

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

## Agenda Item 6.1

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### **Updates on the On-going Program/Projects**

#### **Background**

1. As of 25 October 2021, a total of 22 projects, comprising 18 regular projects and four (4) AFoCO-NIFoS research projects are on-going including one (1) project (AFoCO/026/2021) which is under inception arrangement. These projects have a total funding requirement of 26.8 million USD. The list of on-going projects and information on the follow-up actions are summarized in Annex-1.
2. In order to facilitate the project inception arrangements for the five (5) regular projects, series of pre-project inception and technical meetings were conducted since April 2021, in cooperation with the Implementing Agencies (IAs) of the Philippines, Indonesia, Viet Nam, Lao PDR and Timor-Leste. The separate inception meetings were likewise organized for the two (2) AFoCO-NIFoS research projects in Cambodia and Viet Nam that had their inception arrangements and meetings.
3. To cope up with country-specific challenges under COVID-19 pandemic, the Secretariat in consultation with respective NFPs and IAs, tackled project implementation issues and concerns bilaterally during project inception and Project Steering Committee meetings. Said consultations were complemented with joint project report evaluation and online survey that led to the conduct Annual Technical Workshop (ATW) on Project Management and Performance Review on 23 June 2021, and Consultation Meeting on 2 September 2021 for the advance review of CY 2022 Work and Budget Plan in consideration of the evolving COVID-19 situation.

#### **Points for consideration**

4. The Assembly may wish to:
    - review the update on the on-going programs and projects, and provide further guidance as necessary.
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## Annex-1.

### List of On-going Projects and Summary of Follow-up Actions to Facilitate Project Implementation

#### List of on-going projects

1. Below is the list of on-going projects as of September 2021.

Unit : Thousand USD

On-going Projects				
Project code	Country	Project title	Period	AFoCO fund
AFoCO/005/2014	KH	Establishment of Forest Genetics Research Center for Restoration of Major Timber Species in Cambodia	2016-2025	1,500
AFoCO/006/2014	VN	Rehabilitation and Development of Mangrove Forest Ecosystem in Thai Binh Province, Viet Nam	2016-2023	1,500
AFoCO/007/2014	Sec.	Establishment of Regional Education and Training Center in Myanmar	2014-2023	8,734
AFoCO/008/2014	LA	Village-based Forest Rehabilitation in Lao PDR	2016-2025	1,500
AFoCO/010/2016	MY/TH	Domestication of Endangered, Endemic and Threatened Plant Species in Disturbed Terrestrial Ecosystems in Malaysia and Thailand	2016-2022	1,200
AFoCO/012/2019	KH	The Registration of Small-scale Private Forest Plantations in Cambodia	2020-2021	249
AFoCO/013/2020	VN	Improving <i>Pinus caribaea</i> Morelet for Plantation on Degraded Land in Viet Nam's Northern Mountainous Region	2020-2023	486
AFoCO/014/2020	MM	Integrated Pest and Disease Management in Teak Plantations in Bago Regions, Myanmar	2020-2025	955
AFoCO/015/2020	MM	Model Forest for Livelihood Improvement of Forest Dependent Communities through Development of Community-based Enterprise and Forest Conservation	2020-2023	952
AFoCO/016/2021	PH	Promotion of Vertical Integration in Wood Processing through People's Organizations in Community Based Forest Management Areas in the Philippines	2021-2026	929
AFoCO/017/2020	BT	Sustainable Community-based Enterprise development for Improved Rural Livelihood	2020-2025	1,000
AFoCO/018/2020	TL	Development of Agroforestry Models for Promotion of Reforestation in the Different Zones in Timor-Leste	2021-2024	517
AFoCO/023/2021	ID	Innovative solution for climate change and biodiversity landscape strategy to support SDGs in Indonesia	2021-2025	700
AFoCO/024/2021	VN	Conservation and development of forest ecosystems biodiversity resources at Cat Tien National Park	2021-2026	1,132
AFoCO/025/2021	LA	Integrated village-driven forest rehabilitation and livelihood improvement in Viengthong district, Bolikhamxay province, Lao PDR	2021-2026	993
LP-2	Sec.	Development of Education and Training Programs for Capacity Building (Landmark Scholarship Program)	2014-2023	2,334
LP-4	Sec.	Development of Advocating Activities	2014-2023	1,000
Subtotal				25,681
Project under Inception Arrangements				
AFoCO/026/2021	TL	Re-greening the bare lands in Timor-Leste through promotion of locally customized restoration models	2021-2024	1,000
Subtotal				1,000
AFoCO-NIFoS- Research Project				
AFoCO/019/2020	BT	Assessment of Adelgid diversity and distribution in conifer forest of Bhutan to mitigate future outbreaks	2020-2022	33
AFoCO/020/2020	KZ	Investigation of the resistance of black saxaul ( <i>Haloxylon aphyllum</i> ) forms to gall-forming insects in Kazakhstan	2020-2022	33
AFoCO/021/2020	KH	Performance of Cluster Method in Rehabilitating Degraded Lands in Cambodia	2021-2023	35

AFoCO/022/2020	VN	Research on Forest Enrichment using High Valuable Native Species in Hoa Binh Province, Viet Nam	2021-2023	34
Subtotal				135
Total				26,816

### **Update on the projects in Myanmar**

2. Due to the COVID-19 and political situation in Myanmar, budget transfer has been considerably affected specifically in the three (3) ongoing projects as follows:

- Establishment of Regional Education and Training Center in Myanmar (AFoCO/007/2014)
- Integrated Pest and Disease Management in Teak Plantations in Bago Regions, Myanmar (AFoCO/014/2020)
- Model Forest for Livelihood Improvement of Forest Dependent Communities through Development of Community-based Enterprise and Forest Conservation (AFoCO/015/2020)

3. Likewise, the establishment of the AFoCO Experimental Forest as part of AFoCO/007/2014 has been delayed since January 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic in Myanmar and the Republic of Korea as this requires site validation as basis in finalization of the design of the experimental forest. The two (2) projects (AFoCO/014/2020 & AFoCO/015/2020) have been initiated in Myanmar since 2020. However, in view of Myanmar's internal situation, the remittance of the project fund is still pending in consideration of recommendations from relevant Ministries of ROK. As the follow-up action, the Secretariat organized a bilateral meeting with the Myanmar side in September 2021 to explore workable options to facilitate the project fund transfer.

### **Annual Technical Workshop on Project Management and Performance Review (ATW)**

4. The workshop held on 23 June 2021 focused on the presentation of accomplishments, lessons learned and good practices from the two (2) completed regional projects under the ASEAN-ROK Forest Cooperation (AFoCo), performance review of the 10 on-going projects and updates on the five (5) new projects under inception arrangements. In summary, below are the project implementation and management concerns:

- Implementing Agencies (IAs) of completed projects highlighted the importance of integrating exit strategies, logical framework including implementation of sustainability mechanisms during and after the project.
- With regards to the coordination of regional project activities, the difficulties and limitations of the lead country (as in the case of BIPS project) was emphasized. Correspondingly, the Secretariat informed of its current effort in developing regional projects (i.e. Forest Fire Management in CLMV Countries and NTFP) and eventual management/coordination through the engagement of Regional Project Manager.
- For the 2014-008 project, field activities being done virtually in the light of the COVID-19 Pandemic have to be closely monitored in order to ensure timely delivery of outputs.
- All IAs of on-going projects have been implementing the AFoCO COVID-19 Coping-up Guidelines in terms of specific measures through on-line platform and alternative activities. Hence, there was no further recommendations to amend the said guidelines.
- 016, 023 and 024 projects have been proceeding to complete inception arrangements including identification of some anticipated operational concerns. Other projects for inception will be further approached by the Secretariat bilaterally.

## **Consultation Meeting relative to Project Implementation in CY 2022 in consideration of the COVID-19 situation**

5. Further to our joint efforts in the monitoring and supervision of the on-going and recently launched AFoCO projects, the Secretariat arranged a consultation meeting on 2 September 2021, via online platform. The Meeting was organized to tackle project fund execution and related issues and concerns.

6. The Secretariat, in consultation with the respective IAs, has been implementing the AFoCO Coping-up Measures where alternative activities, among others, are being implemented to mitigate the effects of COVID-19. Likewise, series of pre-inception and technical meetings were organized to facilitate project inception arrangements and requirements. Despite these efforts, the implementation of CY 2022 project activities remains crucial, as the ensuing year is most likely to be still affected by the evolving COVID-19 pandemic. Hence, the consultation meeting deliberated on the following:

- Implementability of CY 2022 project activity including carry-over activities from CY 2022
- Project Fund Execution Level, including need for the development of catch-up plan
- Estimate perceived savings that will not be realistically implemented in CY 2022
- Recommendations in the use of savings to ensure achievement of CY 2022 planned budget execution

7. In summary, the meeting has agreed on the utilization of Projected Savings vis-à-vis the COVID-19 impacts, to wit:

- For the IAs to further update CY2021 WBP of newly launched projects to make it the COVID-19 responsive. However, this will only be applicable prior to the release of first tranche (Year 1) of the project budget.
- For the IAs to review each project activity in CY 2022, including carry-over activities/budget and alternative activities pursuant to AFoCO COVID-19 Coping-up Guidelines. Respective IAs will be allowed to firstly identify alternative activities before determination/projection of savings;
- For the Secretariat to initially draft guidelines on the pooling of savings for implementation in CY 2022. The zero draft of the guidelines will be circulated for comments and recommendations of the IAs and NFPs;
- For the IAs to facilitate the conduct of PSC meetings to finalize and approve CY 2022 WBP including determination/utilization of the savings before end of December CY2021.

8. Consistent with the outcomes and agreements at the Consultation Meeting with respective NFPs and IAs, the Secretariat has finalized and circulated the Addendum to Guidelines on COVID-19 Coping-Up Measures for AFoCO projects (hereto attached Attachment) reflecting relevant comments and recommendations from the NFPs and IAs. The guidelines anticipate the persisting effects of the COVID-19 pandemic in CY 2022 and the need to proactively identify further measures to ensure delivery of planned budget execution for all projects. Hence, the Addendum mainly provides the following: (1) the relevant definitions regarding “Savings” and “Carry-over Budget”; (2) determination of Carry-over and alternative activities; (3) submission requirements and procedures; and (4) utilization of Savings. As and when necessary, online technical meetings and/or bilateral calls with NFPs and IAs will be organized.

9. A request for No-Cost Extension of the project (AFoCO/012/2019) entitled: “Registration of Small-scale Private Forest Plantation in Cambodia” was officially submitted to the Secretariat. On the basis of relevant provisions of the Project MOU and the AFoCO Manual, the PSC made a decision in its meeting on 21 October 2021 approving the extension of the project up to September 2022 including

audit activities, in view of the following:

- Acknowledgement of the impacts of evolving COVID-19 situation in Cambodia
  - Remaining activities will be completed consistent with Project objectives and outputs as approved by the 1<sup>st</sup> AFoCO Assembly in November 2018
  - The project extension will not require additional cost
  - Compliance with the provisions of the Project Manual
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