A-23-8-3 Annex 1

AFoCO Climate Action Plan

**Draft as of 20 March 2023**

# Why a climate action plan?

**AFoCO needs a climate action plan because Asia — and the world — needs urgent action!**

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change’s Working Group I issued its contribution to the Panel’s *Sixth Assessment Report* in 2021. Working Group I addresses the most up-to-date physical understanding of the climate system and climate change, bringing together the latest advances in climate science.

The Group reported that many climate impacts were becoming ‘irreversible’ unless we take immediate action. That was in 2021 and little action has been undertaken.

There is a corresponding lack of progress toward the Paris Agreement’s goal of limiting global warming below 1.5°C by 2030.

According to the United Nations Environment Programme’s *Emissions Gap Report 2022*, there is ‘no credible pathway to 1.5°C in place’ today. The Earth is on track to exceed 1.5°C warming within the next decade.[[1]](#footnote-1)

Even targets in countries’ nationally determined contributions (NDCs) to limiting global warming — which were enhanced at the 2022 Conference of Parties to the United Nations Framework Agreement on Climate Change — need to be further increased by a total of 23 gigatonnes of carbon-dioxide equivalents to achieve the 2030 climate target.

The most recent science on ‘tipping points’ suggests an even more dire situation. Five Earth systems’ tipping points are likely to be surpassed by the time 1.5°C is reached[[2]](#footnote-2). These include accelerated melting of permafrost, release of enormous quantities of CO2 and methane into the atmosphere, and the collapse of the Greenland and Antarctic ice sheets, accelerating sea-level rise to 1 meter or more by 2100.

Together, these facts make it obvious that the global goal of net-zero emissions by 2050, in line with the Paris Agreement, is totally inadequate to stabilize a warming climate.

# Forests are the solution

The world’s forests have the potential to sequester 8 gigatonnes of carbon-dioxide equivalents per year by 2030, which would achieve, and exceed, the missing gigatonnes in countries’ NDCs.

AFoCO is in a unique and powerful position to contribute by working with Member Countries to protect, rehabilitate and grow new forests and agroforests.

Over 80 global companies are already investing in 65 countries to achieve their targets for environmental safeguards’ management and corporate net-zero emissions.

AFoCO can facilitate effective and efficient partnerships between the private sector and Member Countries to drawdown greenhouse gases from the atmosphere and sequester them in restored — and new — forests that are also immediately beneficial to local communities.

# What is the state and importance of Asian forests?

In Asia, over 150 million hectares are available for large-scale restoration and around 300 million hectares can be used for mosaic landscape restoration, whereby trees and forests are combined with other land uses.[[3]](#footnote-3)Further, detailed survey results from AFoCO focal representatives in 8 target countries indicated that the total degraded land area is estimated to be more than 200 million hectares.[[4]](#footnote-4)

Asia has one of the highest rates of deforestation in the world. For example, between 1990–2020, the rate of deforestation of Southeast Asia’s forests was 15%. This compares to a global loss during the same period of 4%, making Southeast Asia’s share even more alarming. The major drivers of this loss and degradation of forests were anthropogenic, that is, conversion to agricultural land, illegal logging, forest fires, and extractive activities.

Asia’s forests, of course, aren’t just a collection of trees storing carbon; they are home not only to much of the world’s diverse fauna and flora, which act as the foundation of our food systems — nearly half of the world’s ‘biodiversity hotspots’ are in the Asia-Pacific region and are under threat of disappearing — but also 85.70 million people, most of whom earn less than USD 1.25 per day. The COVID-19 pandemic has severely disrupted their already precarious livelihoods, putting increased pressure on forests for food and material for consumption and sale.

# AFoCO’s Climate Action Plan (2025–2034)

In response to the climate crisis and in recognition of the critical role of forests in mitigating the crisis and AFoCO’s unique position and responsibility to act, a 10-year Climate Action Plan must be in place as a program under the new Strategic Plan (2024–2030).

Now is the significant moment to strategize AFoCO to unlock the full potential of Asian forests.

In this regard, AFoCO will 1) put major effort into assisting Member Countries enhance their contributions to achieving the Paris Agreement’s goals and accelerate efforts to remove massive amounts of atmospheric carbon to stabilize global temperatures, 2) bolster support for a fair, equitable, prosperous, adaptable and sustainable transition to post-pandemic and post-fossil-fuel societies in Member Countries, and 3) work harder and smarter to narrow the developmental gap among Member Countries through climate-smart practices and nature-based solutions.

**Objective and expected impact**

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| **The Climate Action Plan aims to accelerate efforts amongst AFoCO Member Countries to drawing down massive amounts of carbon from the atmosphere to arrest global warming while simultaneously advancing economic prosperity.**  **The Climate Action Plan will deliver positive impacts on Member Countries’ carbon-removal targets, make their economies greener and improve communities’ well-being.**  **The Climate Action Plan will further strengthen regional and inter-regional cooperation on Asian forests.**  **AFoCO will mobilize the funding from bilateral/multilateral/public-private partnerships and make a least double its budget resources for the next 10 years** |

# Strategic approaches

To turn the Plan’s objective into actions and deliver impact, AFoCO will focus on six strategic approaches.

1. **Climate-focused cooperation to upscale forest-based solutions.**

Proven forest-based solutions — such as agroforestry, non-timber forest products’ enhancement, improved watershed management — will be identified with Member Countries to fit with national and international goals for mitigation of, and adaptation to, the climate crisis while simultaneously building communities’ livelihoods and protecting biodiversity.

1. **Diversified funding from public, private and alternative sources.**

Governments alone cannot fund the massive investment needed to restore and rehabilitate forests, drawdown carbon and improve rural livelihoods. Together with Member Countries, the larger private sector, specialist organizations and individual experts, AFoCO will develop tailor-made packages of financial solutions for meeting the challenges faced by Member Countries in their effort to meet climate and development goals.

1. **Enhanced monitoring, reporting and validation for evidence-based action**

Measurement and monitoring are critical for reporting to national and international agreements and for providing evidence for efficient and effective actions. AFoCO with Member Countries will develop context-appropriate monitoring systems that are able to capture necessary data for reporting requirements while also provide the information needed to adjust, or create new, programs for forest restoration or rehabilitation.

1. **Action-focused cooperation for forests**

As stated in recent studies mentioned above, action is urgently needed on the ground not just in policy arenas. AFoCO will work closely with Member Countries to ensure that policies are swiftly developed and enacted for smooth implementation of actions to meet national and international goals.

1. **Strengthened competencies**

Without capable and competent human resources, it will be impossible to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals and those of the Paris Agreement. Accordingly, AFoCO will work closely with Member Countries to build capacity and competency in a range of technical and other skills that directly support achievement of national and international climate and development goals.

1. **Partnerships with a diverse range of groups**

Only together can we achieve the ambitious targets that we have set ourselves as a world community. As members of the Asian community, the world is looking to us to keep our commitments, and exceed them, supporting us through various international mechanisms established during Conferences of Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change and other agreements. Our Asian community is widely diverse, from local indigenous knowledge through a huge and growing middle class to high-technology companies and more. AFoCO will bring stakeholders together for focused solutions and wide-ranging discussions targeted at bringing out the best in our communities of practice.

# Strategic actions

Given that the degradation of forests in Asia is largely the result of human activities and that AFoCO has a unique set of technical skills to address degradation and deforestation, the Climate Action Plan (2025-2034) focuses on three major, interlinked Actions: 1) Forest restoration and rehabilitation; 2) Community solutions; and 3) Digital innovations.

1. **Forest restoration or rehabilitation**

Forest restoration or rehabilitation is, by far, the most effective and cost-efficient way of increasing carbon removals from the atmosphere with multiple co-benefits. Forests are not only carbon sinks but also harbour biodiversity and support healthy watersheds.

The Action will mainly focus on restoration or rehabilitation of damaged terrestrial forests from natural disasters (for example, tsunami, typhoons, landslides) and human-induced activities (such as forest fires) which will magnify carbon removals with co-benefits of biodiversity and other ecosystems services and speed up recovery of affected communities. The Action targets restoration of 200,000 hectares of these forests, using proven and scalable restoration approaches, such as assisted natural regeneration, enrichment planting, mixed-species plantations and agroforestry. People and communities living close to or within these vulnerable areas will be able to participate in the activities and benefit from the restoration of natural ecosystems.

1. **Community solutions**

Communities are the most critical factor in restoration or rehabilitation of forests stemming from the initial degradation often being driven by communities’ need to alleviate poverty and provide livelihoods by (unsustainable) use of forests. Accordingly, this Action will not only seek to reverse this trend but also help meet Member Countries’ achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, particularly, goals 1 (No Poverty) and 8 (Decent Work and Economic Growth) by supporting the development of 1) forest-related community businesses; and 2) ‘green’, or sustainable, villages.

The Action will support forest communities for capacity development and funding for micro-to-small-scale nature-based enterprises, such as niche non-timber forest products, biodiversity-friendly agricultural products, and forest-ecotourism that offers wellness and educational services. Furthermore, the Action will support local communities to manage their landscapes in a sustainable and integrated way (Sustainable, Integrated Landscape Management) through adopting environmentally friendly fuel-management techniques, such as bio-char[[5]](#footnote-5), and organic farming, along with other biodiversity-friendly, climate-smart and agroecological practices — such as agroforestry — and protecting and managing community forests. Other nature-based solutions may be included, along with addressing governance mechanisms, including benefit sharing and decision making.

1. **Digital innovations**

A key message of the Seoul Forest Declaration at the Fifteenth World Forestry Congress, was: “Innovative technologies and mechanisms are emerging for the provision of, and equitable access to, accurate information and knowledge on forests. These must be applied widely to enable evidence-based forest and landscape decision-making and effective forest communication.” Accordingly, AFoCO will deploy its unique set of technical skills to heed this message.

The Republic of Korea has developed ICT-based forest management technologies that can be transferred and/or customised to suit the needs and capacity of AFoCO Member Countries. Technology transfer includes building users’ capacities to effectively use new technologies. Other advanced technologies and approaches, such as drone mapping and monitoring, satellite and terrestrial early warning systems, risk mapping and strengthened monitoring, reporting and validation systems will also be deployed.

Monitoring and reporting are an integral part of AFoCO’s Climate Action Plan. This Action will create an interactive, integrated forest data management system that captures forest changes, impacts, issues and achievements within Member Countries. The data management system will be designed and developed in collaboration with Member Countries to ensure relevant aspects of the database are taken into consideration.

# Resource mobilization and promotion

AFoCO will mobilize the funding from bilateral/ multilateral/ public-private partnerships and make at least double its budget resources for the next 10 years.

Blended financing approach will be introduced. Climate Action Matching Platform (CAMP) is a crucial part of AFoCO’s plan to blend finance to support achievement of the Climate Action Plan. CAMP is an online marketplace and information centre where people can meet and make deals for flowing finance into forests for carbon sequestration, biodiversity and livelihoods.

AFoCO will promote the objectives of the Climate Action Plan and build alliances through strategic events and activities. AFoCO Leaders’ Forum on Climate, Forests and Environmental Safeguards is conceived as a high-level meeting of business and political leaders to cohere commitments and plan actions in an integrated but urgent manner. Conference on ESG for corporates will bring together a diverse range of groups to respond to Asian climate challenges and provide opportunities for investment in forests.

1. Diffenbaugh NS, Barnes EA. 2023. Data-driven predictions of the time remaining until critical global warming thresholds are reached. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 120(6):e2207183120. <https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.2207183120> [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Armstrong McKay DI, Staal A, Abrams JF, Winkelmann R, Sakschewski B, Loriani S, Fetzer I, Cornell SE, Rockström J, Lenton TM. 2022. Exceeding 1.5 °C global warming could trigger multiple climate tipping points. *Science* 377(6611). doi: 10.1126/science.abn7950 [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Ibid, 2018. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. This total included survey data on degraded land areas from Bhutan, Cambodia, Indonesia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Mongolia, Myanmar and Philippines. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. “Biochar is a carbon-rich, solid material derived from a wide range of biomass or organic waste through a thermochemical method. It is an organic charcoal material that is the final product of pyrolysis, or high-temperature burning, of agricultural biomass without the presence of oxygen. The use of biochar is a simple yet powerful tool to combat the climate crisis by sequestering atmospheric carbon into soil as well as processing agricultural and other waste into useful clean energy.” Sustainable Biochar Production through Agroforestry Systems and its Application: a Climate-resilient Soil Management Approach project. <https://www.worldagroforestry.org/blog/2021/06/14/sustainable-biochar-agroforestry-and-its-application>. Biochar “can support rural, isolated and low-to-middle income communities to overcome […] obstacles while simultaneously promoting enhanced restoration and management of degraded” land. Njenga M, Sundberg C, Kätterer T, Roobroeck D, Thevs N. 2021. *Biochar for climate-change mitigation and restoration of degraded lands*. White Paper. Nairobi, Kenya: World Agroforestry (ICRAF). [↑](#footnote-ref-5)