

Ninth Session of the Assembly
25-26 October 2023, Seoul, Republic of Korea

Agenda Item 9

Update on Operationalization of the Regional Office

I. Background

1. At the Fifth Session of the Assembly held on 26-27 October 2021, the Secretariat proposed the establishment of the AFoCO Regional Office with the aim of enhancing project performance and fostering external cooperation to finance the Organization's long-term initiatives by enhancing the country/regional presence of AFoCO in the Parties. As tasked by the Assembly, the Secretariat further developed the implementation plan for the establishment of AFoCO Regional Office which was approved by the 8th Session of the Assembly held on 25-26 April 2023 in Seoul, Republic of Korea.
2. As guided by the Assembly, the Secretariat conducted the assessment of the financial feasibility for ensuring the sustainable operation of the Regional Office. The Secretariat further explored potential benefits in terms of enhancing organizational capacity for project management and resource mobilization through donor analysis for external funding opportunities.
3. Base on the review results, the Secretariat has identified the Mekong Region as the most suitable region for hosting the first Regional Office of the Organization. Subsequently, invitations were extended to the Mekong Region countries, namely Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar, Thailand, and Viet Nam, to submit a proposal for hosting the Regional Office.

II. Update on the Selection Process

A. Status of Proposal Submission

1. The Secretariat has received the proposals for hosting the AFoCO Regional Office from three (3) Mekong Region Countries by the submission deadline of 31 August 2023 as summarized in the following table:

Country	City	Proposed Location
Cambodia	Phnom Penh	Forest and Wildlife Research and Development Institute
Thailand	Bangkok	Faculty of Forestry at Kasetsart University
Viet Nam	Hanoi	Option 1: Viet Nam National University of Forestry
		Option 2: Vietnamese Academy of Forest Science

B. Evaluation Process

1. The Secretariat established the Selection Committee which was composed of two (2) external experts and two (2) staff members of the Secretariats to review and evaluate the proposals submitted by the relevant Parties in accordance with the implementation plan.
2. The Selection Committee conducted proposal evaluation by pre-visit document review and subsequent site validation held on 14-17 September 2023 in accordance with the following evaluation criteria: 1) *Assessed Needs and Rationale*; 2) *Geographic Location and Infrastructure, and*; 3) *Commitment to Operational Support*.

C. Selection Results

1. Finally, out of the four (4) proposed sites, the **Vietnamese Academy of Forest Science** located in Hanoi, Vietnam has been selected as the final candidate for the Regional Office, as it received the highest scores from the Selection Committee.

D. Follows-up Actions

1. Upon the endorsement of the Assembly, the Secretariat will proceed with concluding a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the selected proponent for hosting and operationalizing the AFoCO Regional Office aiming to open the Regional Office within the 1st Quarter of 2024.
2. The Secretariat will develop the operational guidelines of the Regional Office which shall be circulated for endorsement of the Assembly before opening the Regional Office.

III. Points for Consideration

1. The Assembly may wish to consider and endorse the selection result of the Host Country for the AFoCO Regional Office along with the indicative annual budget plan (***Annex 1***) for its operation.
2. The Assembly may further task the Secretariat to develop the operational guidelines of the Regional Office which is subject to the endorsement of the Assembly prior to opening the Regional Office.

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

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Indicative Annual Expenses
for the Operation of the AFoCO Regional Office

Budget Item	Amount (in USD)	Remark
Salary and Benefits (A)¹	154,624	
• Salary for the Head of Office	102,724	
• Payments for the local supporting staff (2 Persons)	24,000	
• Rental subsidy and other personnel allowances	27,900	
General Operating Costs (B)²	31,950	
• Office Rental Cost	20,000	In-kind Contribution by the Host Country
• Office management fee (water & electricity)	420	
• Office supplies & stationery	3,000	
• Maintenance of official vehicle	3,340	
• Meeting & hospitality	1,200	
• Communication (including Internet)	240	
• Travel allowances	1,950	
• Miscellaneous expenses	1,800	
Grand Total (A+B)	186,574	

¹ Based on the relevant regulations of the Secretariat

² Based on the prevailing standard living expenses and available market prices of the Region and subject to be changed by the cost norms provided by the Member Party selected