

Fifth Session of the Assembly
25-27 October 2021, Seoul, Korea (hybrid)

Summary Record

1. The Fifth Session of the Assembly of the Asian Forest Cooperation Organization (AFoCO), as a regular session, was held in hybrid from 26 to 27 October 2021. The Assembly was attended by Bhutan, Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Kazakhstan, Mongolia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Republic of Korea (ROK), Thailand, Timor-Leste, Viet Nam as Parties, and Singapore as an Observer and the Secretariat. Parties and Observers are collectively referred to as the Member Countries.

A. Organizational Matters

Agenda Item 1. Opening of the Session by the President of the Assembly

2. In accordance with Rule 7.2 of the Rules of Procedure of the Assembly, Mr. Lobzang Dorji, the President of the Assembly presided over the session of the Assembly. The President opened the Fifth Session by highlighting the challenges faced by all the countries amid the pandemic and the importance of regional cooperation. The President noted the efforts of the Parties and the Secretariat and further highlighted the works and progress of the Organization.

3. Mr. Choi Byeong-am, Minister of the Korea Forest Service, delivered appreciation to the Secretariat and Mr. Ricardo L. Calderon for organizing the 5th Assembly amid the COVID-19 pandemic. He expressed gratitude to AFoCO Member Countries for their efforts to maximize the role of forests, by improving forest inventory and monitoring system, sustainable forest management, and forest fire and deforestation prevention, based on their own vision and strategies. In addition, he informed that the XV World Forestry Congress (WFC) will be held in the ROK next year and also encouraged all Member Countries' full participation in WFC.

4. The Assembly adopted three decisions as listed in document **A-21-5-INF-1**.

Agenda Item 2. Adoption of the Agenda

5. The Assembly deliberated and unanimously adopted the proposed agenda as contained in document **A-21-5-1**.

6. The ROK recommended the Secretariat to brief on this year's actions and outcomes regarding the Decisions adopted at the 4th Session of the Assembly last year, during the 5th Session of the Assembly. The list of Decisions and relevant update is attached as document **A-21-5-INF-2**.

Agenda Item 3. Report of the Executive Director on the work of the Organization

7. The Executive Director presented highlights and major areas of activities on the work of AFoCO, work progress, the outline of future priorities, and the long-term plan of the Organization as contained in document **A-21-5-2(Rev.)**. The Assembly took note of the information highlighted and commended the extensive works of the Secretariat and efforts to enhance visibility and cooperation in the Host Country as well as with international partners.

Agenda Item 4. Country statements from the Parties and Observers

8. The Parties and Observers were invited to make a county statement, particularly on the impact of COVID-19 in the forest sector in each country. While each country was differently situated and unevenly impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, most countries shared in common the following hardship and negative consequences:

9. The ROK expressed gratitude to the Secretariat for convening the Fifth Session of the Assembly. Also, the ROK showed appreciation for AFoCO's efforts to promote cooperative projects, capacity-building courses, partnerships, and participation in global events. The ROK also shared that the Government of ROK will award the Order of Merit to former Executive Director Mr. Chencho Norbu for his excellent contribution to international cooperation for the ROK for a long period and during his tenure as the Executive Director of AFoCO, and that this medal proves that the work of AFoCO has been fully acknowledged by the Korean Government. The ROK showed its commitment to further strengthening cooperation with AFoCO, and encouraged the Member Countries to participate in the upcoming WFC.

10. Brunei Darussalam expressed that health and safety measures to prevent the spread of COVID-19 has caused disruptions in various ways to most economies. Brunei Darussalam shared that although they are facing the second wave of COVID-19, the forestry sector managed to demonstrate an increase in its production during the second quarter of 2021 and the forestry department remain vigilant in ensuring the forest activities continue to be productive. However, both forest rehabilitation and conservation activities in Brunei Darussalam has slowed down due to the mass gathering restriction imposed by the Ministry of Health. Brunei Darussalam encouraged all parties to maintain strong cooperation during this pandemic and remain resilient to continue to move forward grow stronger through AFoCO.

11. Myanmar acknowledged AFoCO for conducting the Assembly Session despite the current situation. The current situation and its impacts on forests are illegal logging, weak community monitoring system, declining government revenues, and loss of jobs. Finance and resource support from AFoCO is essential to sustainable management of forests in meeting climate change goals. The areas AFoCO should prioritize are 1) capacity development program, 2) more investment in the forestry sector, and 3) focus on technology driven management.

12. The Philippines shared that due to the pandemic and associated restrictions, the overall forestry sector activities have slowed down, for example, low implementation of forestry activities such as rehabilitation or protection programs or services. Loss in income and job are common issues faced now in the country. The pressure on forest resources is increasing especially in remote areas.

The Government started an initiative to help the country recover from the impacts of the pandemic.

13. Thailand informed the Meeting that the strict lockdown is causing problems in the community forest, livelihood and local farming. Many people are concerned about food, jobs and how to survive under a lockdown situation. However, a positive impact has been noticed on the environment and natural resources. Quality Tourism, such as green tourism has to be concerned. Management plans to increase immunity for the environment and natural resources after the COVID-19 recovery needs to be developed to address the unpredictable shock in the future.

14. Cambodia updated the Meeting that the forestry sector is also being affected by the pandemic, but its impacts are not serious. Transportation of goods is allowed with special permits. Concerns arising from returning workers from abroad who are infected with COVID-19 were addressed by the Government with a responsive care program. Livelihood was not severely affected by the pandemic. Lockdown, curfews and travel restrictions were mainly targeted at cities and urban areas where the red and orange zones were imposed. People in rural areas still can find food in the forests. Ceremony at the subnational level is conducted as planned with special arrangement to cope with COVID-19. Rehabilitation and reforestation activities are conducted, but with less monitoring and less budget allocated to forestry activities. The vaccine rollout is high and, since mid-October, the government has lightened travel restrictions. Although Cambodia has the highest rate of vaccination worldwide, the country still needs some time to stabilize the situation.

15. Singapore shared that in charting the way towards pandemic recovery, the country also takes the opportunity to build back greener and sustainably, citing the Singapore Green Plan 2030 (SGP2030) which charts a roadmap for sustainable development. One of the five pillars under the SGP2030, which was launched in March 2021, is the vision to transform Singapore into a City in Nature with continuing efforts to weave nature into the urban landscape. The greening efforts will continue to conserve biodiversity and incorporate nature-based solutions, where feasible, and strengthen climate, ecological and social resilience towards making Singapore a liveable city.

16. Mongolia expressed its gratitude to the AFoCO Secretariat for the continuous support and cooperation in the forestry sector between our countries. Mongolia reported that they confronted a number of critical difficulties due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Significant issues include the government budget cut down by half in the forestry sector development. The travel restrictions on a local level have led to delays, ineffective implementation, or even non-deliverables of some of the activities stated on the government's annual plan and other forestry projects.

17. Indonesia has suffered from COVID-19 pandemic in all lines of national economy, like other countries in the world. Application of large-scale social restriction policy affects the production activities from the large to household-scale. At the site level, most ecotourism areas are closed and most non-timber forest product commodities are unsold which are the main income source for communities around the forest. The Indonesian Government has issued a series of relaxation policies for restoration and building back post-COVID-19 economic condition in the forestry sector including maintaining absorption of labor.

18. Similar to other countries, Bhutan is facing challenges like impact on the overall economy. Eco-tourism and nature tours, which are one of the major revenue sources of the country, are severely affected. Within the forestry sector, timber harvested from forest management units have no market, hindrance in service delivery particularly monitoring activities, organizing consultation workshops, training and community-based initiatives. AFoCO's major role would be to provide

financial and technical support to address the aforementioned challenges. Also to explore and leverage technologies that can help Member Countries to share and showcase the adaptation activities on the ground for regional efforts towards the sustainable management of forests.

19. Lao PDR shared that the manufacturing, service industry, including ecotourism have been affected due to strict movement and border closures which led to economic consequences. Particularly in the forest sector, COVID-19 caused short-term and long-term impact due to difficulty in land allocation and decrease in-ground monitoring and control of the natural forest. The Lao PDR government developed supportive measures to mitigate impact of COVID-19 through a partnership with private investors and developing a legal framework.

Agenda Item 5. Membership

Agenda Item 5.1 Update on the status of the Headquarters Agreement between the Republic of Korea and AFoCO, and information on the list of Parties and Observers

20. The Secretariat briefed on the update on the entry-into-force of the Headquarters Agreement between the ROK and AFoCO on the list of Parties and Observers, as contained in Document **A-21-5-3**. The Assembly further noted the immunities and privileges conferred to AFoCO as a full-fledged treaty-based multilateral organization and appreciated the support of the Host Country, the ROK, in equipping AFoCO with necessary status as an international organization under the Headquarters Agreement.

21. The ROK highlighted that the Headquarter Agreement signifies strong support and willingness of the ROK to enhance AFoCO's activities and strategies, and looks forward to closer cooperation between the government of ROK and AFoCO.

Agenda Item 5.2 Update on the intention of Kyrgyzstan to be a Party to AFoCO

22. In accordance with Article 5 of the Agreement and Decision 3-I-18R, the Assembly was informed of an intention of the Government of Kyrgyz Republic to be a Party to AFoCO, and further took note of the acknowledgment from the Parties as contained in document **A-21-5-4**.

23. The Assembly, in principle, welcomed the Kyrgyz Republic to be a Party. The Assembly noted that Cambodia and Myanmar need to take domestic procedures to confirm respective positions on the intention of the Government of Kyrgyz Republic to be a Party to AFoCO. Upon no-objection by all Parties, the Secretariat is requested to proceed with necessary notification and follow-up procedures for the Government of Kyrgyz Republic to become a Party to AFoCO and further facilitate the accession process.

24. In response to the ROK's question on AFoCO's country engagement strategy, the Secretariat noted that the expansion of the membership, especially with five Central Asian countries, is in consideration. The Secretariat requested Cambodia and Myanmar to facilitate the issuance of internal confirmation on the intention of the Kyrgyz Republic so that the Secretariat could introduce AFoCO to three other Central Asian Countries — Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, and Tajikistan — at the upcoming 14th Korea-Central Asia Cooperation Forum which will be held on 30 November 2021.

Agenda Item 5.3 Promotion and Enhancement of Partnership

25. The majority of Parties welcomed the Secretariat's plan to expand partnerships as contained in document **A-21-5-5(Rev.)**. In response to the ROK's question on the Secretariat's intention to grant potential partners a right for decision-making, the Secretariat clarified that partners will have no voting power or right for decision making, though they may participate in the sessions of the Assembly, upon invitation from the Secretariat and the Member Countries. The Assembly recommended the Secretariat to clearly distinguish partners from Member Countries and prepare the Terms of Reference to clarify the extent of participation of said partners.

26. See **Decision 41-V-21R**.

B. Implementation of Strategic Plan 2019-2023

Agenda Item 6. Updates on the ongoing programs/projects and evaluation of completed projects

Agenda Item 6.1 Updates on the On-going AFoCO Programs and Projects

27. The Assembly considered the progress updates on the ongoing programs and projects with supplementary statements provided from the ROK and Myanmar as attached in document **A-5-21-6**. The Assembly took note of the current status in Myanmar, and further recommended the Secretariat to sustain its coordination with the government of Myanmar in order to facilitate fund transfer and project implementation.

Agenda Item 6.2 Updates on the Final Evaluation of Completed AFoCO Projects

28. The Assembly took note of the information on updates on the final evaluation of the project entitled 'Facilitating the Participatory Planning of Community-based Forest Management Using Geographic Information System and Remote Sensing Technologies in Forest Resources Management in the Philippines, Indonesia and Thailand [AFoCO/004/2014] as contained in document **A-21-5-7**.

Agenda Item 6.3 Updates on Project Impact and Best Practices

29. The Assembly took note of the outcome of the project impact and best practices as contained in document **A-21-5-8** and plan of the Secretariat to facilitate the finalization of the report and further actions relative to the effective and efficient utilization of the project learnings and best practices as well as its external promotion and dissemination.

Agenda Item 7. Project development and project proposals

Agenda Item 7.1 Approval of new projects

30. See **Decision 42-V-21R**.

31. Upon clarification sought from the Assembly, the Secretariat explained that: (i) the proposed regional project on Non-Timber Forest Products (NTFPs) will be participated by all Member Countries through various modes of involvement to showcase NTFP development within the context of the entire value chain from raw material production up to marketing at national, sub-regional and regional levels, e.g. production and harvesting protocols, product development, capacity building and knowledge sharing; (ii) the Secretariat is exerting best efforts to facilitate project development especially in Member Countries who have less or no in-country AFoCO projects, and has already received a project concept note from Mongolia which is under the final review of the Secretariat; and (iii) the provision of counterpart project budget (in cash/in kind) is dependent on existing domestic policies in Member Countries.

Agenda Item 7.2 Updates on the new and potential projects and programs

32. The Assembly took note of the new and potential projects and programs being developed, including the ASEAN-ROK Garden and the ones targeting collaboration with the World Bank, as well as potential funding opportunities under the International Climate Initiative (IKI), the Readiness and Preparatory Support Programme of the Green Climate Fund (GCF), and Partnering for Green Growth and the Global Goals 2030 (P4G), among others. The Assembly tasked the Secretariat to sustain the aforementioned initiatives and further consult with the Parties on project development concerns in accordance with potential donors' requirements. The information is contained in document **A-21-5-10**.

33. On the comment made by the ROK, it was further clarified that the development of new projects and programs is related to efforts in securing other sources of funds relative to Agenda Items 11 and 12 to support the implementation of AFoCO's mission and undertakings. Likewise, since AFoCO is targeting donor institutions from the international development arena, the ROK recommended the Secretariat to ensure its participation in the forthcoming UNFCCC COP26 and optimize opportunities to meet and strengthen its network at the margin of the said event.

Agenda Item 7.3 Project Development Concerns

34. The Assembly was informed of and considered the project development concerns as contained in **A-21-5-11**. The Assembly welcomed the development of the Environmental and Social Management System (ESMS) Guidelines as contained in **G-4-21R** and the proposed plan for pre-testing. The Assembly also authorized the Secretariat to facilitate the necessary actions on project development according to the indicative project development timeline.

35. The ROK acknowledged the importance of the implementation of ESMS, underscoring the balance between environmental and social values in any project of AFoCO. In terms of procedures, the Secretariat clarified that the ESMS guidelines will serve as the implementing regulations of the Environmental and Social Safeguard (ESS) Policy as approved in the 2nd Session of the Assembly. The guidelines consider international standards, as well as related domestic policies of the Member Countries. In view of the nature of the current and potential projects of AFoCO which do not involve infrastructure development or with relatively less carbon footprints, the Secretariat is also inclined to provide appropriate capacity building and a simple manual/handbook for low-risk projects.

36. In response to the request of Viet Nam to present a regional concept note, the Secretariat

proposed submission following the applicable provisions of the Project Manual.

Agenda Item 8. Updates on the capacity building activities

37. The Assembly was updated on the ongoing capacity-building activities, including the development of Capacity Building Roadmap, the establishment of the AFoCO Experimental Forest, and High-level Workshop on Forest-related Disasters and Impacts of Climate Change in 2022. The Secretariat also shared a summary and highlights from the training programs, scholarship program, and fellowship program conducted and operated in 2021. The meeting noted that the Science and Technology Exchange Partnership (STEP) program and on-site training at the RETC have been deferred under the continued COVID-19 pandemic. The information is contained in document **A-21-5-12(Rev.)**.

38. The Assembly endorsed the establishment of an Organizing Committee for the High-Level Workshop on Forest-related Disaster Management and Impacts of Climate Change in 2022. Also tasked the Secretariat to take the necessary follow-up actions.

Agenda Item 9. Updates on activities and engagement at the UN General Assembly, UN Conventions, and ASEAN

Agenda Item 9.1 Engagement plan for the UNFCCC COP 26 in November 2021

39. The Assembly took note of the information on activities relating to engagement at the UNFCCC COP26 in November 2021 and the plan of engaging the COP27 as contained in **A-21-5-13(Rev.)**.

Agenda Item 9.2 Engagement plan for the 14th Korea-Central Asia Cooperation Forum in November 2021

40. The Assembly took note of the information on activities relating to engagement at the 14th Korea-Central Asia Cooperation Forum to be organized in Tajikistan in November 2021 as contained in **A-21-5-14**. The Assembly welcomed and appreciated the invitation of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the ROK, in coordination with the Korea Forest Service, for the participation of AFoCO in the 14th Korea-Central Asia Cooperation Forum, particularly on the arrangement of the thematic session on forest and climate change. The Assembly tasked the Secretariat to share the comprehensive plan with supplementary information upon confirmation by the organizer and host country.

Agenda Item 9.3 Engagement plan for the UN General Assembly, UN Conventions, and other meetings and fora in 2022

41. The Assembly took note of the plan of engaging in the UN General Assembly, UN Rio Conventions, ASEAN meetings, and the technical partnership groups including Global Partnership on Forest Landscape Restoration (GPFLR) and the Collaborative Partnership on Forest (CPF), as contained in document **A-21-5-15** and duly endorsed AFoCO's participation to those meetings, forums, and relevant activities.

Agenda Item 10. Plan for the AFoCO Engagement at the XV World Forestry Congress

42. The Assembly was informed that the 15th Session of the World Forestry Congress (XV WFC) will be organized in Seoul, ROK with new dates from 2 to 6 May 2022. Recognizing the strategic relevance of the XV WFC for AFoCO, the Assembly endorsed the engagement plan of AFoCO as contained in document [A-21-5-16](#) and further tasked the Secretariat to implement the plan in close coordination with the Parties.

Agenda Item 11. Updates on communications and partnership activities

43. The Assembly took note of the activities relating to external relations including the activities of the AFoCO's Special Representative to International Organizations and communications activities. The Assembly was further informed of the potential collaborative activities being developed with the partners, including RECOFTC and Baekdudaegan National Arboretum. The information is contained in [A-21-5-17](#). The Assembly welcomed further development of collaborative activities and partnership programs with partners and tasked the Secretariat to take follow-up actions.

44. The ROK suggested the Secretariat provide a communication platform, country profile, policy brief, and context analysis discussed during the 4th Session of the Assembly, and share other outcomes of the Secretariat's efforts with Member Countries. In regards to this, the Secretariat is in the process of updating the country profile which is done 70% up to now, and plans to circulate the document once finalized.

Agenda Item 12. Update on the activities related to resource mobilization

45. The Assembly took note of the updates relative to the resource mobilization activities in 2020-2021 as contained in [A-21-5-18](#). The Secretariat was asked to further the efforts to develop other sources of funds to fully finance the approved budget and make the operations sustainable. It was further requested to take full advantage of the eligibility status for fund-raising of designated donations in the ROK and build a track-record on mobilizing the same in the coming years. The ROK requested the Secretariat to mobilize additional resources such as the private sector, fully utilize the ODA-eligibility status, and facilitate producing and disseminating tangible project outcomes.

Agenda Item 13. Development and strengthening partnership with the private sector

46. The Assembly considered a proposal of the Secretariat to develop a private sector partnership to promote cooperation between AFoCO and the private sector entities as contained in [A-21-5-19](#). The Assembly noted that the proposal should be considered in the context of the discussion made in Agenda Item 5.3 on Promotion and Enhancement of Partnership. It was further noted that clear roles, terms of reference, and guidelines should be clarified, particularly in determining the capacities of the engaged private sector partners — implementing partners for the projects or the financial contributors. The ROK recommended that the capacity of partners should be limited to financial contributors only, to differentiate them from the Parties. The Assembly tasked the Secretariat to further elaborate the proposal, including roles, terms of reference, and procedures, as applicable, to be considered in the next session.

Agenda Item 14. Program Approach

47. The Secretariat introduced the enhanced approach for project development — Program Approach including its key features and benefits for the consideration of the Assembly, as contained in **A-21-5-20**. The Assembly acknowledged the development of program approach in project development and tasked the Secretariat to develop a corresponding action plan in consultation with Member Countries and relevant partners, in consideration of the following: (i) facilitate program approach in undertaking resource mobilization for other sources; (ii) ensure that the core values of AFoCO in putting premium on country-driven projects will be considered in project development. Hence, further consultations with Member Countries is imperative; (iii) consider the need to address forestry/wildlife crimes and the importance of biodiversity conservation in general in the development of the themes/programs; and (iv) consider the growing opportunities in tapping climate financing for AFoCO projects.

Agenda Item 15. Strengthening Project Performance and Country Presence of AFoCO in the Parties

48. The Secretariat introduced a plan on the engagement of Project Coordinators and operation of AFoCO Country/Regional Offices, as contained in document **A-21-5-21**.

49. The ROK raised questions about the limitation of the current structure, which utilizes each member country's government officials for project implementation, under the core value of 'country-driven,' and the difference between Project Manager and Project Coordinator. Also, the ROK showed concerns over whether private project coordinators will have more access to the project than the existing governmental officials.

50. The Secretariat provided the following clarifications: (i) country and regional presence of AFoCO will be implemented on a phased and need-based approach. The funding requirement for the operationalization of country and regional/sub-regional offices and staff will take into account the limitations of existing and potential operational fund sources of the Secretariat, including in-kind contributions of the Member Countries in hosting offices/workplace and staff complement; (ii) project coordinators are envisioned to assist concerned Implementing Agencies (IAs) or Project Management Teams and to be deployed on a full-time basis and corresponding fund requirements will be charged under Program Support Fee (PSF). It was emphasized that Project Managers designated for the ongoing projects are working on a part-time basis, hence assistance is needed to facilitate project management deliverables. Moreover, project coordinators (as contractual staff) will serve as the extension of the Secretariat in conducting oversight functions such as project monitoring especially as a stop-gap measure to cope up with the evolving COVID-19 situation; and (iii) it was emphasized that the engagement of project coordinators will serve as learning inputs in the development of detailed plan on the matter in CY 2024.

51. In view of the foregoing, the Assembly advised the Secretariat to provide further updates on the matter in the forthcoming Session of the Assembly.

Agenda Item 16. Report of the Donor's Meeting in 2021 and plan for the next Donor's Meeting

52. The Secretariat briefed on the third Donors' Meeting organized in February 2021 and a plan

for the next Donor's Meeting, as contained in document [A-21-5-22\(Rev.\)](#). The Assembly took note of the report and in response to the request of the ROK, the Secretariat agreed to put in necessary efforts to expedite the project fund execution and ensure the production of greater impacts from the supported projects.

Agenda Item 17. Update on the Special Account (project fund) of AFoCO and the Program Support Fee

53. The Assembly took note of the current status of the Special Account and utilization of the Program Support Fee, as provided in document [A-21-5-23](#).

Agenda Item 18. Second AFoCO Ministerial Meeting in 2022

54. Following the AFoCO Ministerial Meeting in 2019, the Secretariat proposed organizing the 2022 Annual Thematic Dialogue as the Second AFoCO Ministerial Meeting, possibly in conjunction with the Regular Session of the Assembly. The proposal is contained in document [A-21-5-24](#). The Assembly positively considered organizing the Ministerial Meeting in 2022, while the majority of the Member Countries supported having the AFoCO Ministerial Meeting back-to-back with the XV WFC and the special session of the Assembly in May. The Assembly also noted the different situation in respective Member Countries, including national elections and limitations in long overseas mission for ministers.

55. The Assembly requested the Secretariat to consult with individual Parties and the organizer of the XV WFC and propose the most feasible date and arrangement for the Ministerial Meeting.

Agenda Item 19. Review of the Strategic Framework

56. The Secretariat provided an update on the review of the Strategic Framework, put forward by the Fourth Session of the Assembly on the Revised Strategic Framework of AFoCO. The Assembly was also informed on the plan and timeline for the preparation and development of the next term's organizational strategy, tentatively titled as "Strategic Plan 2024-2030". The Assembly welcomed the proposal and tasked the Secretariat to further elaborate and communicate the process of developing the strategic plan in coordination with the Party members. The brief is contained in document [A-21-5-25](#).

57. The Assembly endorsed the plan of developing the Strategic Plan 2024-2030 and provided the Secretariat with the following comments to be considered for designing the elaborated processes for the Strategic Plan, to wit:

- Development of the Strategic Plan 2024-2030 should be based upon the review of the current Strategic Plan 2019-2023, if the strategic outcomes and goals were met and what are the achievements and learned lessons.
- Needs and interests of the key stakeholders should be assessed.
- Financial mobilization should be considered as an integral part of the strategic plan.
- The new strategic plan can be more aligned to urgent and significant policy imperatives of each Member Country and ongoing international processes relevant to the forest sectors.
- The new strategy should have quantifiable targets to be achieved and eventually used to evaluate the performance.

- Forest biodiversity conservation is one of the areas to be enhanced in the new strategic plan and forest and wildlife crimes should be considered significantly along with this thematic focus.

C. Effective operation of the Secretariat

Agenda Item 20. Work Plan of the Executive Director Selection Committee in 2022

58. The Assembly was informed on the follow-through activities of the Executive Director Selection Committee in reference to Decision 4-I-18R and Paragraph 1 of Article 9 of the Agreement. The Assembly endorsed resuming the works of the Executive Director Selection Committee in 2022 and tasked the Secretariat to undertake necessary processes as contained in document **A-21-5-26**.

Agenda Item 21. Annual Report and Financial Report 2020

59. The Assembly took note of the publication of the annual and financial report of 2020 as contained in document **A-21-5-27**. The Assembly further took note of the updates on activities which are available at the AFoCO website. Upon request of the ROK, the Assembly requested the Secretariat to avail the draft of each year's Annual Financial Report to the Parties by the first quarter of the following year, because the Korean Government's review on each Korean agency's contributions to international organizations will be held at the beginning of each year.

D. Work plan and budget 2022

Agenda Item 22. Work plan and budget 2022 (for Decision)

60. See **Decision 43-V-21R**.

61. The Assembly provided the following comments and guidance to the Secretariat relevant to the operations of AFoCO in 2022:

- To update relevant information on AFoCO websites, including the Permanent Observer status to the United Nations General Assembly and the organizational structure of the Secretariat
- To dispatch officers to the RETC to facilitate operational management and implementation of the projects in Myanmar
- To put utmost efforts to mobilize targeted amount of funds from 'Other Sources,' to cover unfunded operational expenditures.
- To consider developing and retaining good in-house capacities at the Secretariat when mobilizing necessary expertise and talents to prevent high dependency on consultancies.
- To develop a mitigation plan for the prolonged restrictions posed upon the on-site training at the RETC

E. Procedural Matters of the Assembly

Agenda Item 23. Election of Succeeding Officers

62. Upon consideration of the information provided in document **A-21-5-29**, the Assembly, in accordance with Rule 7 of the Rules of Procedure of the Assembly, elected the Republic of the Union of Myanmar and the Kingdom of Cambodia as the President and Vice President.

Agenda Item 24. Date and venue of the Sessions of the Assembly (Special Session and Regular Session)

63. In accordance with Decision 16-I-18R, the Assembly endorsed organizing two sessions of the Assembly in 2022. In planning the date, venue and arrangement of the Special Session, the Assembly recommended the Secretariat to closely work with the Member Countries and the WFC Secretariat and consider the consultation on the AFoCO Ministerial Meeting arrangements, since the majority of the Member Countries support having the AFoCO Ministerial Meeting back-to-back with the XV WFC and the Special Session of the Assembly in May. The Assembly agreed the Regular Session to be scheduled on 25-27 October 2022. The Assembly further tasked the Secretariat to communicate the plan accordingly.

G. Summary Record of the Session

64. The Assembly considered and adopted the Summary Record by circulation.

Closing of the Session

65. The President in his closing remarks, thanked all the delegates from the Parties and Observers for lively and constructive discussion. The Session was held in the spirit of cooperation.

Adopted on 9 December 2021 by circulation.

Fifth Session of the Assembly
25-27 October 2021, Seoul, Korea (hybrid)

List of Decisions Adopted at the Fifth Session of the Assembly

Decision 41-V-21R Promotion and Enhancement of Partnership

Decision 42-V-21R Approval of New Projects

Decision 43-V-21R Work Plan and Budget for 2022

Fifth Session of the Assembly
25-27 October 2021, Seoul, Korea (hybrid)

List of Decisions Adopted at the Fourth Session of the Assembly and Respective Updates

Taking note of the comment from the Republic of Korea to brief on this year's actions and outcomes regarding the Decisions adopted at the 4th Session of the Assembly, the Secretariat will make necessary preparations in the future sessions so that the updates on the Decisions of the previous session of the Assembly is addressed.

Below is the list of Decisions and relevant updates. There are **seven Decisions** adopted at the Fourth Session of the Assembly.

Decision-34-IV-20R Policy Relevance of AFoCO's Operation

The Assembly

- Approved the plan for enhancing policy relevance of the AFoCO's operation as contained in D-34-1 and mandated the Secretariat to establish and manage the 'Communication Platform for Policy Updates and Development';
- Tasked the Secretariat to start the process in constructing 'AFoCO Forest Policy Archive' and developing 'Country Profile and Context' documents in close consultation with the Parties; and
- Tasked the Secretariat to prepare the Annual Thematic Dialogue starting from 2021.

In line with this decision, the Secretariat worked with the Fellowship Officials of AFoCO and graduate Landmark Program Scholarship Students, for the preparation and stocktaking of the "Communication Platform for Policy Updates and Development."

Currently, the summarized form of the country profile and the collected national policies, laws, and regulations relevant to the sustainable management of forest in AFoCO Parties are uploaded in the renewed AFoCO website, under 'Country Information Hub.'

Development of the Country Profile and Context documents is a work in progress which is currently 70% complete for ten countries,

including Bhutan, Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Kazakhstan, Mongolia, Myanmar, Republic of Korea, Thailand, and Viet Nam. These draft documents will be asked for further inputs and vetting by the National Focal Points. Drafts for the other three countries are currently being prepared, and are expected to achieve 70% completion by early 2022.

The 2021 Annual Thematic Dialogue was organized in conjunction with the Fifth Session of the Assembly, with participation and contribution by 82 forest experts, government officials, and diplomats from 13 Parties and 2 Observers, as well as from other partner organizations. The outcome report of the event is being prepared, targeting official release by early 2022. The session information together with the background discussion paper and the presentation materials are currently archived in the AFoCO Website under 'Annual Thematic Dialogue.'

Decision-35-IV-20R Approval of New Projects

The Assembly approved 2 projects:

Integrated village-driven forest rehabilitation and livelihood improvement in Viengthong district, Bolikhamxay province, Lao PDR (AFoCO/025/2021)

- Following necessary inception arrangements have been undertaken, the project implementation agreement was signed on 17 September 2021 and subsequent inception meeting and the first meeting of the Project Steering Committee was held on 12 October 2021.

Re-greening the bare lands in Timor-Leste through promotion of locally customized restoration models (AFoCO/026/2021)

- Domestic procedures are undertaken for the inception arrangements. Series of meetings between the Secretariat and the Timor-Leste have been arranged for conclusion of the project inception and recommendation of the Project Steering Committee.

Decision-36-IV-20R Amendment of Staff Regulations

The Staff Regulations has been effective and applied for the day to day operations since 26 November 2020.

Decision-37-IV-20R Amendment of Financial Regulations

The Financial Regulations has been effective and applied for the day to day operations since 26 November 2020.

Decision-38-IV-20R Appointment of the Executive Director

The Secretariat facilitated follow-up procedures and travel arrangements for the assuming of the incumbent Executive Director.

Decision-39-IV-20R Budget Reallocation for Operational Expenditures in FY2020

The unobligated administrative budget was reallocated for practical management of funds, effective for financial year of 2020.

Decision-40-IV-20R Work Plan and Budget for 2021

The Assembly approves the Work Plan and Budget for 2021.

The annual work plan and budget is the main planning tool for the operation of the organizations and allocation of the administrative budget.

The Secretariat has facilitated the implementation of the planned activities and the approved budget for 2021, in close coordination with the Representations and National Focal Points of the Parties and Observers.

Prolonged impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic significantly restricted organizing physical meetings or events in 2021 and traveling across countries. In this respect, many of the planned activities were conducted virtually or in hybrid mode while the major changes to the AFoCO's engagement plan for the Fifteenth World Forestry Congress was inevitable following its postponement decision to 2022.

The overall operational performance of AFoCO will be reported through Annual Report and the Financial Report 2021.
