

Sixth Session of the Assembly
29-30 March 2022, Virtual

Summary Record of the Sixth Session of the Assembly

1. The Sixth Session of the Assembly of the Asian Forest Cooperation Organization (AFoCO), as a special session, was held virtually from 29-30 March 2022. The Assembly was attended by Bhutan, Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Kazakhstan, Lao PDR, Mongolia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Republic of Korea (ROK), Thailand, Timor-Leste, Viet Nam as Parties, and the Kyrgyz Republic, and Singapore as Observers, and the Secretariat. Parties and Observers are collectively referred to as the Member Countries.

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

2. In accordance with Rule 10.1 of the Rules of Procedure of the Assembly, the Session is in quorum with thirteen Parties and two Observers represented in the Sixth Session of the Assembly.

3. In accordance with Rule 7.2 of the Rules of Procedure of the Assembly, Dr. Thaung Naing Oo of Myanmar presided over the session of the Assembly as the President of the Assembly. The President officially opened the Sixth Session of the Assembly. The President further extended his welcome and appreciation to the Member Countries for participating in the Special Session of the Assembly. The President reiterated the importance of AFoCO's vital role for the Member Countries in taking concrete actions to promote sustainable forest management, address climate change and upscale capacity building. The President further stressed the importance of capacity building which is essential to achieve sustainable forest management of the Member Countries as well as vision and mission of AFoCO.

4. Upon invitation of the President, Mr. Hang Suntra of Cambodia as the current Vice President to the Assembly expressed his sincere acknowledgment to the Secretariat in arranging the Assembly. He wished fruitful discussion to meet the aspiration and goal of the Member Countries.

5. The Assembly adopted one decision during the Sixth Session. The list of Decision adopted, and the Guideline and Rules of Procedure endorsed is contained in document [A-22-6-INF-1](#).

Item 2. Adoption of the Agenda

6. The Assembly deliberated the provisional agenda for the Session. No other matters were proposed and the Assembly unanimously adopted the proposed agenda as contained in document A-22-6-1.

Item 3. Update on the membership and its expansion

7. The Secretariat informed and presented the updated list of Parties and Observers, as contained in Document A-22-6-2. The Assembly warmly welcomed the Kyrgyz Republic which was granted Observer status.

8. The representative of the Kyrgyz Republic extended appreciation and pleasure to participate in the Assembly. The Kyrgyz Republic further looked forward to be a full-fledged Party to AFoCO after finishing all the due procedure and formalities.

Item 4. Final Update for the AFoCO engagement at the XV World Forestry Congress (XV WFC) and Related Events

9. The Secretariat updated the Assembly on the program of work of the Secretariat at the XV World Forestry Congress as contained in Document A-22-6-3.

10. The Assembly sought clarification on the following concerns:

- i) clarification on sponsorship arrangements for the Ministers and delegates
- ii) facilitation of visa issuance through respective Embassies
- iii) exhibition of materials of the Member Countries at the AFoCO booth during XV WFC
- iv) participating countries of the AFoCO Member Countries during XV WFC
- v) possibility of virtual or hybrid platform for pre-congress meetings and events at XV WFC

11. The ROK, as the host of the XV WFC, expressed appreciation to all the Member Countries of AFoCO and the Secretariat for the efforts to extensively engage in the XV WFC. The Assembly noted that the XV WFC is organized in the Asia-Pacific region for the first time in 45 years. The ROK clarified that it is in the process of providing assistance in visa issuance and have communicated to respective Embassies to facilitate the same. The ROK further informed that the current regulation requires PCR test upon arrival.

12. Regarding the arrangements for the AFoCO Ministerial Meeting, the Secretariat clarified that it will support the travel of the Minister and one accompanying official. The Secretariat will provide support for the sponsored delegates starting from the event on 29 April. The Secretariat will communicate with respective Embassies to facilitate the issuance of appropriate visa, including A2 visa if required, in close consultation with the ROK. With regard to the exhibition booth, the Secretariat is yet to finalize the design and welcomes the Member Countries to exhibit respective materials (brochures, pamphlets and materials) at AFoCO Booth.

13. All AFoCO events at the XV WFC are planned as physical events. The Secretariat will further consult with the XV WFC Secretariat on the available facilities and equipment that could accommodate hybrid and virtual events. The Secretariat anticipates that the Annual Technical Workshop of AFoCO will be in hybrid format.

14. Cambodia expressed concern on the alternate representation to the Annual Technical Workshop and XV WFC other than the specific officials indicated in the invitation. Indonesia informed that the XV WFC coincides with the holidays in Muslim calendar however assured that Indonesia will be represented at the XV WFC.

Item 5. Preparation of the AFoCO Ministerial Meeting

15. The Fifth Session of the Assembly supported to organize the Ministerial Meeting in 2022 and further tasked the Secretariat to coordinate with the Member Countries, and the organizers of the XV WFC. Upon consultation, the Secretariat communicated the general schedule of meetings in January 2022 and notified to organize the Ministerial Meeting in conjunction with the XV WFC.

16. The Assembly reviewed the program of the Second AFoCO Ministerial Meeting as contained in Document A-22-6-4. The Assembly requested the Secretariat to circulate the draft ministerial statement for review and endorsement by respective governments. The Member Countries will be able to confirm Minister's participation upon consultation with respective office of Ministers.

17. The Assembly further reminded that not all Member Countries of AFoCO signed the Glasgow Leaders' Declaration on Forests and Land Use. The Secretariat took note and will take due consideration in the development of relevant documents for the Ministerial meeting.

18. The Secretariat clarified that the AFoCO Ministerial Meeting is planned as a physical meeting. The Secretariat will coordinate with the XV WFC Secretariat on the possibility of organizing high level events in virtual or hybrid mode.

Item 6. Approval of new projects

19. See Decision 44-VI-22S.

20. Upon clarification sought on the involvement of the ASEAN Secretariat, evaluation process, and funding of the ASEAN-Korea Garden, the Secretariat clarified that the ASEAN-Korea Garden was the output of the ASEAN-ROK Commemorative Summit in 2019. The Secretariat has correspondingly facilitated the operationalization of an Evaluation Committee to handle project site selection. The final selection of the project sites are pursued based on the outcomes of the field verification. The background and project information is contained in Document A-22-6-5.

21. The ROK stated that if the ASEAN-Korea Garden is expanded to other countries, the project approved at this Sixth Session of the Assembly will become a good guideline for them to refer to. Also, the ROK encouraged the Secretariat to manage the AFoCO project budget funded by the KFS in KRW, not in USD, because the foreign exchange rate may fluctuate due to international situation.

Item 7. Promotion and Enhancement of Partnership through Partner Countries and Organizations

22. In accordance with Decision 41-V-21R on Promotion and Enhancement of Partnership, the Assembly tasked the Secretariat to take necessary actions to develop a new category of participation and engagement of countries and entities other than Parties and Observers to AFoCO, including preparation of relevant Rules of Procedure. The Secretariat presented the draft rules of procedure for engagement of partners as contained in Document A-22-6-6.

23. The Assembly appreciated the draft rules of procedure which clearly defines the role of the Partners. The Assembly stressed that it is important to have clear distinction between the Partners and Member Countries for smooth cooperation and clear communication. The Assembly further noted that such expanded engagements will enhance the network and partnership of the organization.

24. Upon clarification sought from the Assembly, the Secretariat clarified that countries in the Asian region can participate as a Party or an Observer to AFoCO. Other countries beyond Asia can participate as Partner Countries only. The Secretariat further clarified that the Partner Countries and Partner Organizations may take part in the Assembly by invitation only upon approval of the President and may join the decision making of the programs that they are engaged in. The Partners may use the information from AFoCO upon approval of the Assembly and written consent of the President.

25. The Assembly endorsed the Rules of Procedure for Partner Countries and Partner Organizations as contained in Decision 41-V-21R-ADD-1.

Item 8. Update on the Operationalization of the Capacity Development Division

26. The Secretariat presented on the up-to-date progress of the development of Capacity Building Roadmap 2030 for consideration and inputs of the Assembly and shared the results of the high-level survey conducted. The Secretariat further shared the expanded fellowship program as Secretariat's in-house capacity building program targeted to launch in 2023. The information is contained in Document A-22-6-7.

27. AFoCO's scholarship program under the Landmark Program which started in the ASEAN-ROK Cooperation platform will be completed in 2023. The Assembly noted that new scholarship programs to be developed should accommodate all Parties.

28. In order to resume in-person trainings, the Secretariat is exploring venues to organize physical trainings other than Regional Education and Training Center (RETC) in Myanmar, such as Cambodia and the Philippines, which has relaxed the travel restrictions for inbound travelers. Cambodia further updated its COVID-19 protocol which does not require a PCR test before departure of inbound travelers nor upon arrival and no quarantine is required for travelers who is certified with two shots of vaccination.

29. Upon request of the ROK to present on the updated in-house capacity building plan of the Secretariat, the Secretariat informed the Assembly that the guidelines on staff learning and career development of the Secretariat staffs will take effect within 2022.

30. The Secretariat further clarified that the expanded fellowship program will have two levels which are for junior and mid-manager level government officials. The internship will accommodate students who will come with their own financial arrangements. The ROK recommended to share the lessons learned for the Fellowship Program. The Secretariat observed that one-year program will provide full cycle of Secretariat operations which will contribute to the Fellowship Officials.

31. The Assembly welcomed the introduction of the expanded fellowship program and endorsed the Guidelines on Expanded Fellowship Program as contained in Document G-5-22S.

Item 9. Project Implementation Status and Related Issues

32. The Secretariat shared updates on the on-going programs and projects including the status of fund execution. The President appreciated the progress and development despite the effects of the pandemic. The Assembly took note of the information as contained in Document A-22-6-8.

Item 10. Annual and Financial Report 2021

33. The Secretariat shared the text of the Annual and Financial Report 2021 as contained in A-22-6-9. The Assembly appreciated the preparation of the Annual and Financial Report 2021 and endorsed to proceed with its design and publication.

34. Recalling the enforcement of the Act on Contribution to International Organizations of the ROK, the ROK informed the Assembly that annual review on the international contribution is conducted by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The annual review includes effectiveness of fund management, execution and utilization of the funds, among other elements. The ROK requested for continued cooperation and support from the Parties and the Secretariat in preparation and sharing of relevant reports. The Secretariat took note of the concerns and will facilitate fund execution in consideration of the guidelines of the ROK government in funding for international organizations.

Item 11. Date and venue of the Seventh Session of the Assembly (2022 Regular Session)

35. The Secretariat recalled that the Assembly, at the Fifth Session, agreed the Regular Session to be scheduled on 25-27 October 2022 and further tasked the Secretariat to communicate the plan accordingly.

36. Kazakhstan expressed appreciation to the Secretariat and the Member Countries, and proposed to host the Seventh session of the Assembly in the Republic of Kazakhstan.

37. Kazakhstan further extended its intervention on agenda discussed during this Session. Kazakhstan congratulated and wished success to Cambodia on its approved project and took note on importance of ecotourism and biodiversity conservation as one of the most impacted sector by the COVID-19. Kazakhstan further requested Secretariat's attention in developing projects with the possibility of participation of all Member Countries. Kazakhstan stressed that it informed the Secretariat that, in terms of development of regional projects, the approaches in forestry and prerogatives differ from the Southeast Asia. In this regard, as a Party to AFoCO, Kazakhstan requests the Secretariat to take into account the specifics of all participating countries. Kazakhstan further requested the Secretariat to share the status related to the project development with more inclusive approach specific to the Central Asian region.

38. Kazakhstan recognizes that AFoCO has started as an important international platform for Asian countries to exchange experience and develop the forestry sector. Kazakhstan expressed its readiness to support through such initiatives like Landscape Partnership Asia and provide all necessary technical support in the afforestation of the dried bottom of Aral Sea. Kazakhstan further expressed its readiness to support expanding and strengthening the potential of AFoCO in Central Asia. For that, Kazakhstan requests the Secretariat to update on how it is working on the expansion to other Central Asian countries and update on the status of the implementation of the Memorandum of Cooperation (MOC) which was signed between AFoCO and Kazakhstan during the visit of the President of Kazakhstan to Korea.

39. The Secretariat took note of the request in considering the regional differences in the development of regional projects. The Secretariat informed the Assembly on its mission to the Central Asian region in November 2021 where meetings were held with the respective forest agencies of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyz Republic, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan. The Secretariat recalled that the Secretariat had a follow-up meeting with the Vice Minister of the Ministry of Ecology, Geology and Natural Resources of the Republic of Kazakhstan, after the signing of the MOC, and a working group under the MOC was assigned. The Secretariat will continue its communication through the working group.

40. The Assembly tasked the Secretariat to consult with Kazakhstan and the Parties to finalize the venue of the Seventh Session of the Assembly.

Item 13. Summary Record of the Session

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

Closing of the Session

42. The President in his closing remarks, thanked all the delegates from the Member Countries. The Session was held in the spirit of cooperation.

Adopted on 23 May 2022 by circulation.

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A. List of Decisions Adopted at the Sixth Session of the Assembly

Decision 44-VI-22S Approval of New Projects

B. List of Rules of Procedure and Guidelines Endorsed at the Sixth Session of the Assembly

Decision 41-V-21R-ADD-1 Rules of Procedure for Partner Countries and Partner Organizations

G-5-22S Guidelines on Expanded Fellowship Program