

Fourth Session of the Assembly
25-26 November 2020, Virtual

Agenda Item 3.5

Updates on operations and activities of the Secretariat

Negotiations with the Host Country

1. The Headquarters Agreement with the Government of the Republic of Korea completed Presidential endorsement ready for signing by the Minister of Foreign Affairs and the Executive Director of AFoCO.
2. The Secretariat applied to the Ministry of Finance of the Republic of Korea to be enlisted as an international organization eligible to receive designated donations. The request was submitted in October 2020 and is under consideration by the Ministry of Finance expected to be completed by the year end.

Membership to other international entities

[Observer status to UN General Assembly]

3. In coordination with the Korea Forest Service and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA), the Secretariat prepared for the proposal to include AFoCO's application for Observer status to UN General Assembly as an agenda item of the 75th Session of the UN General Assembly. The Secretariat duly communicated with the Parties and relevant Embassies in Seoul for support. The letter jointly signed by 15 members of AFoCO for the inclusion of the agenda item and explanatory memorandum was submitted to the UN in August. The General Assembly adopted the agenda on 18 September and allocated the concerned agenda item to the Sixth Committee of the UN General Assembly. Subsequently, the Sixth Committee debated on the agenda on 6 November and 10 November. Upon introduction by the Republic of Korea, eight member countries (Singapore, Philippines, Viet Nam, Malaysia, Myanmar, Lao PDR, Cambodia, and Indonesia) took the floor to support AFoCO to be an Observer to UN General Assembly. The draft resolution on the observer status for AFoCO (UN document: [A/C.6/75/L.7](#)) was adopted without a vote at the 19th meeting of the Sixth Committee on 19 November 2020. The resolution was introduced by 15 member countries of AFoCO and Afghanistan and Germany. The concerted efforts of the Representatives and National Focal Points of all AFoCO Parties and Observers greatly supported the coordination among the diplomatic channel.

[Global Partnership on Forest Landscape Restoration]

4. AFoCO has been accepted as a member of the Global Partnership on Forest Landscape Restoration (GPFLR) on 11 November 2020. The GPFLR is a proactive global network that unites governments, organizations, academic/research institutes, communities and individuals under a common goal: to restore the world's lost and degraded forests and their surrounding landscapes.

Partnerships arrangements

5. The Partnership Agreement between the Founding Members of the Landscape Partnership for Asia: restoring drylands and drought-prone areas was concluded among three other international organizations, namely Center for International Forestry Research (CIFOR), Global EverGreening Alliance (GEA) and International Centre for Research in Agroforestry (ICRAF). AFoCO has also concluded cooperation arrangements and/or Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with five partner institutes including Korea Forest Welfare Institute (FOWI), Dream Sharing Social Cooperative, The Regional Community Forestry Training Center for Asia and the Pacific (RECOFTC), National Institute of Forest Science (NIFoS), and Korea Foundation for International Healthcare (KOFIH). The information on areas of cooperation and complementary strengths are in **Attachment-1**.

6. Consultations are ongoing with the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and UN Convention on Combating Desertification (UNCCD) on the draft text of the partnership arrangements. Other potential partners under consideration are Korea Forestry Promotion Institute (KOFPI), Korea Development Bank (KDB), and Korea Trade-Investment Promotion Agency (KOTRA). The information on potential partners under consideration and relevant programs are in **Attachment-2**.

AFoCO Advisory Roundtable

7. The AFoCO Advisory Roundtable was organized on 17 November 2020. The Roundtable was updated on the current progress of general activities of the organization. The Roundtable provided farsighted directions on the following:

- a. strengthening the identity of AFoCO through collective efforts of strengthening institutional framework and enhancing individual capabilities of the staffs;
- b. taking advantage through identification of opportunities in cooperation with countries outside the region as well as the private sector;
- c. exploring diverse communication platforms for AFoCO activities including capacity building activities in response to post COVID-19 era;
- d. taking advantage of the wisdom and experiences of former Executive Director and former focal persons of the Parties through an expert or advisory group of AFoCO

AFoCO's COVID-19 Response

8. To cope with the challenges posed by outbreak of COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, the Secretariat made efforts to minimize compromise in the operations. The Secretariat introduced prevention and control protocol for the Secretariat and the RETC in compliance with the respective host countries. With cooperation with all Parties, the essential meetings were organized virtually including the monitoring of projects and programs.

Budget Reallocation for Operational Expenditures in FY2020

9. Regarding the unobligated balance in the operating cost which is expected to be arose mainly due to the limitation of organizational intervention amid COVID-19 pandemic in FY2020, the Secretariat proposes the reallocation of the 2020 budget assigned for the operational expenditures to enhance the financial integrity and accountability of the Organization.

10. Upon the approval by the Assembly, a total of USD 180,672 will be reallocated from the budgetary heading *A.2 Official Travel* to the budgetary heading *A.6 Asset Acquisition* to cover the expenses for additional asset acquisition and management for more effective operations of the organization including the long-term scale building maintenance of the RETC.

Annual and Financial Report 2019

11. The annual report and financial report 2019 are attached as **Attachment-3**.

Point for Consideration

12. The Assembly is may wish to:
- a. Take note of the information; and
 - b. Consider and approve the reallocation of 2020 operation budget as proposed by the Secretariat.

Attachment-1: List of concluded partnerships after the 3rd Assembly

Attachment-2: Information on potential partners under consideration and relevant programs

Attachment-3: Annual Report and Financial Report 2019

List of concluded partnership arrangements after the 3rd Session of the Assembly

Partner Organization	Areas cooperation and relevance to AFoCO Strategic Priority Areas	Complementary Strengths of the partner organization
1 Korea Forest Welfare Institute (FOWI)	To promote welfare service based on forest and conducting relevant capacity building, including joint research on public benefits related to forest awareness on importance of forest for public health and quality of life of current and future generations. <i>Relevant to priority areas: 1, 4, and 5 (MOU was signed on 1 November 2019)</i>	- Expertise in national and subnational policy development and private-public sector engagement and investment
2 Dream Sharing Social Cooperative	To promote participatory forest management and local livelihood improvement, and to foster citizen participation and awareness in the forest sector <i>Relevant to priority areas: 1, and 5 (MOU was signed on 3 December 2019)</i>	- Partnership and linkage with private sector and other CSOs
3 The Regional Community Forestry Training Center for Asia and the Pacific (RECOFTC)	- sustainable forest management, and forest and landscape management - promoting role of community in forest management and enhancing community livelihood linking to climate change adaptation and mitigation - capacity development. <i>Relevant to priority areas: 1, 4, and 5 (MOU was signed on 11 December 2019)</i>	- Experience and empirical data on community forestry and capacity building
4 National Institute of Forest Science (NIFoS)	- promoting networking among the research institutes and research and development opportunities among Parties - Knowledge and technology exchange - capacity development. <i>Relevant to priority areas: 2, and 5 (MOU was signed on 6 February 2020)</i>	- Scientific expertise in specific areas of forest and forestry
5 Korea Foundation for International Healthcare (KOFIH)	- Establishment of the foundation for joint projects in areas of international cooperation in forestry and healthcare - Joint research and studies in areas related to climate change and post COVID-19 - Cooperation in the existing projects and exploring new cooperative projects including livelihood and income generation of local communities <i>Relevant to priority areas: 2, 4, and 5</i>	- Empirical data and research on relationship between human health and environment, post-COVID-19 response, and training capacity in the fields of the human welfare and health

(MOU was signed on 11 August 2020)

6 Center for International Forestry Research (CIFOR), Global EverGreening Alliance (GEA) and International Centre for Research in Agroforestry (ICRAF)	- Development of concept, plans and projects for Landscape Partnership for Asia: restoring drylands and drought-prone areas - Implementation of the projects/programmes under Landscape Partnership for Asia - Sharing knowledge and experiences on land restoration, sustainable forest management, agroforestry, forestry research, sustainable agriculture and climate change <i>Relevant to priority areas: 1, 2, and 5 (Agreement was signed on 22 October 2020)</i>	- Technical and scientific data and experiences in drylands restoration - Partnership and linkage with private sector and international NGOs
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Information on potential partners under consideration and relevant programs

1. Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO)

The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) is a Specialized Agency of the United Nations system with a vision to create a world free of hunger and malnutrition where food and agriculture contribute to improving the living standards of all, especially the poorest, in an economically, socially and environmentally sustainable manner. The potential areas of cooperation with FAO include (i) promoting sustainable forest management practices, including forest landscape approach, ecosystem services, and sustainable forestry for food security; (ii) promoting advanced technical solutions against forest-related disasters; (iii) addressing drivers of deforestation and forest degradation; (iv) promoting role of community in forest management and enhancing community livelihood through forestry; and (v) addressing the climate change through forestry.

2. UN Convention on Combating Desertification (UNCCD)

The UN Convention on Combating Desertification (UNCCD) is the sole legally binding international agreement linking environment and development to sustainable land management. The potential areas of cooperation with UNCCD are: (i) promoting synergies on between forestry and land management, (ii) promoting forest and forestry in developing internally agreed target settings, and (iii) exploring participation to relevant initiatives.

3. Korea Forestry Promotion Institute (KOFPI)

The Korea Forestry Promotion Institute (KOFPI) is a public institution established to promote the application and industrialization of research and development in the forest, forestry and wood use fields. KOFPI further provides technical support, quality control systems and information service in order to promote forestry industry. The potential areas of cooperation with KOFPI are: (i) sustainable forest management through application of wood-use technology and information system, (ii) sharing knowledge and experience in creating added value of both wood and non-timber forest products, sound small-sized forestry businesses; and (iii) capacity development.

4. Korea Development Bank (KDB)

The Korea Development Bank (KDB), is a national direct entity of the GCF, obtaining its accreditation on 14 December 2016. KDB has been providing financing for the development and promotion of industries, the expansion of social infrastructure development of countries, including that of the Republic of Korea, the stabilization of financial markets and the facilitation of sustainable growth. KDB has placed climate change and socially responsible investment as policy issues that are addressed in its annual planning. Based on the initial discussion with the KDB, the Secretariat observed that KDB has a possibility to be partnered as the grant-channeling agency to the GCF.

5. Korea Trade-Investment Promotion Agency (KOTRA)

KOTRA (Korea Trade Promotion Corporation initially, Korea Trade-Investment Promotion Agency since 1995) is a state-funded trade and investment promotion organization operated by the Government of South Korea. Under the global mainstream to achieve sustainable development goals (SDGs), the KOTRA has been running a Global Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) platform to support Korean companies active in overseas markets in their CSR responsibility activities.

A prospective consortium model may be explored among AFoCO-KOTRA-KOFPI for 'On-demand Dissemination and Promotion of Qualified Forest Equipment and Technology from the Republic of Korea to the Member Countries':

- a. AFoCO, as the coordinator of the consortium, can develop the relevant activities and liaise/invite the relevant agencies in the Member Country to participate in the said activities;
 - b. KoFPI may be the technical agency based on their professional authority to issue a certification to companies who meet the level of their quality criteria on certain items; and,
 - c. KOTRA's financial resources by the said Global CSR platform may support the local companies who want to provide their items to the Member Countries.
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