

Ninth Session of the Assembly
24-26 October 2023, Seoul, Republic of Korea

Agenda Item 7

Updates on the On-going AFoCO Programs and Projects

I. Background

1. As of 25 October, a total of 33 approved projects composing of 25 individual projects, four (4) regional projects and four (4) AFoCO-NIFoS research projects are on-going including one (1) individual project (AFoCO/029/2022) which is under inception arrangements. These projects have a total funding requirement of 46.2 million USD, fund execution of which are being facilitated as guided by the respective donors and partners. The list and updates on the on-going projects including those that are under inception arrangements are summarized in Annex-1.
2. Out of the approved projects at the AFoCO Assembly, one (1) project from the Philippines (AFoCO/029/2022) is yet to be officially launched in view of the domestic governmental pre-inception requirements.
3. Two (2) projects (AFoCO/006/2014 & AFoCO/013/2020), will be completed in 2023. The ex-post evaluation of each project will be conducted in 2024, respectively, in accordance with the AFoCO Project Manual and Guidelines for Monitoring and Evaluation.
4. In cooperation with respective National Focal Points and Implementing Agencies, the Secretariat has been putting serious efforts to discuss and address project inception and operational issues and concerns through the Project Steering Committee (PSC) and related meetings as early as 4th Quarter of 2023.

A. Updates on the Special Account (AFoCO Fund)

1. Based on the recommendations of the 5th Donors' Meeting held on 2 February 2023, the Secretariat has been taking up follow-up actions to include but not limited to the following:
 - Updated the fund execution of the AFoCO projects to the Korea Forest Service.
 - Facilitated the project fund transfer according to the Work and Budget Plan (WBP) for CY2023 approved by the PSC meetings that were organized from November 2022 to January 2023.
2. As of 25 October 2023, a total of 4.445M US dollars have been executed (Annex-2). This amount accounts for 108% of 4.119M US dollars voluntarily contributed by the Korea Forest Service (KFS) in the 5th Donors' Meeting for FY 2023. Above all, the fund

execution of the three (3) projects: AKCF project (AFoCO/032/2022), NTFP project (AFoCO/035/2022), ASEAN-Korea Garden (AFoCO/036/2022) which account for a large proportion of the project fund will be facilitated in cooperation with the Implementing Agencies in the participating countries.

B. Update on the projects in Myanmar

1. The two (2) projects (AFoCO/014/2020 & AFoCO/015/2020) have been initiated since 2020. However, in view of the UN sanctions imposed in 2023, the fund transfer has been considerably affected in the following projects:
 - Integrated Pest and Disease Management in Teak Plantations in Bago Regions, Myanmar (AFoCO/014/2020)
 - Model Forest for Livelihood Improvement of Forest Dependent Communities through Development of Community-based Enterprise and Forest Conservation (AFoCO/015/2020)
2. In order to settle down the issues on the fund transfer of the two (2) project, a series of bilateral meetings have been arranged between the Secretariat and Forest Department of Myanmar. Based on the recommendations and outcomes of the meetings, the Secretariat will manage the implementation and finance of the said projects. The project activities for FY 2023 have been further facilitated, monitored and implemented under the AFoCO Project Manual and related guidelines.

C. Updates on the projects due for completion

1. Based on the AFoCO Project Manual, two (2) projects will be completed within CY 2023 as follows:
 - Rehabilitation and Development of Mangrove Forest Ecosystem in Thai Binh Province, Viet Nam (AFoCO/006/2014)
 - Improving *Pinus Caribaea Morelet* for Plantation on Degraded Land in Viet Nma's Northern Mountainous Region (AFoCO/013/2020)
2. Said projects conducted the planned activities and achieved expected outputs based on the project documents. The official project closure will be made subject to: 1) reporting on the completion of the project to the Assembly; 2) receipt of satisfactory financial audit report; and 3) receipt of unused funds from the Implementing Agency. The Implementing Agency should also close the project bank account after returning any remaining funds in the project account to the Secretariat.

D. Update on the new projects in 2023

1. In CY 2023, five (5) individual projects were expected to be launched based on the AFoCO Project Manual. Out of the five (5) projects, four (4) projects were successfully launched while only one (1) project is still under inception arrangements as follows:
 - Ensuring Functioning of Cultural Ecosystem Services in an Urban Setting: Assimilating Nature for Forest Healing and Experiential Learning in Ninoy Aquino Parks and Wildlife Center (AFoCO/029/2022);

2. The Philippines side is making the internal administrative procedures for the MOU signing of the project (AFoCO/029/2022) rest on the MOU signing. tial Authority (SPA). Upon completion of MOU signing, the Implementing Agency will facilitate the project implementation for CY 2023.

E. Update on Annual Technical Workshop on Project Management and Performance

Review

1. The 4th Session of the Annual Technical Workshop was held in Ha Noi, Viet Nam, from 18 to 20 September 2023 with a total of 68 participants from 12 different Member Parties of AFoCO. The workshop tackled the 2022-2023 performance review of 18 on-going projects, and included interactive discussions to help build networks and promote exchanges among the participants.
2. In summary, the workshop discussed the following:
 - The need for sustained review and enhancement of the AFoCO Project Manual and related guidelines, particularly for regional projects
 - The need to enhance the capacity of AFoCO Member Parties and the Secretariat in terms of project development, implementation, monitoring and evaluation
 - The need to strengthen the adaptive management of IAs and create an incentive mechanism for eligible/talented staffs to work for the projects
 - To avoid delays and difficulties in implementing projects, there is a need to pay more attention to project development, especially feasibility study and site validation prior to implementation
 - The cost estimates for the projects need to consider real time scenarios and inflations at the time of implementation and have a special provision for contingency funds
 - Member Parties should consider changes in the domestic government regulations and consult and notify the Secretariat to facilitate smooth implementation of projects by the IAs
 - Establishment of consistent communication between the project managers, coordinators, staffs and the AFoCO Secretariat for effective and efficient project implementation

F. Update on Regional Projects

1. The NTFP Project (AFoCO/035/2022) is the first AFoCO project in which all member countries participate. As of September 2023, eight (8) out of the eleven participating countries, which include Bhutan, Cambodia, Kazakhstan, Lao PDR, Mongolia, the Philippines, Timor-Leste, and Vietnam, have signed the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) for the Project Implementation Agreement. Among these eight (8) signatory countries, Bhutan, Kazakhstan, Lao PDR, Mongolia, and Timor-Leste have successfully completed the inception arrangements and project budget transfers required for the project's implementation. The Secretariat is currently awaiting agreements on project implementation from Indonesia, Myanmar, and Thailand. In light of the time required to complete the proposed project activities, the Assembly calls for the attention of Member States to ensure that the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) related to the Project

Implementation Agreement is finalized so that the project can be implemented on the ground at the earliest possible time.

2. To facilitate the implementation of the AKCF project (AFoCO/032/2022) on the ground, the regional project manager was dispatched to Phnom Penh, Cambodia on March 27, 2023. The MOU for the implementation agreement has been signed with Cambodia and Lao PDR on June 12, and September 15, 2023, respectively. The 1st Project Steering Committee was held on August 16 to discuss the outcomes and future progress of the AKCF project. The main outcomes and progress of the project were reported in the 26th ASEAN Senior Officials on Forest (ASOF) held in Siem Reap, Cambodia.
3. Based on the endorsement of the project for funding under the 6th Call of MKCF, titled "ACT for Adaptation to Climate Change and Forest Fire Management in Mekong Region (AFoCO/037/2023)," the MKCF and AFoCO reached an agreement on a fund disbursement totaling USD 996,031 on 9 February 2023. Following the inception meeting held on March 22, the Secretariat identified and contracted with a consultant who is responsible for developing and customizing the ICT-based Forest Fire Management (FFM) system protocol for Cambodia and Vietnam as well as the project coordinator for the respective country. The project is now being implemented on the ground.
4. The Sustaining an Abundance of Forest Ecosystems (SAFE) Project (AFoCO/041/2023) is a collaborative initiative between the Korea Forest Service and the United Nations Environment Programme. Its objective is to conserve and restore vulnerable forest ecosystems with high biodiversity values in selected Asian countries, which currently include Cambodia, Lao PDR, Vietnam, and Bhutan (starting in 2024). UNEP and AFoCO have entered into a cooperative agreement to implement the SAFE Project, with UNEP assuming overall leadership and coordination responsibilities, while AFoCO oversees Output 1. In response to UNEP's request, AFoCO developed and submitted the implementation plan for Output 1 on July 5. Subsequently, the SAFE Project Inception Meeting convened on July 13.

II. Points for consideration

1. The Assembly may wish to:
 - take note of the information on the on-going programs and projects and provide further guidance and recommendations, as appropriate.

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

Sungho Choi, Project Team 2, Project & Program Division
(Phone: +82 2 785 8997; Email: quercus1@afocosec.org)

A-23-9-6-Annex-1.**List of on-going projects and projects under inception arrangements**

Unit: Thousand USD

On-going Projects				
Project code	Country	Project title	Period	AFoCO fund
AFoCO/005/2014	KH	Establishment of Forest Genetics Research Center for Restoration of Major Timber Species in Cambodia	2016-2025	1,500
AFoCO/006/2014	VN	Rehabilitation and Development of Mangrove Forest Ecosystem in Thai Binh Province, Viet Nam	2016-2023	1,500
AFoCO/007/2014	Sec.	Establishment of Regional Education and Training Center in Myanmar	2014-2023	8,734
AFoCO/008/2014	LA	Village-based Forest Rehabilitation in Lao PDR	2016-2025	1,500
AFoCO/013/2020	VN	Improving <i>Pinus caribaea</i> Morelet for Plantation on Degraded Land in Viet Nam's Northern Mountainous Region	2020-2023	486
AFoCO/014/2020	MM	Integrated Pest and Disease Management in Teak Plantations in Bago Regions, Myanmar	2020-2025	955
AFoCO/015/2020	MM	Model Forest for Livelihood Improvement of Forest Dependent Communities through Development of Community-based Enterprise and Forest Conservation	2020-2023	952
AFoCO/016/2021	PH	Promotion of Vertical Integration in Wood Processing through People's Organizations in Community Based Forest Management Areas in the Philippines	2021-2026	929
AFoCO/017/2020	BH	Sustainable Community-based Enterprise development for Improved Rural Livelihood	2020-2025	1,000
AFoCO/018/2020	TL	Development of Agroforestry Models for Promotion of Reforestation in the Different Zones in Timor-Leste	2021-2024	517
AFoCO/023/2021	ID	Innovative solution for climate change and biodiversity landscape strategy to support SDGs in Indonesia	2021-2025	700
AFoCO/024/2021	VN	Conservation and development of forest ecosystems biodiversity resources at Cat Tien National Park	2021-2026	1,132
AFoCO/025/2021	LA	Integrated village-driven forest rehabilitation and livelihood improvement in Viengthong district, Bolikhamxay province, Lao PDR	2021-2026	993
AFoCO/026/2021	TL	Re-greening the bare lands in Timor-Leste through promotion of locally customized restoration models	2021-2024	1,000
AFoCO/027/2022	KH	Site Restoration and Sustainable Management of Community Forest Using Multiple Use Tree Species and Agroforestry	2022-2027	664
AFoCO/028/2022	KZ	Pilot project on inventory of unaccounted forests in Kostanay and North Kazakhstan regions and automation of the collection of information on forestry	2022-2025	953
AFoCO/030/2022	TH	Improving local community's livelihoods and engagement in sustainable forest and land management in Thailand through Forest Landscape Restoration	2022-2024	304
AFoCO/031/2022	VN	Rehabilitation of degraded and potentially deserted forest land in the Northwest region of Viet Nam through application of integrated technical measures	2022-2026	800
AFoCO/032/2022	CLMV	Capacity Building on Enhancing Resilience to Forest Fire and Local Livelihood in CLMV Countries	2021-2026	8,502

AFoCO/035/2022	All	Improved local community livelihoods through increased income from non-timber forests products (NTFP): Modeling scalable community-based enterprises in Asia	2022-2027	4,000
AFoCO/036/2022	KH	ASEAN-Korea Garden	2022-2025	1,802
AFoCO/037/2023	KH,VN	ICT for Adaptation to Climate Change and Forest Fire Management in Mekong Region <i>*Funded by Mekong-Republic of Korea Cooperative Fund</i>	2023-2025	996
AFoCO/038/2023	KH	Advancing Restoration of Native Agarwood – <i>Aquilaria crassna</i> and <i>A. Malaccensis</i> – for Sustainable Use and Management in Southwestern Cambodia	2023-2025	684
AFoCO/039/2023	MN	Forest Restoration Demonstration through High-Capacity Tree Nursery and Capacity Building in Support to “1 billion Tree” Campaign in Mongolia	2023-2025	1,000
AFoCO/040/2023	PH	Forest Restoration using Philippine Threatened and Endemic Tree Species (PTES) in Bacon-Manito Geothermal Reservation in Support to the Philippines’ Forestry Sector’s National Greening Program	2023-2025	293
AFoCO/041/2023	BT, KH, LA, VN	Sustaining an Abundance of Forest Ecosystems <i>*Please note that the budget provided pertains to Year 1 only. The budget for the years 2024 onwards will be determined by UNEP</i>	2023-2030	120
LP-2	Sec.	Development of Education and Training Programs for Capacity Building (Landmark Scholarship Program)	2014-2023	2,334
LP-4	Sec.	Development of Advocating Activities	2014-2023	1,000
Subtotal				45,350
Project under Inception Arrangements				
AFoCO/029/2022	PH	Ensuring Functioning of Cultural Ecosystem Services in an Urban Setting: Assimilating Nature for Forest Healing and Experiential Learning in Ninoy Aquino Parks and Wildlife Center	2022-2026	705
Subtotal				705
AFoCO-NIFoS- Research Project				
AFoCO/021/2020	KH	Performance of Cluster Method in Rehabilitating Degraded Lands in Cambodia	2021-2023	35
AFoCO/022/2020	VN	Research on Forest Enrichment using High Valuable Native Species in Hoa Binh Province, Viet Nam	2021-2023	34
AFoCO/033/2022	ID	Community–government restoration, recreation and livelihoods in Batur UNESCO Global Geopark in Indonesia for Climate Resilience	2022-2024	34
AFoCO/034/2022	TH	Assessment of Financial Instrument and PES Model Application for Rare and Endangered Species Preservation in Thailand	2022-2024	31
Subtotal				134
Total				46,189

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Summary of Project Fund Execution as of 25 October 2023 (unit: Thousand USD)

No.	Project Code	Country	Carry-over	2023 Work and Budget Plan (5th Donors' Meeting)		Remark
				Plan	Execution	
On-going Project						
1	AFoCO/007/2014, AFoCO-LP-2&4	MM/AMS	1,016	0	956	To be executed in Q4
2	AFoCO/006/2014	VN	14	9	23	
3	AFoCO/005/2014	KH	223	73	75	
4	AFoCO/008/2014	LA	191	0	49	
5	AFoCO/013/2020	VN	0	64	64	
6	AFoCO/017/2020	BT	0	216	7	Considered savings from 2022
7	AFoCO/014/2020	MM	286	103	15	
8	AFoCO/015/2020	MM	456	41	15	
9	AFoCO/016/2020	PH	37	98	32	
10	AFoCO/018/2020	TL	101	74	204	Q3 & Q4 budget to be executed in Q4
11	AFoCO/023/2021	ID	130	160	24	To be executed in Q4
12	AFoCO/024/2021	VN	292	140	0	Considered savings from 2022
13	AFoCO/025/2021	LA	282	178	170	
14	AFoCO/026/2021	TL	576	229	325	
15	AFoCO/027/2022	KH	54	130	115	
16	AFoCO/028/2022	KZ	3	b276	180	
17	AFoCO/030/2022	TH	158	145	76	
18	AFoCO/031/2022	VN	84	245	220	
19	AFoCO/032/2022	CLMV	1,225	376	69	To be executed further in Q4
20	AFoCO/035/2022	AMC	1,172	939	560	To be executed further in Q4
21	AFoCO/036/2022	KH	1,802	0	1,187	To be executed in Q4
22	AFoCO/038/2023	KH	0	75	54	
23	AFoCO/039/2023	MN	0	164	0	To be executed in Q4
24	AFoCO/040/2023	PH	0	25	25	To be executed in Q4
Sub-total			8,102	3,760	4,445	
Projects under inception arrangement and development						
25	AFoCO/029/2022	PH	209	359	0	to be launched in Q4
26	ASEAN-ROK Garden	LA, VN	2,735	0	0	
Sub-total			2,944	359	0	
Total			11,046	4,119	4,445	