

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

Agenda Item 19

Review of the Strategic Framework

I. Background

1. The Strategic Plan (2019-2023) is the first Strategy of AFoCO adopted by its Assembly at the inaugural session in 2018 and AFoCO is currently in the third year of implementing the plan. Pursuant to the strategic recommendations provided from the 2019 External Institutional Review, the Assembly considered the newly proposed statements of the organizational vision and mission and the revised set of priority areas at its fourth session in 2020. Given the nature of the strategic framework that is far-reaching and long-term, the Assembly recommended the Secretariat to give sufficient time for the Parties for their consideration and inputs. And the Assembly further tasked the Secretariat to improve the current Strategic Plan 2019-2023 when vision and mission statements and the priority areas are finalized through the consultative process.

2. This document aims to provide an update on actions taken in response to the Assembly's decisions and recommendations towards enhancing the organizational strategic framework and get guidance on the next steps.

II. Results of consultative survey on the revised strategic framework

3. Following up on the recommendations of the 4th Session of the Assembly, the Secretariat has conducted a consultative survey **from 4 to 29 December 2020** on the provisional statements of vision and mission and the revised set of priority areas (shown below). Responses from the Parties and Observer countries were collected through Google Form Survey and via email.

A. Provisional vision statement:

"A greener Asia with resilient forest, landscapes and communities"

B. Provisional mission statement:

"To strengthen cooperation in promoting practices of sustainable forest management through policy support, capacity development, and inclusive partnership to combat climate change and its impact"

C. Provisional set of revised priority areas:

- *Accelerating contextualized actions on tackling forest loss and promoting forest restoration*
- *Establishing greater resilience of forest and forest-dependent communities against increasing climate and disaster risks*
- *Advancing community forestry and sustainable livelihood strategy*
- *Strengthening human and institutional capacities to enhance sustainable forest management*

4. There were a total 5 responses received respectively from Cambodia, Myanmar, Philippines, Republic of Korea and Singapore, through the consultative survey, all of which were provided by the Representatives and/or national focal points of respective countries. Presented below are key ideas suggested through the survey.

- **Geographical scope of the AFoCO's mission may go beyond Asian region.** The similar ideas were formerly proposed by the institutional review panel and then positively considered among the members. In this regard, it was proposed to take into account the possibility of participation of non-Asian countries in AFoCO activities in the formulation of the mission statement.
- **The notion of sustainability should be fully embedded in the vision statement.** The current provisional statement is likely to be misinterpreted as if "a greener Asia" can be achieved through unsustainable expansion of agricultural or commodity plantations. The vision needs clear demonstration of its orientation towards sustainable resources management and natural forest conservation that balances with the other economic derivatives from forests. One relevant suggestion was to insert the word "sustainable" prior to "resilient", to read as "A greener Asia with sustainable and resilient forests, landscapes and communities".
- **It may be useful to develop a clear definition of what "resilient" means in the vision statement.** This is crucial in building a shared understanding and clear interpretation of the vision statement.
- **It is imperative to aligning AFoCO's vision and mission to global development and climate goals.** AFoCO can be understood as a multilateral cooperation platform to support each member's attainment of national sustainable development goals and subsequently contribute to global goals.
- **Some unique features of AFoCO, such as "action-oriented" approach and "multi-stakeholder engagement",** can be more clearly reflected in the mission statement.
- **The provisional statement tends to focus on fractions of the objectives of establishing AFoCO.** In this context, one suggested to consider incorporating in the statements other issues like biodiversity conservation, enhancement of ecosystem services, etc. Another proposal suggested changing the part "~ to combat climate change and its impact" to a more encompassing phrase of "~ towards greener Asia."
- **Full consideration should be given to the areas like conservation of forest biodiversity and enhancement of ecosystem services,** as one of the priority areas of AFoCO.
- **It should be clear on what aspects have been covered by each new priority area.** One may wish to review whether all important aspects of forestry and climate change

related actions are covered under the revised set of priority areas.

III. Plan of developing the AFoCO Strategic Plan 2024-2030

5. Given the facts that the current strategic plan has passed through the midpoint and many new significant changes have been brought to the cooperation context and landscape for AFoCO in recent years, the Secretariat assessed that it may be most desirable to reflect the views collected over the new strategic framework in the next term's strategy, tentatively titled as "**AFoCO Strategy 2024-2030**". The process of developing the new strategy will be started at this early stage, **targeting its soft-launching at the outset of 2023**. It will allow the organization to have the full year of 2023 **with preparatory works to pave the way for its due implementation**, particularly in programming and resource mobilization. By doing so, the current strategic plan can be readily shifted on to the new strategy with sufficient time for developing a detailed plan of actions and other functional strategies, such as the Resource Mobilization Strategy.

6. There will be five major work components in the strategy development process:

- Review of the Strategic Plan 2019-2023 and its implementation
- Baseline Study and External/Internal Analysis
- Drafting AFoCO Strategy 2024-2030
- Drafting Complementary Plan of Actions
- Drafting Complementary Evaluation Framework

7. The process of the new strategic plan will particularly emphasize baselining and assessing the contextual changes brought in the member countries and at the regional and global levels. The COVID-19 pandemic surely is the one to be considered for its wide-range impacts that have changed our day-to-day lives and has huge potential to set back the progress made towards sustainable development. Also, major international processes and global targets that aim to accomplish bold ambitions by 2030 drive us to develop our long-term goals and targets aligned to those new developments. This may include Sustainable Development Goals, UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration 2021-2030, Post-2020 Biodiversity Framework, and implementing Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) under the Paris Agreement, achieving the goal for net-zero emission by 2050. The baselining studies required for the strategy can be benefited from the Secretariat's currently ongoing baselining activities on the policy relevance of AFoCO's operations (**Decision-34-IV-20R**).

8. Concurrently, the strategy development process will highly value the wide and extensive engagement of the member countries and various other key stakeholders. This will make the new strategy and AFoCO's operations better aligned to the national priorities and interests of the Parties and win more buy-ins thereon.

9. The Secretariat will further develop and communicate with the Parties the detailed approaches and work schedule for the strategy development in due course.

Points for consideration

10. The Assembly may wish to:
- Take note on the progress made in the review of the AFoCO Strategic Plan (2019-2023);
and
 - Provide guidance and support to the Secretariat on the proposed plan of developing the AFoCO Strategic Plan 2024-2030.
