

Side Event

International Drylands Greening Network

Venue: E-327 **Time & Date:** 9:00 – 10:30, 05 May 2022, COEX, Seoul, Republic of Korea

Minutes of the Side Event:

The program was hosted by the Asian Forest Institute (AFI), the National Institute of Forest Sciences (NIFoS), and the Asian Forest Cooperation Organization (AFoCO). Dr. Ho Sang Kang (Executive Director of AFI) served as the moderator of the side event and introduced the distinguished guests.

The welcome remark was delivered by Dr. Hyun Park (President of NIFoS, Republic of Korea). He welcomed all the event participants and extended his sincere appreciation to all the presenters. He mentioned that about 23 M ha every year are being lost due to desertification and that 43 billion USD every year is being damaged to the people's livelihood. This situation makes the land inhospitable due to climate change escalation. It is now a challenge, therefore needing cooperation. Efforts on collaboration are being conducted through strategic research. Also, UNCCD COP10, which was held in ROK, gave birth to the Changwon Initiative to reduce the dryland damage. The ROK is continuously supporting this project in solidarity and more cooperation.

H.E. Ricardo L. Calderon (Executive Director of AFoCO) gave his congratulatory remark to organizers, including Dr. Ho Sang Kang, for successfully organizing the event during the World Forestry Congress. He mentioned the importance of land degradation neutrality through the restoration of drylands. Desertification in Central Asia, especially Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, caused 3.6 billion ha of damage. Toxic salts from the bottom of the Aral Sea became a problem, so dryland should be approached at the landscape level. Experts from other regions are encouraged to share genuine cooperation to explore possible platforms that could provide a necessary and practical solution and tangible actions on the ground in Central Asia.

Mr. Yrsaliev Bektybek (Deputy Director of Forest Service in Kyrgyzstan) thanked the participants for gathering at the event. He emphasized the great importance of restoring drylands to preserve the CO₂ Paris agreement. He mentioned that the forest ecosystem affects the economy, and hence it is important to increase the country's forest area. The Forest Service of Kyrgyzstan is willing to support this endeavor. The country adopted new research to address afforestation efforts. This year is designed as the year of restrengthening the mountain forest to increase the country's forest area. The usable forest lands will allow forest workers to increase the country's forest area. Based on the international forest data, 50% of their land has been affected by degradation. The Forest Service of Kyrgyzstan will continue to combat and increase its forest areas. He thanked the participants for the meaningful event.

Mr. Nurali Khisainov, Director of Research Institute of Forestry, gave a congratulatory remark on behalf of Mr. Yusufzoda Abdujabbor Ghairatshoh (Director of Agency of Forestry in Tajikistan). He was happy to be invited to the side event as the topic is crucial in Central Asian countries. Due to the drought problem, the discussion on global warming as affected by the degradation has become more critical. Therefore, combined efforts are needed to combat these issues. He hoped that this meeting would contribute to resolving the issue of degradation as today's participants will take actions to address these.

Mr. Oyunsanaa Byambasuren (Director General of the Department of Forest Policy Implementation, Ministry of Environment and Tourism in Mongolia) was pleased to be at the event. They mainly have very big dryland having severe problems. Land is the foundation for living, and climate change has doubled compared to the global average. About 57% of the areas are degraded in Mongolia, and about 2 billion USD are damaged every year, affecting livelihoods and contributing to local poverty. The national arrangement reported that around 79% of the country had been degraded, especially in dry areas. Therefore, control of drylands is fundamental as the country's economy relies on the livestock industry. Sustainable landscape management are needed. Several efforts are ongoing. To green the land, planning is essential to integrate sustainable land management, particularly agroforestry, and alternatives and incentives for local communities are needed to avoid dependence on forests. Mongolia is initiating the planting of a billion trees for 2030 to address challenging issues. He emphasized the importance of greening their landscape, motivating the people who suffered in this condition. The people of their country actively focus on the three main issues restoring degraded landscapes damaged by pests and insects, adopting agroforestry concepts to provide jobs and income to local rural livelihoods, and infrastructure development.

Dr. Abdushukur Hamzaev (Director General of the Research Institute of Forestry and former Deputy Chairman of the State Committee on Forestry in Uzbekistan) thanked the organizers for the invitation to the congress and the side event. Congress focuses on the expansion of the forest and combat climate change, creating a unique opportunity to work together on food security and maximizing the full potential of the forests. In Uzbekistan, cooperation between the country and international organizations in forestry is ongoing. With the initiative of the President of Republic of Uzbekistan, areas to plant forests were selected in 2018 to address the issue of the Aral Sea, one of the most acute areas in the country. The work was carried out by the head of the state to combat desertification and reduce its impacts. As part of our activities under the project green space, 200 million trees are being planted. This kind of activity aimed to improve environmental and forest health sectors. We have been working with our Korean colleagues during the congress, and we signed a Memorandum of Understanding between the AFI and Research Institute of Forestry, Uzbekistan. He thanked the organizers again, AFoCO, AFI, and other organizations, for this initiative.

For the **International Cooperative Project on Drylands Greening presentation**, Dr. Evgeniy Botman (Project Leader of Uzbekistan) gave the first presentation. He gave keywords on arid land, international cooperation transfer of technology. The general background was presented, including the population and its distribution in Uzbekistan. He mentioned that mountains are the only source of water in

Uzbekistan. They had problems with snow and rain feeding rivers on degraded land, melting snow, water erosion, and mudflows in downstream areas. Forest as a factor in stabilizing soil fertility and regulating the hydrological regime is essential. They have only a small watershed, which was artificially established in the mountain. After the establishment, the river flow does not stop all year-round. Unfortunately, they have only one catchment area of the Aktaashay River. He shared the experience of Korea in addressing a similar issue (as presented by Dr. Hyung Tae Choi) and that this can be replicated in Uzbekistan.

The next presenter was Prof. Byung Bae Park (Board Member of the Northeast Asian Forest Forum or NEAFF). He gave an overview of the Mongolia Forest Restoration Project. He mentioned that Mongolia is seven times bigger than the Korean Peninsula, with a dry and cold climate. He also said the Mongolian forest distribution. The causes of Mongolian desertification included overgrazing and increased fire damage. He introduced the Planting Trees Business (2003-2014), a Mongolia Forest Restoration Project in Selenge Province's Tujin Nars pine forest. This project has three phases. Phase 1 is the restoration of wildfire damage wherein they successfully planted 10 million scotch pine trees. Phase 2 is the forest tending business (2015~), covering 100 ha every year. While, Phase 3 covers the research forest creation Project (2021~) – called the Yuhan-Kimberly forest. Yuhan-Kimberly is an environmentally friendly company in Korea that leaps forward forests as an international research forest. They established a nursery through containerized seedlings, monitoring, trail, and building measurement tools in some areas. They are also supporting the thesis for the project, conducting planning and promotion, and other activities for the project.

This was followed by the presentation of Dr. Yeboa Benis (Côte d'Ivoire) about re-greening Africa. He mentioned that Africa is sensitive to climate change, and about 3 million ha of forests per year are lost in the region. They have the current initiative called the Great Green Wall, which aims to restore 100 million ha by 2030 and create 10 million jobs. One initiative in Africa is the AFR100, AUDA-NEPAD, which was launched in 2015. Reforestations were conducted in some countries, particularly in Ethiopia and Ghana. One of the challenges includes industrial and artisanal mining in the African region. The government's strategy was to plant 220,000 ha in intensive reforestation. Another significant issue is the planting of cacao in the country, as the participation of farmers, particularly women and youth, is needed. Another initiative is the Forest Investment Program (FIP) of the World Bank under the REDD+ program. Africa committed at COP21 to increase the forest cover rate to 20% of the national territory by 2030.

The last presenter was Dr. Deiva Oswin Stanley (FAO Consultant) about re-greening DPR Korea. She mentioned the problem of deforestation and forest degradation in DPRK integrated with poverty, biodiversity loss, and added political issue. She presented the re-greening plans in DPRK, including restoration of deforested and barren lands to improve soil fertility and water retention. The DPRK makes its effort to ensure conservation, restoration and sustainable use of territorial and inland freshwater ecosystems, in particular forests, wetlands, mountains, and drylands, in line with obligations under the international agreements, including the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate

Change, the United Nations Convention on Biodiversity and the United Nations Convention on Combat Desertification. The DPRK prioritizes forest recovery targets (2015-2024) to afforest about 1.4 million ha of the mountain by 2024. By 2025, DPRK hopes to investigate, monitor, and evaluate biodiversity regularly. With support from the FAO and Swiss Development Agency, DPRK declared in 2013 that agroforestry should be vigorously promoted to restore the forests and degraded lands. The “National Agroforestry Strategy and Action Plan (2015–2024)” or NASAP was also developed in 2015 to implement this policy. As a mass movement, “The forest recovery campaign” was declared in 2015. March 2nd is marked as “Tree Planting Day,” when people across the country plant trees. Other greening efforts include producing major crops, classifying land cover and deforested areas using phenological characteristics, and others. Threats to re-greening include effective forest management and protection requiring significant human, financial, and material resources in short supply. UN sanctions are making it difficult to pursue a renewable energy strategy. Re-greening of a country plays a crucial role in meeting multiple objectives on climate change, biodiversity, action against desertification, and sustainable development. DPR Korea should achieve amidst all odds.

As a **way forward in research and capacity building for drylands greening**, Dr. Ki Hyung Park (Researcher of NIFoS) presented Korea’s (NIFoS) experience with the collaboration with China (CAF) through the Dryland Research Network and Cooperation. He gave an overview of the projects (2001-2005), including the background and purpose. Plans were also presented to complete the field research of 10 sites by 2023. For the conclusion and recommendation, the following were enumerated: joint efforts of forestry authorities and research institutes, precise target/goal setting, don’t just focus on the success of forest restoration and fostering the next generation.

In closing, Dr. Batkhui Nyam-Osor, (Environment and Green Development Advisor to the President of Mongolia) gave his insight on capacity development for drylands greening through cooperation. He mentioned that bilateral or multilateral agreements at all levels are essential in the regional and global levels of collaboration. He encouraged everyone to work together to reduce and mitigate climate change issues in Central Asia and Mongolia. He hopes to cooperate with the Central Asia Region (CAR) by including more countries. Since 2011, CAR has continuously built capacity by organizing conferences and meetings. Country visits to CAR were also part of the activity to know the problems in the area. He thanked the government level for the cooperation and joint research. Active participation of the countries and more intensive work in the near future are encouraged. He cited saxaul forests in Mongolia, which were successfully restored and reforested. Those lessons and successes have to be shared among countries. He hopes to have fruitful cooperation among CAR countries and ROK.