

*Building a Green &
Sustainable Future Together*



AFoCO

Proposal to add AFoCO to the OECD DAC List of ODA-eligible international organizations

The Asian Forest Cooperation Organization (AFoCO) is an intergovernmental organization aiming to strengthen regional forest cooperation by transforming proven technology and policies into actions in the context of sustainable forest management (SFM) to address the impacts of climate change. Established in 2018, AFoCO has been undertaking action-oriented forest programs in Asia, covering a wide range of areas from forest restoration and climate change adaptation and mitigation to livelihood improvement of rural communities, and providing policy supports for the promotion of SFM.

Currently, the Republic of Korea (ROK) and 12 other Asian countries, namely Bhutan, Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Kazakhstan, Lao PDR, Mongolia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Thailand, Timor-Leste, and Viet Nam, are Parties to AFoCO and another two countries — Malaysia and Singapore — are Observers to AFoCO. All participating countries except the ROK, Brunei Darussalam, and Singapore are developing nations in the Asia.

The organization operates on funds generated through mandatory contributions from Parties and voluntary contributions from certain members or other sources of funds. In 2019, the total revenue amounted to USD 8.66 million of which USD 4.58 million came from un-earmarked contributions.

Recognizing the relevance of AFoCO's mandate to the global development agenda and direct contributions from its work program to the promotion of the economic development welfare of developing countries, the ROK, an OECD Development Assistance Committee (DAC) member since 2010, **proposes to accord AFoCO with Official Development Assistance (ODA) eligibility status at the upcoming annual deliberation on the Converged Statistical Directives for the Creditor Reporting System and the Annual DAC Questionnaire by the DAC Working Party on Development Finance Statistics (WP-STAT).**



RATIONALE

Asian forests, which cover 549 million ha and account for 14 percent of global forest cover, play vital roles in providing a variety of services that billions of people depend upon for their livelihood and subsistence. In particular, tropical forests in Southeast Asia play important roles in biodiversity conservation and global carbon balance. However, the region experienced continuous forest loss at a rate of 8 million ha per year between 2005 and 2015, largely attributed to deforestation in tropical humid and low-land forests. Meanwhile, forest degradation in Mongolia and Kazakhstan, aggravated by climate change, is causing serious environmental consequences in the region — salt-induced land and water degradation, land productivity reduction, and expansion of desertification. Forests in Asia are at risk of reduced capacity for climate change mitigation, limited provision of ecosystem services and reduced economic growth potential without proactive measures to put in place sustainable management practices.

To address such issues and challenges, AFoCO has been directly engaging with member countries' forest departments for tangible cooperation in forest-related issues. Its forest program revolves around **restoring degraded forests and lands (contributing to SDGs 6, 13, 14 and 15); strengthening the resilience of forest ecosystems and forest-dependent people against changing climates and related natural disasters (contributing to SDGs 7, 11, 13 and 15); and securing the livelihoods of rural forest communities (contributing to SDGs 1, 2, 8, 12 and 15)**. AFoCO aims to support balanced economic development and welfare enhancement in developing countries by building forest resource bases for economic growth and providing social and environmental safety nets against climate change.





Nongbua Village of Sangthong District, Lao PDR. Since 2016, AFoCO has joined efforts with the government of Lao PDR in demonstrating participatory forest management, "Village Forestry" in Lao's policy context, to restore highly fragmented and degraded forest landscape in the region, drawing inspiration from the past forest restoration experience of the Republic of Korea under the "Saemaul Undong (New Village Movement)".

Since the initial preparatory phase under the ASEAN-ROK Forest Cooperation framework (2012-2016) and the transition period (2016-2018), AFoCO has built a continuous track record of **field-based forest projects** and **capacity building programs** carefully designed to fit local policy contexts and to meet the needs of its member countries.

AFoCO has developed and implemented **7 country-based** and **7 regional-based projects**. Through these field-based projects, AFoCO has established **23 reforestation sites** in environmentally significant and vulnerable regions including mangrove coastal ecosystems; **fostered participatory forest management** by engaging local communities in 42 community-based forestry initiatives; **promoted ecosystem-based local livelihood development** at 8 ecotourism sites; supported the **strengthening of national institutional and policy frameworks** related to climate change adaptation and mitigation, and forest rehabilitation; and **developed alternative livelihood mechanisms** using non-timber forest products in 46 villages to prevent deforestation and forest degradation in the context of a climate change mitigation strategy. The story is still being written with more than a dozen new projects ready to take off in 2020 and 2021.

Rehabilitation of degraded mangrove forest ecosystem in Thai Binh Province of Viet Nam, one the most significant adaptation measures recognized in Viet Nam's Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs). AFoCO has joined hands with the Viet Nam Administration of Forestry since 2015 to conduct afforestation (80 ha), enrichment planting (80 ha), and protection activities (800 ha) in this region.

Moreover, recognizing that building the capacities of policy-makers, technical practitioners and researchers in the forestry sector is the key to promoting SFM and visualizing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in the region, AFoCO has developed and conducted diverse capacity development activities that contribute toward fulfilling and achieving the goals and priorities of member countries. In particular, the **AFoCO Regional Education and Training Center (RETC) in Yangon, Myanmar**, was established to provide regular and customized training and education programs, share best practices, promote research and development, and support knowledge and information exchange. Since its grand opening in 2018, the RETC has been offering diverse capacity building programs for stakeholders including government officials, local communities, and students. **In 2019 alone, it has benefitted 4,284 participants.**

With aspirations of becoming a credible partner and effective multilateral cooperation organization, AFoCO is committed to ensuring that its operations and activities are accorded with the **appropriate principles and ethical standards, as well as environmental and social safeguards while maintaining transparency and authenticity.** During its first year of operation, AFoCO has established **relevant policies and guidelines in compliance with the standards required by multilateral funds** (i.e., Green Climate Fund) and development partners. With this, AFoCO aspires to stand with DAC members as a viable and credible partner in realizing inclusive and sustainable development through effective and efficient program operations in the forest sector.



The 2020 AFoCO Community Development Training Program on “Bamboo-shoot Production and Rattan Furniture-making Training” organized jointly with the Forest Department of Myanmar. The rattan furniture in the foreground was made by the trainees during the training session.



Demonstrations on mechanical suppression and ground suppression techniques during the 2020 AFoCO Regular Training Program on “Community-based Forest Fire Management”

PROPOSAL

International cooperation is now becoming more crucial than ever. The pressing challenges from intertwined environmental and development issues are posing existential threats to humans and nature. More than ever, the world is witnessing the disruptive impacts of climate change in every continent and country. The recent COVID-19 pandemic, which has been attributed to the unsustainable use of natural resources and excessive human disturbance and over-exploitation of ecosystems, has turned the world upside down and no single country is safe from this transnational crisis and its impacts.

Established with a bold commitment for action, AFoCO is an intergovernmental organization that seeks to harness the role of forests and the forest sector in tackling such global developmental and environmental challenges to ensure a sustainable and prosperous future. Given that AFoCO's work program has a clear focus on promoting SFM especially in developing countries by facilitating the sharing of knowledge and resources among member countries and interested partners beyond the region, AFoCO wishes to be granted ODA eligibility and become a trusted multilateral partner for DAC members.

In this backdrop, the government of the ROK representing AFoCO, has submitted its proposal to add AFoCO to the DAC List of ODA-eligible international organizations for consideration by the WP-STAT of the OECD DAC. The proposal will be considered and assessed from the perspectives of AFoCO's organizational mission, activities, budget and expenditures by examining the extent to which the organization operates for the benefit of developing countries.

We seek the support of the DAC members to include AFoCO in the ODA List of ODA-eligible international organizations along with the annual process of reviewing the list at the WP-STAT. Identified procedures and targeted timelines are presented below, with asterisk signs indicating procedures that directly involve DAC members.

Identified procedure	Action holder	Targeted timeline
Submission of the proposal to the DAC Secretariat	Permanent Delegation of Korea to OECD	Sep. 2020
Assessment of the proposal	DAC Secretariat	Sep. to Nov. 2020
Notification of a list of proposals on the 'WP-STAT Collaborative and Knowledge Management Platform'	DAC Secretariat	Sep. 2020
Circulation to WP-STAT of the assessments of proposals and recommendations for approval under the written procedure on the 'WP-STAT Collaborative and Knowledge Management Platform'	DAC Secretariat	By end of Nov. 2020
*Review and decision on the proposal	WP-STAT of the DAC	Dec. 2020
*Completion and closure of the written procedure	WP-STAT of the DAC	Dec. 2020