

Eighth Session of the Assembly
25-26 April 2023, Seoul, Republic of Korea

Agenda Item 5

Operationalization of Regional Office

I. Background and Rational

1. The Asian Forest Cooperation Organization (AFoCO) is committed to advancing global initiatives and commitments to sustainable development under the climate crisis through enhanced regional cooperation in the forestry sector of the Asian region. In this context, the Fifth Session of the Assembly in 2021 tasked the Secretariat to develop a plan for the establishment of regional offices aiming to strengthen project performance by enhancing the country/regional presence of AFoCO in the Parties.
2. One of the critical requirements of many ODA-related agencies, such as GCF, IKI, KOICA, etc., for project proponent is the presence of its office in the target country or region to ensure the successful implementation of the projects and reliable fund management. In this regard, it is also crucial to establish regional office of the Organization in strengthening its funding capacity to finance the long-term strategic initiatives of AFoCO such as the Climate Action Plan.

II. Roles and Responsibility of the Regional Office

3. The expected roles and responsibility of AFoCO's Regional Offices include the followings:
 - a. Conducting feasibility studies to facilitate the development of projects/programs in line with action plans and initiatives for the successful achievement of the new Strategic Plan 2024-2030;
 - b. Facilitating resource mobilization activities to finance projects/programs by enhancing the communication between the Secretariat and relevant funding agencies of the region;
 - c. Implementing the Secretariat-led projects/programs of the region and financial reporting of the relevant project funds to the Secretariat;
 - d. Conducting enhanced on-site monitoring and evaluation for the regular projects and coordinating project management between the implementing agency of the proponent countries and the Secretariat for smoother project implementation

III. Plan for the Establishment of the Regional Office

4. The Secretariat would like to establish one (1) regional office in the selected Member Country by the end of 2023 aiming to operationalize from 2024 and expand the number of the regional offices in phased and need-based approaches in consideration of the strategic needs of the organization and capacity of project funds to be mobilized in the target region as well.
5. The proposed procedures for selecting the host country of the Regional Office are as follows:
 - a. The Secretariat will notify Member Countries to express their proposal of willingness or intention to host a regional office;
 - b. The Secretariat will review and assess the proposals from the Member Countries in accordance with the pre-established selection criteria;
 - c. The Secretariat will report the final selection result to the upcoming session of the Assembly
6. The provisional criteria for selecting the host country of the Regional Office will include the following:
 - a. The geographic location for easy access to neighboring countries;
 - b. The number of ongoing and new projects in the target region, including regular projects and the Secretariat-led projects;
 - c. Commitment to the legal status of the Regional Office for ensuring AFoCO's activities through the Regional Office as the intergovernmental organization;
 - d. The commitment of the hosting country for providing the office space and appliances for smooth operation of the Regional Office;
 - e. The fundraising potential and availability of funding sources in the target region and host country;
 - f. The presence of other international organization's office(s) in the hosting country, such as the country office of ODA agency, e.g., GCF, IKI, KOICA, and others
7. The Secretariat will appoint a new hire or dispatch one of the current Staff Members of the Secretariat to be stationed at the Regional Office as a Head of office and recruit local supporting staff for project administration.

IV. Financial Considerations

8. General operating costs for the Regional Office will be covered by the Program Support Fee (PSF) from the assigned projects/programs under the Special Account in accordance with the Provision 3.4.1 of the Financial Regulations of AFoCO, stipulating that:

The purpose of Program Support within the Special Account shall be to defray the expenses of administration of activities, projects or programs earmarked to the funds. Such administrative expenses shall comprise of bank charges, project-related

communication costs, remuneration of project administration staff, operation of Project Appraisal Panel, consultancy services required for project management support and other expenses related to project administration.

9. At the early stage of the operation of the Regional Office, the personnel expenses for the Office Head appointed/dispatched by the Secretariat will be covered by the operating budget of the Secretariat, and shall be substituted with the project funds by reflecting such expenses in the project budget plan as much as possible when formulating the Secretariat-led project.
10. Once the host country is selected, the estimation of the annual budget required for the operation of the Regional Office can be calculated by the Secretariat based on the cost norms applicable to the host country selected.

V. Expected Outcomes and Mutual Benefits of the host country

11. The establishment of regional offices is expected to improve project performance by enhancing project monitoring and evaluation at the project site level with increased cost-efficiency, as well as enhance the synergy of project management capacity among the Member Countries and the Secretariat.
12. It is expected to strengthen the resource mobilization capacity to finance cooperative activities in the region by enhancing the credibility of the Organization which will facilitate the project development and scale-up for the increase in project impact and sustainability.
13. It is also expected to enhance AFoCO's visibility and networking with various stakeholders in the Member Countries, which can enhance AFoCO's reputation and influence in the forestry sector.

VI. Points for Consideration

14. The Assembly may wish to consider and endorse the proposal for establishment of Regional Office, as the follow-up action of the Fifth Session of the Assembly, to achieve the goals and mission of the Organization efficiently and effectively, in cooperation with the Member Countries for hosting the Regional Offices.

Queries on the content of the document may be addressed to:

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