

First Session of the Assembly

13 November 2018
Seoul, Korea

RECORD OF DISCUSSION

Opening Session

1. The First Session of the Assembly of the Asian Forest Cooperation Organization (AFoCO) was held on 13 November 2018 in Seoul, Korea. The Meeting was attended by Representatives and delegates from all Parties, namely, Bhutan, Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Republic of Korea (ROK), Myanmar, Timor-Leste and Viet Nam. The delegates from the Signatory countries and prospective member countries, namely, Lao PDR, Mongolia, the Philippines, Kazakhstan, Singapore, and Thailand, also attended the meeting. The officials from the AFoCO Secretariat were also present to provide the secretariat support to the Meeting.

2. Prior to the First Session of the Assembly, the Preparatory Meeting for the First Session of the Assembly was held on 12 November 2018, in order to review the program, agenda and composition of the documents for the First Session of the Assembly. The Preparatory Meeting reviewed and made improvements to the meeting documents for consideration and decision of the Assembly.

3. Dr. Park Eunsik, Acting Executive Director of AFoCO, in his opening remarks, warmly welcomed all delegates to the First Session of the Assembly. He reiterated the significance of the First Session as it will set the practical framework of AFoCO based on the Agreement. He hoped that two technical meetings and the preparatory meeting held in preparation of this First Session could contribute to making constructive decisions during the Assembly. In hopes for AFoCO to become a key player in the region, he looked forward to contributing to global goals in line with the needs and policies of all the members through AFoCO.

Agenda Item 1: Election of the Officers for the 1st Session of the Assembly

4. The Secretariat facilitated the nomination and election of the President and Vice President of the 1st Session of the Assembly in order to have the officers in place before formal adoption of the Rules of Procedure of the Assembly.

5. In accordance with the proposed Rules of Procedure of the Assembly, the Assembly elected Mr. Ko Kiyeon, Director General of International Affairs Bureau of the Korea Forest Service, ROK as the President and Mr. Pham Van Dien, Deputy Director General of Viet Nam Administration of Forestry as the Vice President of the 1st Session of the Assembly.

6. Mr. Ko Kiyeon, recalling on the past journey for the establishment of AFoCO, expressed appreciation for the commitment and efforts of all the members. He congratulated all the members

as well as the Secretariat in hopes to further solidify the partnership and cooperation among the members. He hoped for successful deliberation of the very first session of the Assembly.

Agenda 2. Ascertainment of the Quorum

7. In reference to the report of the Secretariat, the President declared the quorum for the First Session of the Assembly had been met. The list of participants is attached as **ANNEX-1**.

Agenda 3. Adoption of the Agenda

8. The Assembly reviewed and adopted the annotated Agenda as attached as **ANNEX-2**.

Agenda 4. Approval of Rules of Procedure of the Assembly

6. The Assembly reviewed and adopted the Rules of Procedure of the Assembly as contained in **Decision 1-I-18R**.

Agenda 5. Membership

Agenda 5.1. Update on the entry-into-force of the Agreement

7. The Secretariat reported on the current state of Parties, Signatory countries, and prospective parties to the Agreement.

Agenda 5.2. Admission of Observer

8. The Assembly endorsed the decision to grant observer status to the Signatory countries, namely Indonesia, Lao PDR, Mongolia, the Philippines, and prospective member countries, namely Thailand, Singapore, and Kazakhstan, as contained in **Decision 2-I-18R**. The President requested the Secretariat to post the list of observers on the AFoCO website and facilitate their activities and involvements to AFoCO in accordance with the Rules of Procedure of the Assembly.

Agenda 5.3. Application of new members

9. The Assembly considered and adopted the Guidelines on the Application of Non-Signatory Countries as contained in **Decision 3-I-18R**.

Agenda 5.4. Invitation of new members

10. The Assembly requested the Secretariat to update on any indication by non-signatory countries intending to become a member of AFoCO. The Secretariat has only received unofficial

verbal approaches regarding membership to AFoCO. The Secretariat further updated the Assembly on recent developments in the inter-Korean relations. Upon consideration of potential cooperation through AFoCO at the Inter-Korean Summit, the Secretariat sent official letter to the Parties seeking the position on inviting the Democratic People's Republic of Korea as a new member. The Assembly had no objection to invite the DPRK.

11. The Assembly tasked the Secretariat to disseminate information on AFoCO and the application process to become a Party to the interested countries and other potential members, including the DPRK. The Assembly further tasked the Secretariat to take follow-up actions in accordance with the Guidelines on the Application of Non-Signatory Countries to Become a Party and update the Assembly at the next session of the Assembly.

Agenda 6. Appointment of the first Executive Director

Agenda 6.1 Report of the Executive Director Selection Committee

12. The Chairperson of the Executive Director Selection Committee reported on the activities of the Committee and recommended Mr. Chencho Norbu for the position of the Executive Director of AFoCO for consideration and approval of the Assembly.

Agenda 6.2 Appointment of the Executive Director

13. In consideration of the recommendation of the Executive Director Selection Committee, the Assembly appointed Mr. Chencho Norbu as the Executive Director and decided on the validity of the Executive Director Selection Committee as contained in **Decision 4-I-18R**.

14. Mr. Chencho Norbu delivered his acceptance statement through video message and also provided the statement in writing. In his message, he extended appreciation to the Executive Director Selection Committee and the Assembly. Emphasizing that restoration of degraded areas is what the region needs and wants, he assured that the Secretariat will serve to translate the wisdom and knowledge of the Assembly into concrete actions on the ground.

Agenda 7. Strategic Plan of AFoCO

15. The Assembly considered and adopted the Strategic Plan of AFoCO (2019-2023) as contained in **Decision 5-I-18R**. The plan of action will be further elaborated and developed in accordance with the decision.

Agenda 8. Organizational Symbol of AFoCO

16. The Assembly considered and adopted the organization symbol of AFoCO as contained in **Decision 6-I-18R**.

Agenda 9. Approval of Regulations

17. The Assembly adopted the internal regulations of AFoCO, including Financial Regulations, Staff Regulations, and Project Manual, as contained in **Decision 7-I-18R**.

18. In accordance with the decision, the Secretariat will develop additional guidelines such as, monitoring and evaluation guidelines for project implementation, guidelines for project staffs, corporate identity (CI) guidelines, *etc*, as required for the effective operation of the organization.

Agenda 10. Installment of the Secretariat

Agenda 10.1 Transition of assets, functions, legal liability and documents from the Interim Secretariat to the Secretariat

19. The Assembly endorsed the establishment of the Secretariat and further approved the transition of the interim secretariat into the AFoCO Secretariat as contained in **Decision 8-I-18R**.

Agenda 10.2 Regional Education and Training Center (RETC)

20. The Assembly endorsed the RETC as a subsidiary organ of the Secretariat as contained in **Decision 9-I-18R**. The Assembly tasked the Secretariat to undertake necessary arrangements in accordance with the decision

Agenda 11. Projects

21. The Assembly considered and approved four projects respectively from Viet Nam, Cambodia, Timor-Leste, and Bhutan as contained in **Decision 10-I-18R**. The Assembly further tasked the Secretariat to take necessary follow-up actions in accordance with the decision.

Agenda 12. Proposal of Fellowship Program

22. The Assembly considered and endorsed the operation of the AFoCO Fellowship Program as contained in **Decision 11-I-18R**. The Assembly further adopted the Guidelines for the AFoCO Fellowship Program and tasked the Secretariat to process the selection of the candidate officials for the AFoCO Fellowship Program.

Agenda 13. External Relations

23. The Assembly considered and endorsed development of and strengthening external relations, as contained in **Decision 12-I-18R**, through necessary agreements with the concerned Parties, as well as cooperation arrangements with or accreditation to other entities.

24. The Assembly noted that the Secretariat will request support and cooperation from the Parties, when necessary, in the course of undertaking due procedures for accreditation and/or making cooperation arrangements.

Agenda 14. Work plan and budget

Agenda 14.1 Work plan and budget for 2019 and 2020

25. The Assembly endorsed the Work Plan for 2019 and approved the Budget for 2019 and 2020 as contained in **Decision 13-I-18R**.

Agenda 14.2 Guidelines on the in-kind contribution

26. The Assembly considered and adopted the Guidelines on the In-Kind Contribution as contained in **Decision 14-I-18R**. The Assembly tasked the Secretariat to develop more detailed guidelines on in-kind contribution for consideration and approval in 2019.

Agenda 15. Other Matters

Agenda 15.1 Disclosure policy

27. The Assembly considered and adopted the decision on the Exceptions to Public Disclosure of Activities of the Assembly as contained in **Decision 15-I-18R**.

Agenda 16. Date and venue of Regular Sessions of the Assembly

28. The Assembly considered and decided to convene the regular sessions of the Assembly in the Republic of Korea in the last week of October in each year as contained in **Decision 16-I-18R**.

29. The Assembly acknowledged of the needs to hold a special session in the first half of 2019 in order to further share update on the on-going projects, report on the plan for development of internal guidelines, and update on the external relations. The Assembly considered and decided to convene the Second Session of the Assembly in a special session in late April or early May of 2019 back to back with an international seminar to showcase the achievements of the past and on-going projects and way forward. The Assembly tasked the Secretariat to notify the date and venue of the Second Session in due course.

Agenda 17. Election of Succeeding Officers

30. The Assembly elected Dr. Pham Van Dien, Vice Director General of Viet Nam Administration of Forestry as the incoming President and Mr. Manuel Mendes of Timor-Leste as the incoming Vice President in accordance with Rule 7 of the Rules of Procedure of the Assembly. The elected officers will serve until their successors are elected at the end of the next regular session in October 2019.

31. Dr. Pham Van Dien accepted the position of the President of the Assembly. In his remarks, he highlighted the long history and milestones of the transitional period towards the formalization of AFoCO as well as the unique strengths and values of AFoCO. He committed to make efforts to promote creativity and solidarity as the President. He looked forward to welcoming the Observer countries as Parties very soon. In closing, he thanked and requested for continued support from all AFoCO members to fulfill the duties and responsibilities of the President.

Agenda 18. Adoption of the Record of Discussion

32. The Assembly considered and endorsed the Record of Discussion by circulation. The list of decisions adopted at the First Session of the Assembly is attached as **ANNEX-3**.

Closing

33. In closing, Mr. Ko Kiyeon expressed his appreciation and honor to serve as the President of the First Session of the Assembly. He further congratulated all the Parties and Observers for the successful session of the Assembly. He hoped AFoCO to play an important role in the region and looked forward to active participation and contributions of the incoming President. He also noted on the upcoming Asia Pacific Forestry Week to be hosted by Korea in June 2019. He requested for support and participation by all AFoCO members. He wished all delegates safe trip back to their home countries.

Adopted on 4 December 2018 by circulation.
