

Fifth Session of the Assembly
25-27 October 2021, Hybrid

Agenda Item 15

Strengthening Project Performance and Country Presence of AFoCO in the Parties

1. AFoCO is encouraging its Member Countries to implement projects primarily to facilitate achievement of respective national targets and regional/international commitments in the forestry sector as well as enhancing project management capacity. While the Secretariat has also been exerting best efforts to mobilize project funds, the presence of a country/regional office will definitely contribute to the qualification of AFoCO in terms of project management.
2. Moreover, the number and scope of AFoCO programs/projects are envisioned to grow in the coming years, hence the capacity of the Secretariat in project monitoring and supervision has to be strengthened at the country/project site level, especially under the COVID-19 situation.
3. Strengthening country/regional presence of AFoCO will be implemented in a phased approach, need-based and in consideration of utilization of existing and potential human resources as well as funding capacity of AFoCO as follows:
 - a. 2021-2023 (temporarily during COVID-19 situation)
 - As the full operation of the country/regional office will be contingent to the refreshed Strategic Plan (2024-2030), the Secretariat intends to initiate country presence and enhance its project management capacities by taking advantage of existing AFoCO project office to also serve as country office of the Secretariat in countries upon mutual consideration of the concerned Implementing Agency (IA).
 - At this stage, Project Coordinators at the country level will be deployed to serve as the extension/counterpart of the Secretariat in the monitoring and supervision of in-country projects including other duties that are relevant to the coordinating functions of the Secretariat.
 - The deployment of Project Coordinators will be engaged in countries where project supervision is crucial (with more projects, IAs capacities have to be enhanced in the process and project development for strategic partnership and donors' relation). The deployment will also consider the collaboration of AFoCO with the Korea-Mekong Forest Cooperation Center (KMFCC) and presence of National Experts (authorized by the 4th Assembly).
 - Payment for the Project Coordinators and operational costs of the project office will be drawn up from respective project funds under the Project Support Fee (PSF) and/or in-cash/in-kind project contribution from the Member Countries.

b. Preparation of action plan by 2024

- From 2024, the Secretariat will start developing specific action plans to consider the followings:
 - establishment of a country/regional office will be pursued on a need based.
 - The engagement of country officers will be charged under PSF while regional office staff will be manned by the regional project management office (project manager and staff) of existing regional projects (e.g., Forest Fire Management Project funded by AKCF and regional project on NTFPs).
 - All the program/project will consider and include salaries for the staff and operating costs of the country/regional project office as part of the project budget allocation. Also, in-kind/in-cash contributions for operating country/regional project offices (including dispatching country/regional officers) will be encouraged to the Member Countries.

Points for consideration

4. The Assembly may wish to:
- acknowledge and/or provide further guidance on the matter; and
 - task the Secretariat to develop action plans in due course.