



Strategic Plan 2024–2030

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AND YET TO INCLUDE ANALYTICAL STATEMENTS OR DESIGN
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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1. About AFoCO

AFoCO was established on the solid foundation of the 2012 Forest Cooperation Agreement between the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN) and the Republic of Korea with a vision and mission that has been carried through to the present.

VISION

A Greener Asia with resilient and sustainable forests, landscapes and communities

MISSION

Promote action-oriented international cooperation for creating sound policy contexts, building strong capacity and fostering inclusive partnerships to drive the transition of Asian forests onto a resilient and sustainable path

The AFoCO Vision and Mission align with, and are responsive to, global climate and development objectives, including the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the Paris Agreement on climate change. By implementing proven technologies and policies in sustainable forest management, AFoCO aims to mitigate and address climate change impacts on forests, people and the environment. To realize the Vision, AFoCO applies action-based approaches to regional forest cooperation.

Beginning its operations as an international organization in April 2018, AFoCO currently has 16 Member Countries — 14 (fourteen) Parties: Bhutan, Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Lao PDR, Mongolia, Myanmar, Philippines, Republic of Korea, Thailand, Timor-Leste and Viet Nam, and 2 (two) Observers: Malaysia and Singapore.



Figure 1. Member countries

1.1. Mandate

AFoCO shall promote and undertake action-oriented forest cooperation in Asia on:

- sustainable forest management, biodiversity conservation, maintenance and enhancement of ecosystem services, as well as reforestation and forest rehabilitation;
- climate change mitigation and adaptation activities and supporting the initiatives under REDD+;
- reduction of deforestation, forest degradation, desertification and land degradation, and mitigation of the impacts of forest-related disasters;
- capacity building of stakeholders through research and development, sharing of experiences and the transfer of technology, as well as education and exchange programs; and
- partnerships between the Parties and with other entities to carry out cooperative activities by building upon the current initiatives of other forest-related international agreements and organizations.

1.2. Core functions

To deliver the AFoCo mandate, the following core functions are operational. [This section can be further elaborated if desired]

- Project design and implementation
- Capacity development
- Policy dialogues
- Partnership building
- Knowledge communication and dissemination
- Resource mobilization

Quick facts

- Treaty-based intergovernmental organization
- Permanent Observer at the United Nations General Assembly (admitted 2020)
- Overseas Development Aid status granted by the Organization for Economic Co-operation's Development Assistance Committee (2021)
- (Coverage of diverse ecological regions)
- Nine (9) completed and twenty five (25) on-going projects
- Six (6) research and development projects partnered with National Institute of Forest Science
- Twenty five (25) partnerships and growing (2018 onwards)

1.3. Structure

AFoCO's core functions are carried out through two organs. *The Assembly* is the governing body with decision-making authority. Decisions are made at regular and special sessions. The Assembly consists of one representative from each Member Country.

Under the guidance of the Assembly, *the Secretariat* is a permanent body that performs administrative and financial management as well as any other secretarial functions of the organization. When necessary, the Assembly can approve the establishment of subsidiary bodies to achieve the objectives of the organization. The Secretariat is headed by an Executive Director who is appointed by the Assembly. The Secretariat is based in the Republic of Korea and its functions are to provide necessary administrative support, regional coordination, and carrying out decisions made by the Assembly. In order to translate the strategic priorities and deliver into action in the field in a comprehensive and balanced manner, proper deliberation of related technical matters is conducted among Member Countries and technical resource persons.

The AFoCO Regional Education and Training Center (RETC) was established as a subsidiary organ of AFoCO to develop the capacities of member countries to deal with forestry and related environmental issues. Training courses and workshops are conducted regularly for government officials from member countries, university students, and members of local communities.

(Regional office-TBD)

1.4 AFoCO Strategic Plan (2019–2023): highlights

In 2018, the Assembly adopted the Strategic Plan (2019–2023) as the first strategic framework document of the organization. Adhering to the core values of partnerships, being member-driven, having competency, exhibiting transparency, demonstrating equity and pursuing sustainability, the Strategic Plan (2019–2023) presented mid-term strategies to steer the operations of AFoCO, focusing on three main domains of change.

- 1) Achieving the global goal of increasing forest cover by up to 3% worldwide.
- 2) Implementing the Paris Agreement on climate change, particularly, in pursuit of policy approaches for adaptation in the forestry sector.
- 3) Improving livelihoods and incomes through forestry-related activities.

To strengthen partnerships and regional cooperation, AFoCO organized high-level meetings for ministers, vice-ministers and senior officials from Member Countries wherein challenges and opportunities in international forestry cooperation and the direction of cooperation in Asia were discussed. Moreover, AFoCO hosted thematic dialogues to discuss specific agendas for cooperation such as addressing climate change through Asian forests and green recovery from COVID-19.

AFoCO implemented a total of 9 completed and 25 on-going projects and programs valued at USD 77.6 million, in the areas of restoration and reforestation, climate-change adaptation, forest-related disaster management, livelihoods' improvement and institutional capability development. Furthermore, AFoCO participated in six research and development projects to deliver proven technologies to its Members, including investigation of forest pests and mitigation of their outbreaks, conservation of plant biodiversity and forest restoration.

AFoCO enhanced its international visibility and reputation by expanding its network and through engagement in United Nations conventions. Key achievements are listed below.

- 1) Granted observer status by the UN General Assembly in 2020
- 2) Accredited as an observer intergovernmental organization to the UN Convention to Combat Desertification in 2019
- 3) Enrolled as an eligible international organization for overseas development assistance by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development's Development Assistance Committee in 2021
- 4) Granted accreditation for participation in meetings of the UN Convention on Biological Diversity in 2021
- 5) Admitted as an observer to the Conference of Parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change in 2022

Since 2018, AFoCO has developed partnership arrangements with 25 organizations and actively participated in significant forums — such as the Meetings of ASEAN Senior Officials on Forestry, the 15th World Forestry Congress, UN Forest Forum and UN High-Level Political Forum — to showcase the vital role of Asian forests and AFoCO's contribution toward achieving global goals.

AFoCO's expansive partnership has resulted in fund mobilization from various sources, including the ASEAN–Republic of Korea Cooperation Agreement and Mekong–Republic of Korea Cooperation Fund. The AFoCO Green Partnership, a private-sector engagement platform, has been established to engage private corporations interested in forest-based environmental, social and governance (ESG) issues and carbon neutralization through forests. Funding has been mobilized to conduct feasibility studies to conserve and enhance forest carbon sinks in Member Countries.

1.5 Rationale for the development of a new Strategic Plan (2024–2030)

Steered by the 2019 External Institutional Review of AFoCO, a strategic review and discussions were held regarding the Strategic Plan (2019–2023) and opportunities to improve the future functioning of AFoCO. Given that the Strategic Plan (2019–2023) was in its final phase and many new and significant changes had occurred in the cooperation context for AFoCO in recent years, the 5th Session of the AFoCO Assembly in October 2021 endorsed the launch of a process for developing a strategy for the next term, tentatively titled, AFoCO Strategic Plan (2024–2030).

The release of the Sixth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) in March 2023 has provided further impetus to raise the ambition of the new Plan to greatly increase drawdown of carbon from the atmosphere through accelerating reforestation throughout the region. An earlier spur to action came in 2019 with the Intergovernmental Science–Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services¹ publishing the Global Assessment of Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services². The Assessment highlighted that Nature and its vital contributions to people, which embody biodiversity and ecosystem functions and services, are deteriorating worldwide owing to human activities and that urgent action is needed to halt, and reverse, the destruction of the natural world.

With climate change, biodiversity loss and land restoration at the top of Member Countries' priorities, pathways for AFoCO to achieve results within the next seven years have been identified as follows.

¹ <https://www.ipbes.net/>

² <https://www.ipbes.net/global-assessment>

- Forest policy strategies and cooperation activities
- Multi-stakeholder participation in forest policy making
- National forest planning establishment or revision
- Forest experts' capacity improvement through education and training
- Development and expansion of economic incentives
- Creation and expansion of partnerships

To facilitate these activities, increased forestry research opportunities are needed at local, national, regional and international levels supported by a communication platform among Member Countries at regional level.

2. Trends, challenges and opportunities: global and Asia

2.1 Global mega-trends

2.1.1 Environment

FORESTS

Forests occupy 4.06 billion ha, 31% of the world's land surface. Of the world's forest, Asia holds 15%. Forest areas in the world's top-ten forest countries account for approximately two-thirds (66%) of forests. Among AFoCO members, Indonesia is the eighth-largest forest-area country in the world. Four hundred and twenty million ha of the world's forests were damaged between 1990 and 2020. More than 90% of the damage occurred in tropical regions. The **State of the World's Forests 2022: Forest Pathways for Green Recovery and Building Inclusive, Resilient and Sustainable Economies**, published by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), identifies three pathways through which countries can contribute to addressing reversing environmental degradation and mitigating climate change: a) halting deforestation and maintaining forests; b) restoring degraded lands and expanding agroforestry; c) sustainably using forests and building green value chains.³ In the **global forest policy agenda**, agriculture, biodiversity, climate change, desertification and illegal felling, forest logging and forest fires remain 'hot' topics. Relatively new, or re-emerging, items on the agenda include ecosystem services, RED/REDD/REDD+, resilience, urban forestry, green economy (bioeconomy), forest landscape restoration and COVID-19.

CLIMATE AND BIODIVERSITY TRENDS

Net Zero is a strategy to achieve carbon neutrality and the role of forests is emphasized. The **Sixth Assessment Report⁴ of the IPCC** stresses that "deep, rapid and sustained mitigation and accelerated implementation of adaptation actions in this decade would reduce projected losses and damages for humans and ecosystems (*very high confidence*) and deliver many co-benefits, especially for air quality and health (*high confidence*)". The **UN Convention to Combat Desertification⁵** aims to avoid, reduce and reverse land degradation and is the driving force behind SDG 15 and Land Degradation Neutrality. The **Post-2020 Biodiversity Framework** aims for biodiversity recovery by 2030. Forests

³ <https://www.fao.org/3/cb9363en/cb9363en.pdf>

⁴ <https://www.ipcc.ch/report/ar6/syr/>

⁵ <https://www.unccd.int/our-work/overview>

are biodiversity, providing the ecosystems for species and genetic diversity. The **UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration (2021–2030)** acknowledges the imperative for coexistence between humans and Nature, which is particularly pertinent to AFoCO. The goal of the **Bonn Challenge**⁶ to receive pledges to restore 350 million ha of degraded and deforested landscapes by 2030 was met before time, however, not all commitments have been met⁷. The **UNFCCC Paris Agreement (Article 5)**⁸ encourages to take action implement and support the activities relating to reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation, and the role of conservation, sustainable management of forests and enhancement of forest carbon stocks. The **Global Forest Goals**⁹ aim to stimulate voluntary actions, contributions and enhanced cooperation to reverse loss of forest cover through sustainable forest management and other actions.

2.1.2 Socioeconomic

All AFoCO Member Countries are signatories to the **2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development**.¹⁰ The associated Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) apply particularly to forests and AFoCO through those SDGs related to society, economy, environment and partnerships. The **COVID-19 pandemic** affected “the entire food system and has laid bare its fragility”¹¹. Healthy forests provide numerous supporting functions for a healthy agricultural system and are key to reduction of risk of new diseases. The **World Bank** predicts for the global economy that “a sharp downturn is expected to be widespread, with forecasts in 2023 revised down for 95% of advanced economies and nearly 70% of emerging market and developing economies.”¹² Economic downturns typically lead to more pressure on forests. Globally, the **economic contribution of the world’s forests** has been estimated at over USD 1.52 trillion. Economic disruption caused by COVID-19 led to stagnation across the timber production industry, decreasing both exports and imports¹³. Unstable international situation impact on oil prices with knock-on effects to industrial production globally, has deepened the economic crisis. Global economic stagnation has likely caused stagnation of implementation of forest policies of many countries.¹⁴ Interest is heightening in **ESG** investment, which reflects non-financial factors, such as sustainable forest management, and companies are accelerating ESG programs, such as Net Zero, eco-friendly management and smart plant establishment.¹⁵ In the **post-COVID-19 world**, continuation of economic uncertainties, decarbonization, acceleration of ESG, digital transformation of industries and ‘new normal’ consumption are expected to increase. Global risks within the next ten years, as identified by the **World Economic Forum**, include a number related to forests, such as climate-action failure, infectious diseases and biodiversity loss.¹⁶

2.1.3 Technology

The **Fourth industrial Revolution** is characterized by hyper-connectivity, super-intelligence and hyper-convergence, which are achieved through **Internet of Things (IoT)** technologies. The changes in forestry are three-fold: a) Hyper-connectivity: links between people and objects emerging as a new base for value creation in forestry ecosystems; b) Super-intelligence: optimal decision-making based on data sharing to diagnose changes in forestry production patterns; and c) Hyper-

⁶ <https://www.bonnchallenge.org/>

⁷ <https://www.bonnchallenge.org/pledges/mongolia>

⁸ https://unfccc.int/sites/default/files/english_paris_agreement.pdf

⁹ <https://www.un.org/esa/forests/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/Global-Forest-Goals-booklet-Apr-2019.pdf>

¹⁰ <https://sdgs.un.org/2030agenda>

¹¹ <https://www.who.int/news/item/13-10-2020-impact-of-covid-19-on-people%27s-livelihoods-their-health-and-our-food-systems>

¹² <https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2023/01/10/global-economic-prospects>

¹³ AFoCO Strategic Plan Development (2024-2030) Study Paper

¹⁴ AFoCO Strategic Plan Development (2024-2030) Study Paper

¹⁵ AFoCO Strategic Plan Development (2024-2030) Study Paper

¹⁶ AFoCO Strategic Plan Development (2024–2030) Study Paper

convergence: emergence of new forestry industries through combinations of different types of technologies and industries. **Forestry 4.0** involves **Artificial Intelligence (AI)**, big data, **Internet of Forest Things**, automation, cloud and robot technologies, wireless sensor networks, drones, smart devices, LiDAR, infrared photography, smart greenhouses, harvesting and pruning automation, forest disaster monitoring and prediction and automatic detection systems for damage caused by pests and diseases.

2.2 Challenges and opportunities for Asian forests and AFoCO Member Countries

2.2.1 Asia's forests

The Asia–Pacific Region features 740 million ha of forests, accounting for 26% of the region's land area and 18% of global forest cover.¹⁷ An annual regional loss of over 0.7 million ha of forests from 1990 to 2000 reversed to an annual increase of 2.3 million ha during 2000 to 2005. Between 2005 and 2010, the rate of increase declined to under 0.5 million ha per year. Despite a wide range of supporting initiatives, implementation of sustainable forest management continues to be a challenge. The annual trade in primary forest products in the region exceeds USD 90 billion.

2.2.3 Climate change in Asia

The **World Meteorological Organization's State of the Climate in Asia 2021**¹⁸ reported that there were more than 100 natural hazard events in Asia that year. Economic damage from drought has increased by 63%, from flood by 23%, and from landslides by 147%, compared to the past 20-year average. "There is a clear need to prioritize development of multi-hazard early warning systems and climate forecasts, not only for tackling natural hazards and achieving Sustainable Development Goal 13 (Climate Action)."

As of June 2022, 31 Parties to the UNFCCC from the Asia Region have submitted an NDC and mitigation of climate change has been prioritized by all Parties in this region. The NDCs highlight energy, waste, agriculture and land use/land-use change and forestry as top priority areas for reducing emissions.

Forest disaster

During 2010–2019, Asia suffered numerous forest-related disasters, notably, the **2015 Southeast Asian haze crisis** that affected all countries in the region, which was caused primarily by fires on drained peatland, resulting from slash-and-burn practices. A large, concerted effort by the Government of Indonesia with international support — including AFoCO — contributed to a substantial reduction of fire incidents in the years since.

¹⁷ Asia–Pacific Forestry Commission

¹⁸ <https://public.wmo.int/en/our-mandate/climate/wmo-statement-state-of-global-climate/asia>

2.2.4 Regional forest cooperation

FAO's **Forest and Landscape Restoration Programme** focuses on overcoming capacity, finance and knowledge barriers. A **Regional Strategy and Action Plan for Forest and Landscape Restoration**¹⁹ was endorsed in 2018 by the **Asia-Pacific Forestry Commission**²⁰. AFoCO Member Countries pledged to the **Bonn Challenge Asia**: Kazakhstan²¹ (1,500,000 ha), Kyrgyzstan²² (320,000 ha) and Mongolia²³ (600,000 ha). The **Strategic Plan of Action for ASEAN Cooperation on Forestry (2016–2025)** endorses and promotes sustainable forest management. The **Asia–Pacific Rainforest Partnership**²⁴ was established in 2014 to slow, halt and reverse deforestation. The **Seoul Action Plan 2017** resulted from the **Second Asia–Pacific Urban Forestry Meeting** and outlines concrete follow-up on the recommendations included in the **Zhuhai Declaration**²⁵ made at the first Meeting in 2016.

2.2.5 Sustainable development

While the forestry sector contributes to many of the SDGs, the three most relevant are numbers 13 (Climate), 15 (Life on land) and 17 (Partnerships).

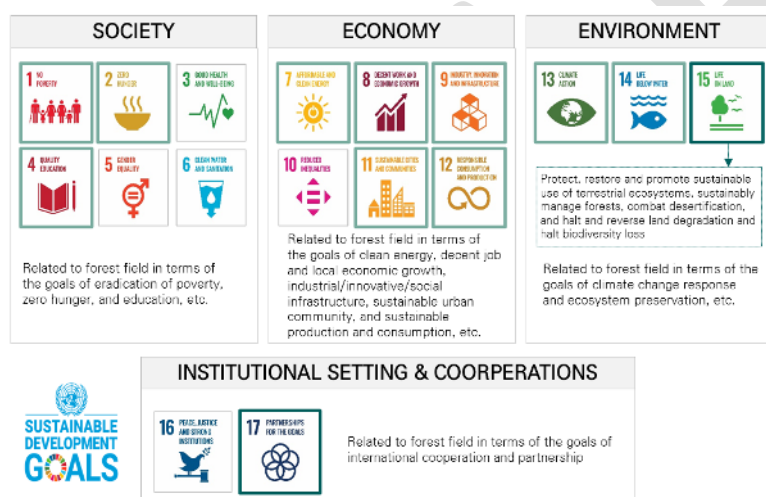


Figure 2. Forestry-related Sustainable Development Goals [EXAMPLE ONLY. TO BE REDESIGNED.]

2.2.6 Monitoring, reporting and verification

Monitoring, reporting and verification (MRV) systems are necessary for credible and cost-effective measurement of forests and landscapes to ensure sustainable management and conservation of forest lands to contribute to achieving Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Some Member Countries are establishing advanced national MRV systems while others face challenges in design, procurement, implementation and analysis. Knowledge-sharing can help develop capacity and lift performance across Asia.

¹⁹ [Regional Strategy and Action Plan for Forest and Landscape Restoration](#)

²⁰ <https://www.fao.org/asiapacific/apfc/es/>

²¹ <https://www.bonnchallenge.org/pledges/kazakhstan>

²² <https://www.bonnchallenge.org/pledges/kyrgyzstan>

²³ <https://www.bonnchallenge.org/pledges/mongolia>

²⁴ <https://www2.cifor.org/asia-pacific-rainforest-summit/about/asia-pacific-rainforest-partnership/>

²⁵ <https://www.fao.org/forestry/48504-0cef5e6519c03c9779c0f1ba18e543d69.pdf>. Delegates to the First Asia–Pacific Urban Forestry Meeting submitted a set of recommendations regarding increasing urban forestry.

3. AFoCO's value proposition

As a treaty-based international organization with a solid track record, sound institutional values, competencies and approaches, and robust partnerships with regional and international conservation, research and development organizations and the private sector, AFoCO is in a strong position to deliver on its Vision and Mission.

3.1. Values

For planning and delivery of actions under this strategic plan, AFoCO adheres to core values.

Partnerships

Partnerships are at the heart of AFoCO. We place high value in building and maintaining positive relationships among all Member Countries and other stakeholders, including external partners.

Member-driven

AFoCO is a collaboration of Member Countries, therefore, we place high value on addressing all Member Countries' needs efficiently and effectively.

Competency

Each Member Country has unique competencies. Together in AFoCO, our competencies become greater and deeper, therefore, we place high value on sharing challenges, best practices, experience and competencies amongst ourselves and with others.

Transparency

Transparency is one of the bases of trust, which is the basis of successful partnerships, therefore, we place high value on transparency as an essential prerequisite of cooperation.

Equity

We place high value on equitable development through increasing access to information and technology; participating in decision-making processes; narrowing gaps; and striving for gender equity.

Sustainability

Our highest goal is a greener Asia with resilient and sustainable forests, landscapes and communities and, therefore, we place high value on sustainability in all we do.

3.2. Attributes

- Member Countries' political commitment and ownership of AFoCO as a treaty-based international organization.
- Continuing pursuit of effective cooperation models amongst Member Countries implementing similar tasks or addressing similar issues.
- Forestry and related ministries engage directly in project implementation to narrow the competency gap in Member Countries.
- Capacity development focused on policymakers, technical personnel and researchers in the forestry sector.

3.3 Competencies

Our experience with the ASEAN–Republic of Korea Forest Cooperation Agreement (2012–2016) and the capabilities of Member Countries helped develop our core competencies in the following areas.

- Forest restoration and rural-sector reform
- Livelihood improvement
- Forest disaster management technologies
- Community-based forest management
- Forest-based, carbon-neutral approaches
- Domestication of endemic and endangered species in degraded areas

Effective and efficient deployment of these competencies — along with other specialist disciplines — is essential for realizing the ambitions of the AFoCO Strategy.

3.4 Approach

Our approach is transformative and ambitious to develop practices and policies that address the climate crisis.

Partnership development

We build partnerships with organizations that share our Vision and Mission. We have created partnerships with the private sector to synergize climate funding through the AFoCO Green Partnership, which accommodates private-sector engagement through AFoCO-led and private-sector-led initiatives; with international conservation, research and capacity development partners; and entered as partner to various initiatives.

Landscape perspective

A landscape perspective is embedded in our approach, given the urgency to massively drawdown carbon from the atmosphere to meet climate targets while balancing economic, environmental and livelihoods' issues.

Contextualized actions

Our projects are co-developed with heightened attention to legitimacy at local level to ensure that specific actions are designed based on local contexts and deliver benefits directly to local stakeholders.

4. Theory of change

The aforementioned AFoCO Vision will be achieved through a Theory of Change (Figure 3). Guided by this Strategic Plan (2024–2030), we seek to address the climate crisis through working with multiple stakeholders in forestry and beyond.

4.1 Strategic thrusts

Guided by, and consistent with, AFoCO's Vision and Mission, the Strategic Plan (2024–2030) addresses the climate crisis through two strategic thrusts.

- 1) Sustainable management of forests to secure environmental, social and economic benefits
- 2) Contributions to the 1.5 °C Paris Agreement goal and the SDGs by 2030

4.2 Program Priority Areas of the Strategic Plan (2024-2030)

With the imperative to act on the global climate crisis and building on the analytical study and review of priorities of Member Countries, three Program Priority Areas (PPAs) and a Cross-Cutting Theme (CCT) were identified to address the most important and urgent issues through this Strategic Plan. Descriptions of the PPAs and CCTs follow. A summary with targets and links to SDGs is in Table 1.

Program Priority Area 1: Forest Restoration and Conservation

Overall outcome

Expanded forest area under sustainable management through reforestation and rehabilitation of damaged forests, forest conservation and sustainable use of forests

1A. REFORESTATION AND REHABILITATION

Outcome

Damaged terrestrial forest land, wetlands and marine ecosystems, particularly mangroves, are reforested or rehabilitated to healthy ecosystems through participatory design, planting, management and monitoring

Key activities

- Reforestation²⁶, afforestation²⁷ and rehabilitation of both terrestrial, wetland and marine ecosystems, including mangroves, through a range of interventions, such as agroforestry, tree plantations, enrichment planting and assisted natural regeneration
- Increase forest cover and restore forest functions, helping to drawdown massive atmospheric carbon and achieve national and international commitments, such as NDCs, UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration and the Bonn Challenge.
- Proven reforestation and afforestation models amongst Member Countries and beyond will be customized in a balanced and integrated manner and scaled up to accelerate massive impact on the ground.

²⁶ “The action of renewing forest cover (as by natural seeding or by the artificial planting of seeds or young trees)”. Merriam-Webster Dictionary. <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/reforestation>

²⁷ “The act or process of establishing a forest especially on land not previously forested”. Merriam-Webster Dictionary. <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/afforestation>

Successful restoration

A successful reforestation and restoration experience of a Member Country from the 1970s to 1990s offers a unique opportunity for sharing with other Members: the reforestation program in the Republic of Korea was run in parallel with a community-based rural development campaign. It was noted as a case of a perfect fit between a top-down approach and bottom-up demand. A major contributing factor was a change from shifting cultivation practices to more regulated and stable practices, which came together with systematic forest management after the Korean War. Such experience of the Republic of Korea and other Member Countries in development-oriented approaches will be considered as a basis for development of reforestation, rehabilitation and afforestation models.

1B. CONSERVATION

Outcome

Natural forests and biodiversity conserved and protected through enhanced management, governance, knowledge and skills

Key activities

- Supporting activities to reduce deforestation and forest degradation and conservation of forests with Member Countries through a range of interventions, such as policy analyses and development concerned with the protection and conservation of primary forests, protected areas, wildlife habitat, key biodiversity areas and other conservation areas, transfer and adaption of forest-monitoring and protection technologies, and sharing knowledge of successful approaches.

Support development of forest land-use plans, in general, and conservation plans, in particular; conservation of endangered tree and other plant species for food, medicines and improved biological richness and functioning of forest ecosystems; and mobilization of forest communities as forest conservationists and guardians (linked to PPA2).

Program Priority Area 2: Community and Bio-economy

Overall outcome

Community forestry with sustainable livelihoods' strategies that support transition to climate-resilient forest communities; enhanced ecosystem services meet both present-day and future needs and contribute to the sustainable development of communities

2A. SOCIOECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Outcome

Enhanced forest-based value-chains, livelihoods and adaptive capacities of forest-dependent communities

Key activities

- Establishment of ‘green villages’ with support for proven, forest-related activities that improve local livelihoods through small-scale enterprise development, including PFES schemes (linked to PPA 1C); forest and community-based ecotourism; non-timber forest products and biodiversity-friendly agricultural products; and other community-based forestry enterprises. Given their eminent role in forest protection, residents of green villages will have their capacity built in various aspects of sustainable forest-based enterprises and obtaining access to green markets.
- With growing attention on carbon farming as a community enterprise, this PPA will also support Member Countries explore opportunities around carbon investments. Our approach to community-based enterprise development is focused on equity and co-benefits for both communities and forests. While improving local incomes and productive functions of forests, considerable attention must be given to ensure protection of natural habitats and biodiversity.
- Assessment of forest ecosystem services and development of PFES schemes at landscape level and/or PFES programs and policies at national level, specifically, analyses of policy instruments related to sharing of national wealth, carbon rights and trading,

Successful PFES

Based on the experience of a project conducted under the 4-year Forest Cooperation Agreement between ASEAN and the Republic of Korea, opportunities emerged for local communities and their associated forests to benefit more from managing ecotourism activities. Maintaining and protecting forests for their natural beauty resulted in ‘eco-cultural tourism’ as a forest ecosystem service. Sharing such proven experience and expanding similar programs with other Member Countries presents an opportunity for generating multiple benefits for forests and local people.

2B. RULES, REGULATIONS & RIGHTS

Outcome

Strengthened forest land and resource tenure security of forest communities for participatory sustainable forest management

Key activities

- Addressing rights, inclusion and equity issues related to sustainable forest management and livelihoods (linked to PPA 2A).
- Assist Member Countries with analyses, development and implementation of forest-tenure models, co-management arrangements, benefit-sharing schemes and participatory models to ensure inclusion of various social groups — such as ethnic minorities, Indigenous Peoples, women and youth — in decision-making, planning and execution of sustainable forest management, livelihoods’ initiatives and equitable benefit-sharing.

Program Priority Area 3: Climate disaster and risk management

Overall outcome

Adaptation of forests and forest-dependent communities to climate change and related impacts, including forest disaster risk management

3A. DISASTER CONTROL

Outcome

Early warning systems, risk prediction, forecast and models are used by Member Countries to mitigate forest disaster risks.

Key activities

- Technology transfer. The forest-fire monitoring and management system in the Republic of Korea is well established and can be shared with Member Countries. Moreover, certain improved techniques in managing forest-related disasters — such as erosion control and landslide management; AI and drone technologies for disaster surveillance, warning and reporting — can be disseminated through technical training and study tours.
- Target disaster-prone areas — such as hotspots of forest fires and sites of landslide incidences — to implement cooperation projects. Based on the latest, proven technology and the technical assessment of the target areas, specific technology-based projects will cover both preventive and control measures, such as forest-fire monitoring and management, erosion and landslide control, establishment of demonstration sites, and capacity building.

3B. DISASTER RESPONSE

Outcome

Strategic and tactical responses deployed in affected forests and communities

Key activities

- Supporting Member Countries' disaster response strategies, particularly regarding forest fires.
- Building Member Countries' capacity to mitigate and control disasters, as well as tactical or short-term responses to disasters.

Cross-Cutting Theme: Governance and capacity development

Overall outcome

Enhanced governance and capacities in sustainable forest management at various levels to contribute to achieving national, regional and global climate and biodiversity goals and sustainable development

CCT 1. Human and institutional capacities

Outcome

Member Countries' enhanced capacities lead to achievement of climate, biodiversity and sustainability goals

Key activities

- Supporting Member Countries build or enhance their capacities at institutional level to support delivery of impactful projects under all three PPAs.
- This includes identifying Member Countries' needs and developing demand-driven and customized capacity-development programs, such as short, informal training courses; study tours; internships; AFoCO fellowship and graduate education programs.
- The Regional Education and Training Center in Myanmar will serve as a learning hub for Member Countries while place-based training will also be conducted in collaboration with capacity-development partners in Member Countries and regionally.

CCT 2. Knowledge management, communication and finance

Outcome

An interactive, integrated forest data management system established that captures changes, impacts, issues and achievements within and between Member Countries along with a Climate Action Matching Platform for blended financing and a communication platform for knowledge sharing.

Key activities

- Establishing a regional, interactive, integrated forest-data management system in close collaboration with Member Countries, regional bodies (such as ASEAN and Central Asia Regional Economic Cooperation) and global organizations (such as FAO and the International Union for Conservation of Nature).
- Associated with the data-management system will be a regional communication platform for knowledge sharing along with the Climate Action Matching Platform (CAMP), which is an online marketplace and information centre for blending financial flows into forests for carbon sequestration, biodiversity and livelihoods.
- The communication platform will not only be an online knowledge-sharing site but also feature physical and hybrid events, such as an AFoCO Leaders' Forum and Conference on Climate, Forests and Environmental Safeguards, exhibitions and awareness-raising campaigns. This CCT will also support the establishment and management of the Asian Knowledge Hub under the Landscape Partnership Asia.

CCT 3. Technology transfer and application

Outcome

ICT-based forest and disaster risk management technologies transferred and/or customised to suit the needs and capacities of Member Countries

Key activities

- ICT-based forest disaster response, forest inventory, monitoring and other technologies relevant to the PPAs. The Republic of Korea has developed ICT-based forest disaster response technologies, computer-aided forest inventory and monitoring tools and applications and has access to further automation, cloud and robot technologies, wireless sensor networks, smart devices, and LiDAR that can be transferred and/or customised to suit the needs and capacity of Member Countries.
- Successfully developed homegrown technologies by Member Countries will be shared to encourage replication and adaptation. Technology transfer includes building users' capacities to effectively use new technologies.

CCT 4. Policies

Outcome

Forest and related policies are developed to transform the forestry sector

Key activities

- Support to Member Countries for policy analyses and dialogues relevant to the PPAs, including policy framing, diagnosis and formulation.
- Engage with various partners in policy dialogues at global, regional and sub-regional levels on critical topics, such as Earth system tipping points, carbon removals, Net Zero, REDD+ and the SDGs.

Table 1. AFoCO's Theory of Change

| Program Priority Area | Outcome statement | Target SDGs |
|---|--|--|
| 1. Forest Restoration and Conservation | | |
| 1A. Reforestation and rehabilitation | Damaged terrestrial forest land and wetlands, including mangroves, are reforested or rehabilitated to healthy ecosystems through participatory design, planting, management and monitoring | 13. Climate Action 15. Life on Land 16. Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions |
| 1B. Conservation | Natural forests and biodiversity conserved and protected through enhanced management, governance, knowledge and skills | 17. Partnerships for the Goals |

| Program Priority Area | Outcome statement | Target SDGs |
|---|---|--|
| 2. Sustainable communities | | |
| 2A. Socioeconomic development | Enhanced forest-based value-chains, livelihoods and adaptive capacities of forest-dependent communities | 8. Decent Work and Economic Growth 10. Reduced Inequalities 13. Climate Action |
| 2B. Rules, regulations, rights | Strengthened forest land and resource tenure security of forest communities for participatory sustainable forest management | 15. Life on Land 16. Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions 17. Partnerships for the Goals |
| 3. Better management of disaster risks | | |
| 3A. Disaster control | Early warning systems, risk prediction/forecast and models are used by member countries to mitigate forest disaster risks | 13. Climate Action 15. Life on Land |
| 3B. Disaster response | Strategic and tactical responses deployed in affected forests and communities | 17. Partnerships for the Goals |
| Cross-cutting theme: Governance and capacity development | | |
| CCT 1. Human and institutional capacities | Member Countries' enhanced capacities lead to achievement of climate, biodiversity and sustainability goals | |
| CCT 2. Knowledge management, communication and finance | An interactive, integrated forest data management system in place that captures changes, impacts, issues and achievements within and between Member Countries along with a Climate Action Matching Platform for blended financing and a communication platform for knowledge sharing. | 10. Reduced Inequalities 13. Climate Action 15. Life on Land 16. Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions |
| CCT 3. Technology transfer and application | ICT-based forest and disaster risk management technologies transferred and/or customised to suit the needs and capacities of Member Countries | 17. Partnerships for the Goals |
| CCT 4. Policies | Forest and related policies are developed to transform the forestry sector | |

4.3 Schema of AFoCO's Theory of Change

Our Theory of Change illustrates how the Strategic Thrusts, PPAs and approaches interact to deliver impact.

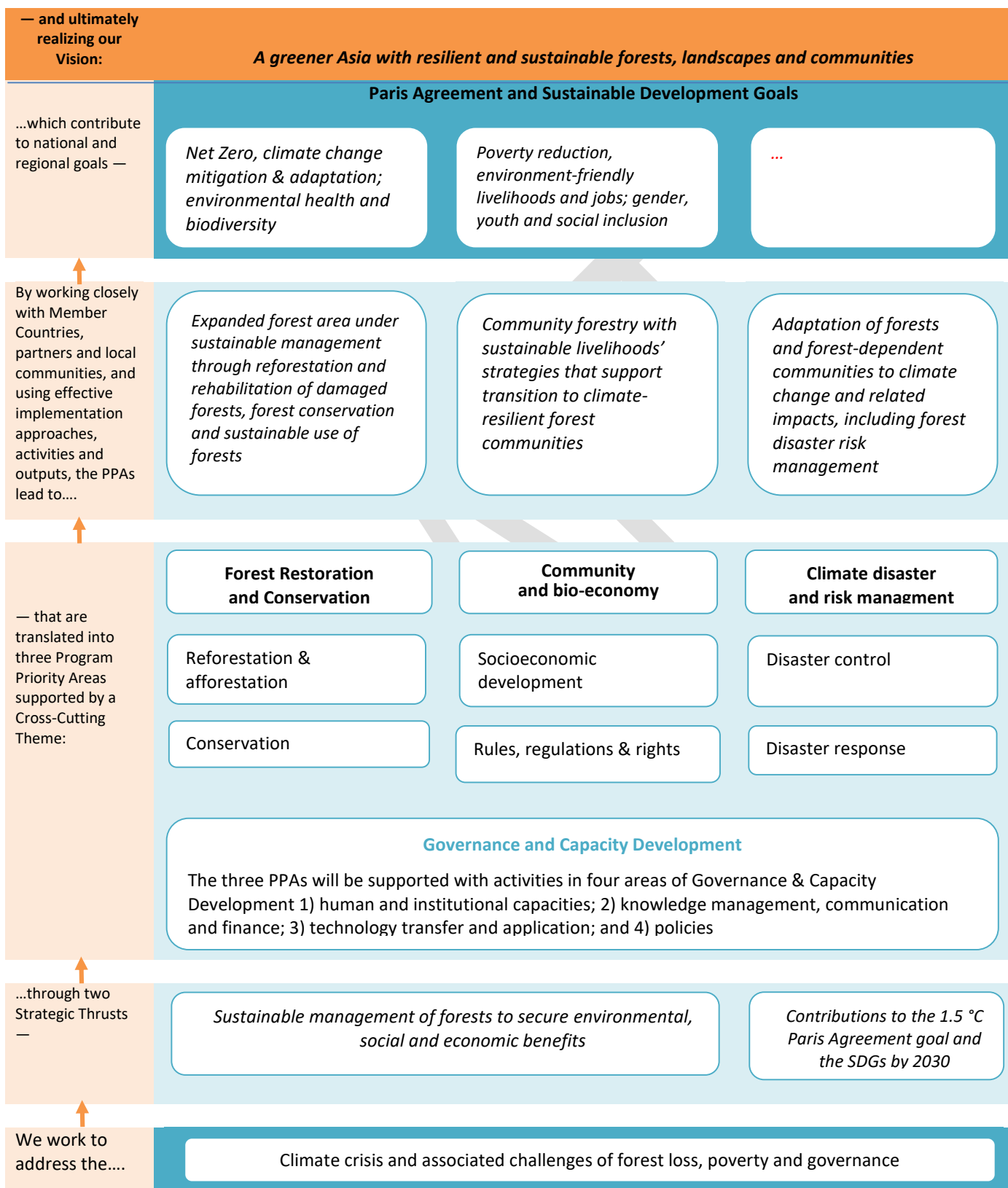


Figure 3. AFoCO's Theory of Change

5. AFoCO's growth and expansion

5.1 Programming approach

In this new Strategic Plan, AFoCO adopts a programmatic approach to support current and future activities wherein country, sub-regional and regional programs and projects will be developed, specific to, or covering more than one, of the PPAs. Such an approach will a) encourage synergies among projects for increased efficiency, sustainability and impact; b) provide support to the achievement of PPA outputs and outcomes; c) facilitate effective and efficient promotion of milestones, achievements, best practices and contributions to national, regional and international goals; d) support comprehensive and logical project evaluation (mid-term, end-of-project and ex-post, including thematic evaluation); e) facilitate development and packaging of relatively larger-scale projects in terms of budget, benefits and impacts, including enhancement of project management capacities of the Secretariat and implementing agencies; and f) support a post-COVID-19 resiliency approach to relevant themes, such as forestry/wildlife crime under biodiversity conservation, which can be initially implemented through capacity building.

Programs and projects conducted through external partnerships will be developed under the following categories: 1) joint program development or participation in existing programs and projects as a partner or implementing agency; 2) joint program development and delivery of co-funding and/or fundraisig collectively; and 3) AFoCO develops a project or program and offers opportunities to potential partners to participate. Active identification and development of programs and projects in external partnerships will be a main focus under this Strategic Plan to increase recognition by other regional and international bodies and attract knowledge, technical and financial co-investment.

5.2 Funding approach

To support implementation of the Strategic Plan (2024–2030), AFoCO will pursue a substantial increase of the funding portfolio through a combination of voluntary contributions — from the Government of the Republic of Korea, Member Countries and partners — and external funding.

To identify new and diverse sources of project funding, which currently is mostly provided by voluntary contribution from KFS, AFoCO will deploy a mid-long-term project funding profile and management strategy. AFoCO will cooperate closely with KFS, including development of projects in line with this Strategic Plan, and liaise with the Ministry of Economy and Finance and Ministry of Foreign Affairs to secure increased funding from the Government of the Republic of Korea.

AFoCO will mobilize further resources by introducing AFoCO programs to funders and strategic partners to generate funding from diverse sources (bilateral, multilateral, philanthropic) through donor-driven and co-investment projects and other mechanisms. AFoCO will also actively respond to calls for proposals from international donor agencies and development banks. To synergise funding relationships with the private sector, AFoCO Climate Action Matchmaking Platform (CAMP) will be a focus and efforts will be linked closely with the Green Partnership program. Through these mechanisms, AFoCO will continue to develop joint projects in Member Countries, including public-private partnerships developed in the Republic of Korea for implementation in Member Countries. To ensure an optimistic funding pipeline, project proposals to a value of at least USD 10 million will be developed and submitted to donors each year over the course of this Strategic Plan.

5.3 Organizational expansion and scaling up

AFoCO will enhance its capacity to deliver the Vision and Mission by increasing the human resources of the Secretariat and strengthening country and regional presence.

The latter will be implemented in a phased approach, based on need and in consideration of effective and efficient use of existing and potential human resources and the funding capacity of AFoCO. AFoCO will initiate country presence and enhance its project management capacities by taking advantage of existing AFoCO project offices to serve as country offices upon mutual consideration with concerned implementing agencies in the Member States. To ensure AFoCO maintains a healthy financial state, country and regional personnel will be funded through country and regional projects, such as the ASEAN–Korea Cooperation Fund. In-kind or cash contributions for operating country and regional offices will be encouraged from Member Countries.

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