

Third Session of the Assembly
28-29 October 2019, Seoul

Agenda Item 5

Preparation of the AFoCO Ministerial Meeting

Introduction

1. In accordance with the Decision 21-II-19S, the Assembly decided to hold the AFoCO Ministerial meeting in conjunction with the 3rd Session of the Assembly.
2. The main objectives of the AFoCO Ministerial Meeting are to
 - a. commemorate and celebrate the establishment of AFoCO
 - b. share the organizational vision and aspiration through high-level support for the implementation of the Strategic Plan (2019-2023) and enhanced collaborative actions in mitigating the regional challenges through AFoCO; and
 - c. promote regional and global recognition of AFoCO through high-level participation.

Agenda and Program

3. The agenda of the AFoCO Ministerial Meeting are:

- a. Opening Session
- b. **Innovative local actions on global targets, exploring opportunities**

Many Parties are committed to the global goals of the forest, land management. The forest sector has also been endeavoring to achieve various internationally agreed targets to increase forest areas. Various challenges are put in the Asian region and in the member countries as well.

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly under 15.2, are promoting the implementation of sustainable management of all types of forests, halt deforestation, restore degraded forests, and substantially increase afforestation and reforestation globally by 2020.

The UN Strategic Plan for Forests (UNSPF) 2017-2030, adopted in 2017 by the UN General Assembly, targets an increase in forest area by 3% worldwide by 2030. The Paris Agreement provides that its parties should take action to conserve and enhance sinks and reservoirs of greenhouse gases, including forests. The Bonn Challenge aims to restore 150 million ha of the world's deforested lands by 2020 and 350 million ha, including New York Declaration on Forest, by 2030.

The Commission on Global Adaptation has announced the start of “Year of Action” and we are also facing the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration (2021-2030).

Welcoming the establishment of AFoCO and its Strategic Plan (2019-2023) endorsed by the Assembly, the Meeting will share ideas on new actions and approaches that will make a significant impact on the forest and forestry sector.

Guiding Questions

What local priority actions the Members need in visualizing the above-mentioned targets to achieve sustainable development and addressing climate change issues?

Where can AFoCO come in to support members and make synergies with other international cooperation mechanisms?

c. **Future of sustainable capacity development with RETC**

AFoCO is promoting consistent capacity development through short- and long-term programs, including courses implemented at the Regional Education and Training Center (RETC), scholarship program, science and technology programs, and AFoCO Fellowship Program.

The RETC aims to strengthen the capacity of the forest sector in member countries through advanced training and education programs. The RETC is a comprehensive facility for education and training, meetings, accommodation, and convenience services. The center was built under the AFoCO Landmark Program and has been operational since July 2018.

The core training topics of the center are (i) Forest Rehabilitation and Reforestation which covers seed harvesting, seed storage and supply, nursery management, tree plantation; (ii) Forest Fire Management which taps on fire safety and behavior, fire prevention, fire inspection, fire information system and fire suppression; and (iii) Community Based Forest Management which enhances socio-economic analysis, forest assessment, monitoring, forest resources, forest-related enterprise development. Since its grand opening in July 2018, the RETC held 43 training courses for more than 5,000 participants, including 26 community development courses.

The Meeting will provide guidance on how to develop sustainable capacity development and make most out of the RETC so that all members benefit through RETC.

Guiding Questions

What should be the strategic direction for developing the right capacities for sustainable development of the region, including opportunities for the RETC?

What are the areas of capacity development needed in the Member countries in addition to the courses provided or planned?

How would you foresee the RETC as a flagship institution shaping up in the region?

d. **AFoCO membership, the way forward**

The ASEAN-ROK Forest Cooperation was formalized in 2012 comprising 10 ASEAN Member States and the ROK with ROK's proposal as an initial phase of the current Asian Forest Cooperation Organization. Under this cooperation mechanism, various regional forestry activities and projects were implemented. Currently, 12 countries are Parties to the AFoCO and some of the ASEAN Member States are yet to join.

As part of the next step on expansion and building a strong foundation of membership, it is important to envisage the full participation of the ASEAN Member States as it was a part of the initial phase of ASEAN-ROK Forest Cooperation. The participation of all ASEAN Member States will strengthen the capacity and the role of the Organization in the region and help to collaborate with the global target in the forest sector.

Noting that the 1st Session of the Assembly has expressed no objection to the participation of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK) to AFoCO, the Meeting will consider involving more countries in the region. With stronger stewardship and wider network, the Organization can support to materialize the vision of a greener Asia.

Guiding Questions

What strategy or approaches should be taken in terms of membership of AFoCO?

What is the vision we want to share with potential member countries in the region?

How can we strengthen the required capacities or aspects when considering expansion of membership including financial resources?

e. Closing Session

The Secretariat will facilitate to finalize and the Meeting will adopt the report. A photo session will follow after the adoption of the report.

Expected Result of the AFoCO Ministerial Meeting

4. In the closing session, the Meeting will welcome all the discourses and adopt Record of Discussion (Summary of the Chairperson) for AFoCO Ministerial Meeting as the valuable outcome document. This document will reflect the vision and guidance of the Ministers' discussions leading towards the way forward of AFoCO in making a Greener Asia.

Points for consideration

5. The Assembly may wish to
- take note of the information on the AFoCO Ministerial Meeting; and
 - take note that the preparatory meeting for the AFoCO Ministerial Meeting will be organized after the 3rd Session of the Assembly for a briefing on the itinerary and program.
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