income through forestry-related activities

**INSTITUTIONAL ARRANGEMENT**

There are two institutional bodies - the Assembly and Secretariat. The Assembly is a governing body with decision-making authority, and the decisions are made at its regular and special sessions. The Assembly, represented by all member countries, consists of one representative from each of the member countries. Under the guidance of the Assembly, a Secretariat is established as a permanent body to perform administrative and financial management as well as any other secretariat functions of the organization. When necessary, the Assembly can approve the establishment of subsidiary bodies to achieve the objectives of the organization.

The Secretariat is headed by an Executive Director who is appointed by the Assembly. The Secretariat is based in the ROK, and its functions are to provide the necessary administrative support, regional coordination and carry out the decisions made by the Assembly.
In order to translate the strategic priorities and deliver into actions in the field in a comprehensive and balanced manner, a proper deliberation of related technical matters is required among the members and technical resource persons. For this purpose, we intend to establish a networking mechanism to facilitate discussions and meetings on regular and ad-hoc basis so that technically specific plans and actions can be developed for timely consideration and approval of the Assembly.

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES (2019-2023)

Our forests represent diverse and complex ecosystems that vary widely from tropical rainforests to boreal forests. SFM is an underpinning factor in national policies of all our members and their priorities in forestry reflect a policy balancing among the factors of economic contribution, environmental consideration and livelihood improvement of local people. The recent Paris Agreement on climate change has also given another important dimension in developing national forestry policies due to the importance of forests in addressing the impact of climate change.

Based on the review of national forestry priorities of our members, the following six (6) areas are observed to be most important and urgent to address in the immediate future.

- Restoration & Rehabilitation
- Forest & climate change
- Forest ecosystems & biodiversity conservation
- Community forestry
- Forest disaster management
- Public services of forest

The experience of the 4-year partnership of ASEAN-ROK forest cooperation (2012-2016) and certain unique capabilities of our members have contributed to core competency of AFoCO. Some of the areas with a comparative advantage are identified below.

- Proven experience and expertise in forest restoration and rural sector reform
- Payment for forest ecosystems services
- Proven technology in forest disaster management
- Forest and community-based ecotourism
- Forest-based carbon neutral approach
- Domestication of endemic and endangered species in degraded area

Based on the analytical study of the internal and external factors, we identified five (5) priority areas for five years (2019 – 2023) as below:
**Priority Area 1: Initiating customized restoration and reforestation models**

Reforestation and restoration of degraded forests are top priorities for us as many of our members continue to cope with a decade-long challenge – deforestation driven by excessive logging, agriculture and aquaculture expansion, large-scale mining, fuelwood demand, and human encroachment. Vast degraded forests are in urgent need of restoration to their former state and one unique example is a massive loss of over 100,000 ha coastal mangroves in Southeast Asia over the period from 2000 to 2012. Large-scale commercial activities have resulted in deforestation and degradation of forests and they have made a major impact on the livelihoods of local people. It is a daunting challenge especially for the least developed countries where skill, technology, and funding sources are in short supply.

A successful reforestation and restoration experience of a member country from the 1970s to 1990s offers a unique opportunity for sharing with other members. For example, the reforestation campaign in Korea was in parallel with its community-based rural development campaign, and it was recorded as a case of a perfect fit between top-down approach and bottom-up demand. Another major contributing factor was a change from shifting cultivation practice to a more regulated and stable practice which came together with systematic forest management after the Korean War. Experiences of the ROK and other member countries in community-driven development approaches will be considered as a basis in the development of restoration and reforestation models.

The activities under this strategy will be implemented through the establishment of restoration and reforestation models in target countries and capacity building activities such as training courses and study tours. Such models will be customized or modified in a balanced and integrated approach of forest landscape restoration for the benefit of target communities, natural habitats and forest ecosystem. The projects will be designed to ensure the proper involvement of local people, a systematic benefit sharing mechanism among the stakeholders, and long-term sustainability of both people and environment.

**Priority Area 2: Supporting research and development in climate change adaptation approaches**

Currently, there is little support and less work done for adaptation of climate change in forestry sector due to its high uncertainty and the need for more studies. More attention and support are often given to address the mitigation aspect of climate change such as REDD+ projects. However, the incidences of irregular weather patterns and frequent disasters today are calling for urgent attention and need to explore the adaptation methodologies and approaches in the forestry
Lack of technology and expertise among our members is a huge challenge when it comes to adopting adaptation methodologies and approaches in forestry sector at national level. At present, the global warming is continuously increasing the risk of species extinction, disrupting ecosystems, biodiversity loss and ultimately affects the livelihood of local communities and their survival. Proper technology-based intervention and adaptation approaches are critical factors to overcome the limitation of knowledge, technology, and expertise at all levels in a long-term perspective.

Under this strategic priority, we will support to conduct a scientific research and study for the development of climate change adaptation methodologies and approaches for the vulnerable areas in the region. It will begin with a review of existing research studies and findings regarding climate change adaptation in the forestry sector. The activities may include, among others, an extensive field survey, analytical study on the risk, vulnerability, and impact of climate change on major types of forest, technical and policy recommendations for forestry sector to cope with the incidences related to climate change. Such methodologies, approaches, and policy recommendations are intended for applying in the vulnerable countries in the region.

Priority Area 3: Introducing systematic management on forest-related disasters

Environmental disasters today are more common and frequent than ever in the region mainly due to the consequence of global warming and climate change, which eventually lead to increasing demand for relevant technology intervention and support. Forest fire, transboundary haze, landslide, and outbreaks of new pest and diseases are some of the forest-related disasters happening more regularly in Asian region these days. Unfortunately, existing technologies for forest-related disaster management in many countries are limited to counter such a threat of that magnitude.

The forest fire monitoring and management system in the ROK is well established and it offers another opportunity to share with those members in need. Moreover, certain improved techniques in managing forest-related disasters such as erosion control and landslide management are also available to disseminate through technical training courses and study tours.

As an attempt to introduce technology in managing forest-related disasters in Asia, we will target disaster-prone areas such as the hotspots of forest fire, sites of landslide incidences to implement cooperation projects with the host countries. Based on the proven latest technology on offer and technical feasibility of the target areas, specific technology-based projects will cover both preventive and control measures, such as forest fire monitoring and management, erosion and
landslide control, the establishment of demonstration sites, and relevant capacity building activities.

**Priority Area 4: Local livelihood improvement and community-based small enterprise development**

Community forestry and maintenance of forest ecosystems are two top priorities among our members. The involvement of local communities, their co-existence with well protected forest ecosystems is considered increasingly important as the local communities become an inseparable part of sustainable development under the SDG. We aim to support proven forest-related activities for local livelihood improvement and small enterprise development, among others, payment for protection service of forest ecosystems, forest and community-based ecotourism, and other community-based forestry enterprise development activities. The approach to community-based enterprise development is clearly defined as to co-benefit both the communities and forest ecosystems. While it attempts to improve the local income and productive function of the forest, a great attention should be given to ensure protection of the natural habitats, wildlife and biodiversity of local forest ecosystems.

Payment for protection service of forest ecosystems is an area in which multiple benefits can be generated such as (1) improving ecological functions of forests; (2) providing income for local people; and (3) saving forest carbon stock to mitigate the impact of climate change. Among our members, there are countries that have advanced experiences in the implementation of payment for ecosystem services.

Ecotourism implies the involvement of nature, local communities and tourists combined. Based on the experience of a project conducted under the 4-year partnership of ASEAN-ROK forest cooperation, an opportunity has emerged for the local communities and their associated forests to benefit more from managing ecotourism activities.

Sharing such proven experiences and expanding similar programs into other member countries present a great opportunity for us in view of generating multiple benefits for the forests and local people. Under these projects, the activities include, among others, study tours to successfully implemented sites, identification of pilot demonstration sites, demarcation of project areas, identification of local communities to be involved, and establishment of benefit sharing mechanisms. Advanced communication and imagery technology can be applied where relevant to be more effective in the implementation.
Priority Area 5: Strengthening institutional capabilities, diversifying resources, and promoting regional actions

Strengthening our institutional capabilities is important to cope with the challenges in dealing with different government systems and diverse socio-economic settings among the members. Meanwhile, we will be seeking for alternative funding sources as part of promoting our strategy and institutional capabilities. As a responsible and accountable organization, the common interests of all our members will be identified and promoted appropriately by taking regional actions in international forums and dialogues.

Setting up an online interactive system among the members is one of the options to strengthen institutional capabilities. This interactive system will provide access to all members regarding information updates, enable the circulation of official documents, function as a secured communication platform, as well as support decision-making processes and operational functions such as organizing meetings and conducting technical research. At the same time, programs for skill improvement and staff exchange with other partner organizations will be implemented as part of strengthening staff capabilities.

Expanding collaboration with other organizations and outreach will be sought continuously to enhance mutual interest and benefit. Particularly, collaboration in the areas of our competitive advantages will be the most desirable partnership. Similarly, there are certain research-based organizations and international NGOs working in the areas of common interest with AFoCO. We will also explore ways to tap into the resources and enhance technical knowledge through joint R&D activities.

Exploring alternative funding sources would become one of our priorities as there are some relevant sources and options available at present and in the future, such as Global Environment Facility (GEF), Green Climate Fund (GCF), and forthcoming UNFF trust fund. From GCF for instance, the accredited entities can submit project proposals for funding support. We plan to seek an accreditation status with GCF, and joint project proposals will be developed in collaboration with the relevant members especially in the areas of adaptation methodologies and approaches in the forestry sector.

As a regional organization, we plan to identify the issues that are common to all member countries and engage in international forums and dialogues to promote our common interests and positions at the global level.
PLAN OF ACTIONS (2019-2023)

1. Implementation Framework

The Strategic Plan will be implemented primarily through actions at national or regional levels, with the support of AFoCO institutions, partners and other relevant stakeholders.

This section defines the roles and responsibilities of the Party members, AFoCO institutions, namely its Assembly and the Secretariat, and other partners and stakeholders in achieving the objectives of the Strategic Plan.

1. Parties and the Assembly

The prime role and responsibility of the Parties is providing policy guidance through the Assembly, which include among others:

- steering development and implementation of cooperation projects in accordance with their national priorities and in a spirit of international solidarity and partnership;
- increasing resources mobilized to implement the Strategic Plan; and
- taking necessary policy actions at national and regional level to facilitate the achievement of the objectives of the Strategic Plan and in accordance with the Agreement on the Establishment of AFoCO.

2. Secretariat

The successful implementation of the Strategic Plan requires the continued strong core servicing advocacy, agenda-setting and representation functions of the Secretariat with commensurate capacity and resources in order to support Parties and the Assembly in fulfilling their respective roles.

2. Expected Outcomes and Key Actions to Deliver

This section illustrates expected outcomes of the Strategic Plan and key actions to deliver in each priority area. These will guide actions of Party members, the Assembly, the Secretariat and other stakeholders of AFoCO towards achieving the objectives set out in the Strategic Plan, taking into full consideration in each respective contexts and conditions.

Progresses made in the implementation of the Strategic Plan will be monitored through the reports of projects and activities in reference to the illustrative output indicators listed parallel to the respective actions. Final evaluation will be arranged subject to the decision of the Assembly tentatively in 2022, the fourth year of the Strategic Plan.
Priority Area 1: Initiating customized restoration and reforestation models

Expected Outcomes

- Restoration and reforestation models which are simple, scalable and customized to local context are established, contributing to the regional/international goals of increasing forest areas and enhancing forest ecosystem services.

- Capacity of the member countries are enhanced with improved skills, capabilities, governance systems and policies to tap their full potential in accomplishing their national restoration and rehabilitation goals to the level required to meet present and future demand for forest-based products and services.

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<tr>
<th>Action</th>
<th>Output Indicator (Illustrative)</th>
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| A. Support member countries to plan and conduct restoration and reforestation adapted to the local context and conditions | A1. Trends in forest cover in affected area  
A2. Models established and/or projects implemented in terms of restoration and reforestation in Member Countries |
| B. Identify successful cases and models of restoration and reforestation established in member countries and share experiences to enhance forest restoration practices in the region | B1. Successful cases and models identified and documented  
B2. Number of publicity activities conducted to share experiences (i.e. technical processor, guideline, training curriculum, text book, study tours etc.) |
| C. Mainstream forest restoration and reforestation actions into national and regional policy frameworks and facilitate creation of a coherent in-country enabling environment | C1. Actions to enhance in-country coordination of restoration and reforestation with other relevant sectors  
C2. High-level dialogue platform established to have earn political support for the enhanced forest restoration actions  
C3. Trends in governmental/public funds invested in forest restoration or reforestation projects |
| D. Provide technical/policy support to fill identified capacity and/or technology gaps in restoration and reforestation | D1. Capacity and/or technology gap identified  
D2. Number of technical support and/or capacity building provided |
| E. Promote participatory approaches of forest restoration and improve incentive and/or benefit-sharing mechanisms for the restoration programs | E1. Number of consultation and environment education conducted for local leaders and communities |
| E2. Number of community people participated in forest restoration and reforestation projects |
| E3. Number of communities benefited through the benefit sharing mechanism |
| E4. Enabling conditions created to engage diverse stakeholders, including private sector, local communities, NGOs, etc. |

| F. Promote sustainable private sector/forest smallholders engagement in forest restoration and reforestation |
| F1. Involvement of private sector in consultation workshop and stakeholder meetings for the drafting of forest policy and relevant legislation |
| F2. Trends in participation of the private sector/forest small holder |
Priority Area 2: Supporting research and development in climate change adaptation approaches

Expected Outcomes

- Forests and forest dependent people in the affected area are provided with an enhanced level of resilience to the risks posed by climate change
- Adequate and timely technical and policy supports in terms of climate change adaptation are mobilized and made available to member countries, in particular for those most vulnerable to the risks of climate change
- Forest-based adaptation approaches are well documented and implemented in coordination with other upstream adaptive and preventive strategies and contribute to increasing climate resilience for a wider society

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<th>Action</th>
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| A. Review climate change adaptation plans of the member countries, and provide policy/technical recommendations to promote resilience of forest ecosystems and its dependent people against the risks posed by the climate change | A1. Review report on the risks of climate change on forest ecosystems and its dependent people  
A2. Technical/policy recommendations for forest-based adaptation to climate change  
A3. Number of researches and studies conducted for the development of appropriate climate change adaptation strategy |
| B. Support member countries to integrate forest sector consideration across relevant national/regional policies, strategies and programs on climate change adaptation, in particular for National Adaptation Plans (NAPs) and Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) | B1. Trends in inclusion of forest-based adaptation approaches in NAPs or NDCs  
B2. Number of technical support/capacity building programs provided |
| C. Identify and transfer proven technologies in building resilience and developing adaptation strategy for the climate-vulnerable forest ecosystems and the regions | C1. Number of technical support/capacity building programs provided  
C2. Number of technologies transferred or jointly developed for target jurisdictions |
| D. Develop and implement forest-based climate adaptation plan to build sufficient resilience for the target forest ecosystems and communities | D1. Establishment and dissemination of climate change adaptation plan in forest sector  
D2. Number of people joined for awareness raising events on climate change adaptation and mitigation measures |
D3. Trends in reducing adverse impacts of climate change on biodiversity and livelihoods of people
**Priority Area 3: Introducing systematic management of forest-related disasters**

**Expected Outcomes**

- Member countries are well equipped with management system and capacities of preventing, monitoring, and suppressing/controlling various types of forest-related disasters
- Forest disaster management in member countries are better aligned and connected to wider networks of disaster risk reductions and capacity building opportunities for forest-related disaster management

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| A. Support member countries to establish/enhance disaster management systems in forest sector, especially for the forest fire prevention, monitoring and suppression of forest fire, landslide, forest specific disease and insects outbreaks | A1. Trends in establishment or advancement of disaster management system  
A2. Number of disaster management tools and instruments procured  
A3. Trends in the incidences and impacts of the disaster before and after the establishment of enhanced management system |
| B. Develop capacity and knowledge on systematic management of forest-related disaster | B1. Number of training, (disaster) drills, technical and policy supports provided  
B2. Number of appropriate technologies and guidelines developed/adopted for disaster management |
| C. Promote regional cooperation through regional network for joint monitoring and management of forest-related disasters and/or regional exchange programs for sharing knowledge and experiences | C1. Trends in participation and cooperation through regional net-work on monitoring and management of forest related disasters  
C2. Number of programs/events conducted to share lessons across multi-countries in the region |
| D. Enhance nation-level coordination across different sectors to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the forest disaster management | D1. Trends in integration of forest-related disaster management system in national disaster monitoring and management system |
| E. Promote awareness and participation of local communities in preventing and reducing forest-related disaster risks | E1. Trends in awareness and participatory actions among local communities on the importance of preventing and reducing forest-related disaster risks |
Priority Area 4: Local livelihood improvement and community-based enterprise development

Expected Outcomes

- Forest resources are managed sustainably through enhanced community-based forestry (CBF) to reduce deforestation and forest degradation, ensure protection of natural habitats, wildlife and biodiversity besides the improvement of local income and productive function of the forest in member countries.
- Livelihoods of forest dependent communities are improved through enhanced capacity in payment of forest ecosystem services, ecotourism, product diversification and community-based small enterprise development (CBED).

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| A. Support member countries to establish and enhance enabling conditions for community-based forestry (CBF) and community-based small enterprise development (CBED) | A1. Regulations and policies developed/improved to support CBF and CBED (i.e. forest tenure, benefit sharing, etc.)  
A2. Policies and guidelines developed for ‘payment for ecosystem services’ or ‘community-based ecotourism’ |
| B. Identify and share best practices in member countries pertaining to the development of alternative livelihood sources for the forest dependent communities and CBED | B1. Number of best practices of CBF or CBED identified  
B2. Number of knowledge sharing events or exchange visit programs conducted |
| C. Support member countries in demonstrating models of CBF and CBED | C1. Number of trainings/capacity development programs conducted  
C2. Number of community-based small enterprises established  
C3. Household income/livelihood of local community enhanced/increased through the CBF and CBED |
| D. Develop capacities of the forest dependent communities in CBED by filling capacity gaps of the targeted community | D1. Number of trainings/capacity building program conducted to raise awareness on environmental values of forest, CBF and CBED |
| E. Develop business capacity of the CBED by promoting private sector engagement/investment and by improving the market access | E1. Number of technical support/capacity building programs delivered  
E2. Trends in market accessibility of CBED |
Priority Area 5: Strengthening institutional capabilities, diversifying resources, and promoting regional actions

Expected Outcomes

- AFoCO operates at full capacity supported by adequate human resources and financial resources to materialize a shared vision with its members by delivering intended impacts, successfully mobilizing necessary resources and creating synergies with existing mechanisms.
- AFoCO acts as a regional forum to support regional forest policy processes and contributes advancement of sustainable forest management in the region.

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<tr>
<td>A. Elaborate strategic framework with a clear statement on vision, mission, and their clear linkages to other strategic components, i.e. niche, priority area, membership, funding, partnership, and governance.</td>
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<td>B. Develop an Impact Framework for projects and activities of the organization with clear sustainability framework embedded in formulation of the projects and by adopting systems view and creating policy relevance in programming process</td>
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<td>C. Strengthen institutional and legal Framework for by establishing internal rules and regulations, including human resources management framework</td>
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<td>D. Strategize the role of the Regional Education and Training Center (RETC) in providing timely and adequate capacity building services in effective manners</td>
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<tr>
<td>A1. Documentation on vision, mission, and plan for other strategic components</td>
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<td>B1. Impact Framework documented</td>
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<td>B2. Organizational policies formulated through policy discourses</td>
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<td>C1. Number of internal regulations and operational policies established and enforced</td>
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<td>C2. Documentation of human resources management framework and other supplementary policies and procedures established</td>
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<tr>
<td>C3. Number of staff newly recruited to enhance institutional capacities</td>
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<td>C4. Number of staff participated in capacity development programs/trainings relevant to respective jobs/tasks</td>
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<tr>
<td>D1. Development of a Strategic Operation Plan for the RETC</td>
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<td>D2. Number of modules developed for regular trainings</td>
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<td>D3. Establishment of experimental forests</td>
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