

First Session of the Assembly
12-13 November 2018, Seoul

Agenda 7

DECISION 5-I-18R

Strategic Plan (2019-2023)

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

Recognizing the global megatrends including Sustainable Development Goals (SDG);

Acknowledge the objectives set out in Article 2 of the Agreement on the Establishment of AFoCO;
and

Taking note of technical review and inputs of the prospective members of AFoCO on the draft Strategic Plan of AFoCO;

Decides to

1. Approve the Strategic Plan (2019-2023) as contained in the annex to this documents; and
 2. Task the Secretariat to further elaborate the plan of action and report the progress and the output to the Assembly.
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Annex (Decision 5-I-18R)

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 give 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

sector.

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.

TENTATIVE PLAN OF ACTIONS (2019-2023)

IMPLEMENTATION APPROACH WITH KEY ACTIVITIES	TIMELINE					KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS (MINIMUM AND INDICATIVE)
	'19	'20	'21	'22	'23	
STRATEGIC PRIORITY AREA 1. INITIATING CUSTOMIZED RESTORATION AND REFORESTATION MODELS						
EXPECTED OUTCOME: ESTABLISHMENT OF LOCALLY CUSTOMIZED RESTORATION AND REFORESTATION MODELS IN TARGET COMMUNITIES AND ADOPTION AND APPLICATION OF SUCH TECHNIQUES IN OTHER AREAS OF THE COUNTRIES.						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of forest landscape restoration and reforestation models, utilizing various experiences of member countries in community-driven development approach and reflecting the needs of target communities and forest ecosystem • Implementation of forest landscape restoration and reforestation models in target areas of the countries • Establishment of a demonstration forest at the regional education and training center regarding forest restoration and conservation techniques • Delivery of training courses and study tour activities related to forest landscape restoration and reforestation models 						<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 1 restoration module - 1 reforestation module (minimum requirement) - 1 on-site restoration model - 1 on-site reforestation model - 1 demonstration forest at the regional education and training center (RETC) - 8 training courses or technical workshops (restoration and reforestation techniques)

IMPLEMENTATION APPROACH WITH KEY ACTIVITIES	TIMELINE					KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS (MINIMUM AND INDICATIVE)
	'19	'20	'21	'22	'23	
STRATEGIC PRIORITY AREA 2. SUPPORTING RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT IN CLIMATE CHANGE ADAPTATION APPROACHES						
EXPECTED OUTCOME: A SCIENTIFIC STUDY ON FORESTRY ADAPTATION APPROACHES AND POLICY ADOPTION OF VULNERABLE MEMBER COUNTRIES TO APPLY RELEVANT ADAPTATION METHODOLOGIES AND APPROACHES.						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conducting of a scoping survey by a team of experts to identify existing research studies and findings regarding the climate change adaptation in forestry sector • Conducting of a comprehensive survey and report by a team of experts on adaptation approaches in forestry sector for the vulnerable member countries • Deliberation of findings and policy recommendations by an ad-hoc working group on adaptation methodologies and approaches for vulnerable areas/countries • Policy adoption, technical verification, and application of relevant methodologies and approaches in vulnerable areas/countries 	→	→	→	→		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 1 survey report - 1 study report - 1 policy recommendation paper - Adoption and application of methodologies and approaches
STRATEGIC PRIORITY AREA 3. INTRODUCING SYSTEMATIC MANAGEMENT ON FOREST-RELATED DISASTERS						
EXPECTED OUTCOME: ESTABLISHMENT OF DEMONSTRATION SITES FOR CONTROL AND MANAGEMENT OF FOREST-RELATED DISASTERS AND EXTENSIVE APPLICATION OF SUCH TECHNOLOGY-BASED TECHNIQUES WHERE APPROPRIATE.						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establishment of a regional network on monitoring and management of forest-related disasters • Demonstration sites and models for forest fire monitoring and management • Demonstration sites and models for landslide management technology • Formulation of training modules and materials for forest-related disaster management • Delivery of training courses and study tour programs 	→	→	→	→	→	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 1 network - 2 demonstration sites and models - 2 demonstration sites and models - 1 training module on forest fire management - 1 training module on landslide management - 2 training courses together with study tour at demonstration sites organized each year from 2019 onwards

IMPLEMENTATION APPROACH WITH KEY ACTIVITIES	TIMELINE					KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS (MINIMUM AND INDICATIVE)
	'19	'20	'21	'22	'23	
STRATEGIC PRIORITY AREA 4. LOCAL LIVELIHOOD IMPROVEMENT AND COMMUNITY-BASED SMALL ENTERPRISE DEVELOPMENT						
EXPECTED OUTCOME: ESTABLISHMENT OF PILOT PROGRAMS IN TARGET AREAS AND POLICY ADOPTION IN TARGET COUNTRIES.						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support AFoCO members to implement best policy and practices (Policy advocacy activities such as high-level seminars and study tours for promotion of payment for ecosystem services, ecotourism, and community-based enterprise development) Demarcation of sites, identification of users and beneficiary communities and development of programs in detail utilizing experiences of member countries Implementation of pilot projects including the establishment of monitoring and benefit-sharing mechanism Delivery of training courses, study tours, and other capacity building activities 	→					<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 promotional event 3 events (1 event per topic)
	→					<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 3 project plans
			→			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 3 pilot projects
		→				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 12 capacity building activities (3 activities per year)
STRATEGIC PRIORITY AREA 5. STRENGTHENING INSTITUTIONAL CAPABILITIES, DIVERSIFYING RESOURCES, AND PROMOTING REGIONAL ACTIONS						
EXPECTED OUTCOME: A CREDIBLE AND ACCOUNTABLE ORGANIZATION IN COPING WITH REGIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL ISSUES.						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Operation of online system for information updates, official communication and decision-making mechanism among the members Preparing and organizing skill improvement and staff exchange programs Expanding partnership with other international entities and undertaking collaborative actions Exploring and securing alternative funding support in collaboration with members and partners (e.g. Global Environment Facility, Green Climate Fund) Identification and deliberation on common regional positions and approaches to be intervened at the international forums and dialogues 	→					<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 integrated online system
	→					<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 4 activities
	→					<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 3 MOUs 2 joint collaborative projects/programs
	→					<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Accreditation with GEF Accreditation with GCF 1 project with external funding
	→					<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Official interventions in international forums and dialogues