

ASIAN
FOREST
COOPERATION
ORGANIZATION

A PHOTO JOURNAL

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AFoCO



JAN 2019 TO DEC 2020

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 Asian Forest Cooperation Organization

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JAN 2019
TO
DEC 2020



Anmyeondo Island Recreational Forest
Republic of Korea

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| COVER PHOTO

The route towards Namsan Tower offers a panoramic view of Seoul and its picturesque natural landscapes. The natural and man-made scenery in the country is a testament to the impressive efforts of the government and citizens to maintain forest cover while pursuing economic development.

The Asian Forest Cooperation Organization (AFoCO) is an intergovernmental organization that came into force on April 27, 2018, after five parties — the Republic of Korea, Timor-Leste, Bhutan, Myanmar, and Viet Nam — ratified the Agreement on the Establishment of AFoCO in early 2018. The Secretariat is headquartered in Seoul, the Republic of Korea, and has a subsidiary office, the AFoCO Regional Education and Training Center, in the Yangon region of Myanmar. In July 2020, AFoCO reached its current membership of 13 Parties and two Observers, with Mongolia the last Party to join. The operation cost of the organization is contributed annually by its 13 Parties, with the Republic of Korea providing 80% of the total cost and other Parties contributing the remaining 20%. The map below shows AFoCO's Parties, as well as its Observer countries, Malaysia and Singapore.



ABOUT THE PHOTO JOURNAL

This photographic compilation presents selected highlights and events of AFoCO over the last two years (2019-2020). The photos are from the database maintained by the Secretariat and from the personal collection of the first executive director.



This book is organized by the thematic areas that AFoCO pursues — intergovernmental processes, policy and strategic guidance, forging partnerships, exploring best practices in forest science and technologies, and rehabilitating landscapes most likely to be hit hardest by the impacts of climate change. This publication is dedicated to the 13 Parties and two Observers to AFoCO, who also sponsored the United Nations (UN) resolution to recognize AFoCO as one of the Observers in the UN General Assembly.

01. INTERGOVERNMENTAL PROCESSES

AFoCO spearheads intergovernmental collaboration and coordination through the Assembly, its highest decision-making body that includes representatives of each of the Parties to AFoCO. The Assembly meets for a session annually, with the President of the Assembly presiding. During the session, the Secretariat submits an annual work plan, budget, and progress report for consideration by the Assembly. The executive director heads the Secretariat and is supported by the vice executive director and professional and general staff. The Secretariat introduces official documents, prepares draft decisions, and provides clarifications when representatives raise questions from the floor during Assembly sessions.



3rd Session of the Assembly

The Secretariat team during the 3rd session of the Assembly, October 2019



Dr. Park Eunsik Vice Executive Director of AFoCO



Dr. Lee Yeongjoo Director, Planning and Budget Division



Dr. Lee Seonghan
Program Officer



Ms. Ryang Soozin
Program Officer



Dr. Bae Kikang
Program Officer



Ms. Park Joowon
Program Officer



Ms. Emily Marie Lim
Program Officer



Ms. Lee Hyekyung
Program Officer



Ms. Kinley Dem
Fellowship Official from Bhutan



Ms. Aidai Zhumasheva
Program Officer



Ms. Kim Jimyung Program Officer



Mr. Choi Sungho Program Officer

The 3rd Assembly Session approved six policy documents:

1. Policy on Ethics and Conflicts of Interest for the Executive Director of the AFoCO Secretariat
2. Policy on Ethics and Conflicts of Interest for the Assembly of AFoCO
3. Policy on Anti-Money Laundering and Countering the Financing of Terrorism
4. Policy on Information Disclosure
5. Environmental and Social Safeguard Policy
6. Gender Policy

Interventions by Country Representatives during the 3rd Assembly session



Mr. Lobzang Dorji
Director, Department of Forests,
Ministry of Agriculture and Forests,
Bhutan



Ms. Noralinda Haji Ibrahim
Acting Director of Forestry Department,
Ministry of Primary Resources and
Tourism, Brunei Darussalam



Mr. Hang Suntra
Deputy Director General, Forestry
Administration, Ministry of Agriculture,
Forestry and Fisheries, Cambodia



Dr. Kirsianti Linda Ginoga
Director, Forestry Research and
Development Center, Ministry of
Environment and Forestry, Indonesia



Mr. Maxat Yelemessov
Head of Department, Department of
Forests and Special Protected Areas,
Ministry of Ecology, Geology and
Natural Resources, Kazakhstan



Mr. Sousath Sayakoummane
Director General, Department of
Forestry, Ministry of Agriculture and
Forestry, Lao PDR



Dr. Thaug Naing Oo
Director, Forest Research Institute,
Forest Department, Ministry of Natural
Resources and Environmental
Conservation, Myanmar



Mr. Nonito M. Tamayo
Director, Forest Management Bureau,
Department of Environment and Natural
Resources, Philippines



Mr. Ko Kiyeon
Director General, International Affairs
Bureau, Korea Forest Service,
Republic of Korea



Mr. Sapol Boonsermsuk
Director, Forestry Foreign Affairs Office,
Royal Forest Department, Ministry of
Natural Resources and Environment,
Thailand



Mr. Rony Joel Barreto da Costa
Chief Advisor, Ministry of Agriculture
and Fisheries, Timor-Leste



Ms. Nguyen Tuong Van
Deputy Director, Department of
Science, Technology and International
Cooperation, Viet Nam Administration of
Forestry, Ministry of Agriculture and Rural
Development, Viet Nam



Mr. Otgonsuren Batgombo
Senior Officer, Department of Forestry Policy and Coordination,
Ministry of Environment and Tourism, Mongolia



Mr. Hassan Ibrahim
Deputy Director, International Biodiversity Conservation,
National Parks Board, Ministry of National Development, Singapore

02. POLICY & STRATEGIC GUIDANCE

Formulating policy and discussing strategic guidance in the areas of landscape restoration and cooperation, in consultation with member countries and international and regional partner institutes, are essential for the success of AFoCO. Among the mechanisms for considering policy and strategy are ministerial roundtable meetings; bilateral meetings with ministers; courtesy calls to ambassadors of member countries, including European Union country ambassadors; and advisory roundtable sessions.

• AFoCO Ministerial Meeting

The first Ministerial Meeting was held under the chairmanship of Viet Nam, the President of the 2019 Assembly session, on October 30, 2019, to celebrate the establishment of AFoCO as an intergovernmental organization. Participants discussed three thematic areas at the meeting:

- Innovative local actions to achieve global targets;
- The future of the Regional Education and Training Center (RETC); and
- AFoCO Membership Expansion — the way forward.



H.E. Mr. Ha Cong Tuan, Permanent Deputy Minister, Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development of Viet Nam, chairing the Ministerial Meeting

■ The AFoCO team at its first Ministerial Meeting



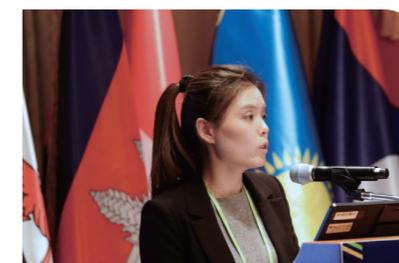
Dr. Park Eunsik introduced the first thematic area on implementing innovative local actions



Dr. Lee Yeongjoo introduced the third thematic area on membership expansion and the way forward for AFoCO



Ms. Kim Jimyung introduced the agenda items for the Ministerial Meeting



Dr. Bae Kikang presented about the second thematic area on the RETC



Ms. Emily Marie Lim gave information on the new projects

■ AFoCO's first Ministerial Meeting produced several key messages:

- Some reforms are required urgently in the areas of forest policy and governance in the region to generate enabling conditions for Forest Landscape Restoration (FLR) actions.
- The region has to scale up afforestation and reforestation efforts to increase forest cover, combat climate change, and address watershed management challenges.
- The region should come together to promote the Regional Education Training Center (RETC) as a center of excellence for forestry in Asia.
- AFoCO should work in close collaboration with the existing forest institutes in the region to facilitate and institutionalize a strong network among institutes so that duplicate efforts can be avoided.
- ASEAN member states are the founding members that molded the ASEAN-ROK forest partnership into AFoCO, an intergovernmental organization in the region. Participants in the meeting encouraged all ASEAN member states to join AFoCO.

Interventions by the Excellencies during the Ministerial discourse



H.E. Lyonpo Yeshey Penjor
Minister, Ministry of Agriculture and Forests, Bhutan



H.E. Mr. Abdul Halidi Mohd Salleh
Deputy Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Primary Resources and Tourism Jalan Menteri Besar, Brunei Darussalam



H.E. Mr. Ung Sam Ath
Secretary of State (Vice Minister), Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, Cambodia



H.E. Dr. Alue Dohong
Vice Minister, Ministry of Environment and Forestry, Indonesia



H.E. Mr. Yerlan Nyssanbayev
Vice Minister, Ministry of Ecology, Geology and Natural Resources, Kazakhstan



H.E. Mr. Thongphath Vongmany
Deputy Minister, Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, Lao PDR



H.E. Mr. Tserendorj Batbayar
Deputy Minister, Ministry of Environment and Tourism, Mongolia



H.E. Dr. Ohn Winn
Union Minister, Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Conservation, Myanmar



H.E. Mr. Rodolfo Garcia
Undersecretary, Department of Environment and Natural Resources, Philippines



H.E. Dr. Park Chongho
Then Vice Minister, Korea Forest Service, Republic of Korea



Dr. Yap Him Hoo
Director General, National Parks Board, Ministry of National Development, Singapore



H.E. Mr. Pongboon Pongtong
Deputy Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment, Thailand



Mr. Raimundo Mau
General Director, Forestry, Coffee and Industrials Plants, Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries, Timor-Leste



Delegates at the first AFoCO Ministerial Meeting

• **Reception for Ambassadors to the Republic of Korea**

A reception was hosted in August 2020 by His Excellency Dr. Park Chongho, Minister of the Korea Forest Service (KFS), for ambassadors of AFoCO member countries as well as representatives of international organizations and potential partners from EU countries based in Seoul.

AFoCO and the KFS team introduced AFoCO and its programs and projects in the region, its plans to seek observer status at the United Nations General Assembly, as well as its proposal to be included on the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's (OECD) Development Assistance Committee (DAC) list of international organizations eligible for Official Development Assistance (ODA).

The KFS also took the opportunity to promote the "Peace Forest Initiative" – a policy program and global initiative that aims to promote peace through forestry cooperation projects in cross-border regions and conflict zones.



H.E. Dr. Park Chongho, Minister of the Korea Forest Service, delivers his welcoming remarks



Mr. Chencho Norbu, Executive Director of AFoCO, delivers his congratulatory remarks



Dr. Park Eunsik, Vice Executive Director of AFoCO, introducing AFoCO and its flagship programs and projects



Dr. Lee Yeongjoo, Director of Planning & Budget Division of AFoCO, providing information on AFoCO's application to the UN General Assembly and proposal to be an ODA-eligible international organization



2020 AFoCO Fellowship Officials
Mr. Nguyen Duy Vuong from Viet Nam, Mr. Vireak Chhorn from Cambodia, and Mr. Lhab Tshering from Bhutan

• **Communicating with Ministers**

AFoCO's representatives met with the ministers of member countries to discuss proposals and new initiatives when opportunities arose. The ambassadors of the member countries were regularly updated on the progress of AFoCO, including proposed plans and programs, through courtesy calls and events hosted by AFoCO in Seoul.



H.E. YB. Dr. Xavier Jayakumar, Minister of Malaysia's Ministry of Water, Land and Natural Resources, at a side event of the ASEAN-ROK Forest Summit, 2019



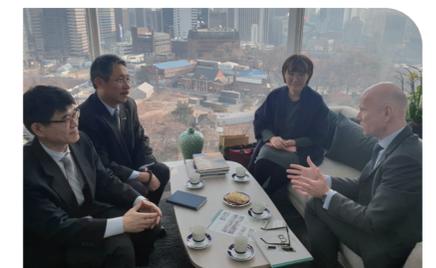
H.E. Mr. Veng Sakhon, Minister, Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, and Fisheries, during the handover ceremony for fire-fighting vehicles in Cambodia, 2020



Courtesy call on H.E. Mr. Umar Hadi, Ambassador of Indonesia, 2019



H.E. Ms. Erdenetuya Namsrai, Deputy Chief of Mission of the Embassy of Mongolia, visited AFoCO Secretariat to deposit the instrument of ratification, 2020



H.E. Dr. Frode Solberg, Ambassador of Norway, talked about exploring financial support and partnerships, 2020

• Advisory Roundtable

AFoCO's Advisory Roundtable, made up of scholars and experts, meets before Assembly sessions to review AFoCO's operations and make recommendations for improvement . One of the highlights of the Roundtable's contributions was its institutional review of AFoCO carried out in 2019. Currently, the Roundtable is composed of Dr. Lee Chinmin, adjunct professor of Korea University; Dr. Lee Donkoo, professor emeritus of Seoul National University; Dr. Moon Kookhyun, president and CEO of New Paradigm Institute; and Ambassador Kim Youngsun, visiting professor of Seoul National University.



Members of the AFoCO Advisory Roundtable

03. FORGING PARTNERSHIPS

It is imperative for AFoCO, as a newly established organization in the region, to explore and build institutional linkages, networks, and partnerships so as to create synergies and minimize the duplication of operations. In the last two years, AFoCO sought to accomplish this by identifying financing opportunities and strengthening cooperation with local, regional, and international institutes and organizations.



AFoCO team with Mr. Ban Kimoon, President and Chair of Global Green Growth Institute (GGGI), Seoul, 2019



Dr. Oyun Sanjaasuren, Director of External Affairs, and Dr. German Velasquez, Director of Mitigation and Adaptation of the Green Climate Fund (GCF), 2020



Dr. Robert Nasi, Director General of the Center for International Forestry Research (CIFOR) with the AFoCO team, Seoul, 2019



Executive Director Dr. David Ganz of the Center for People and Forests (RECOFTC), Bangkok, 2019



MOU signed with the KFS in 2019 (represented by H.E. Dr. Kim Jaehyun, then Minister of the KFS)

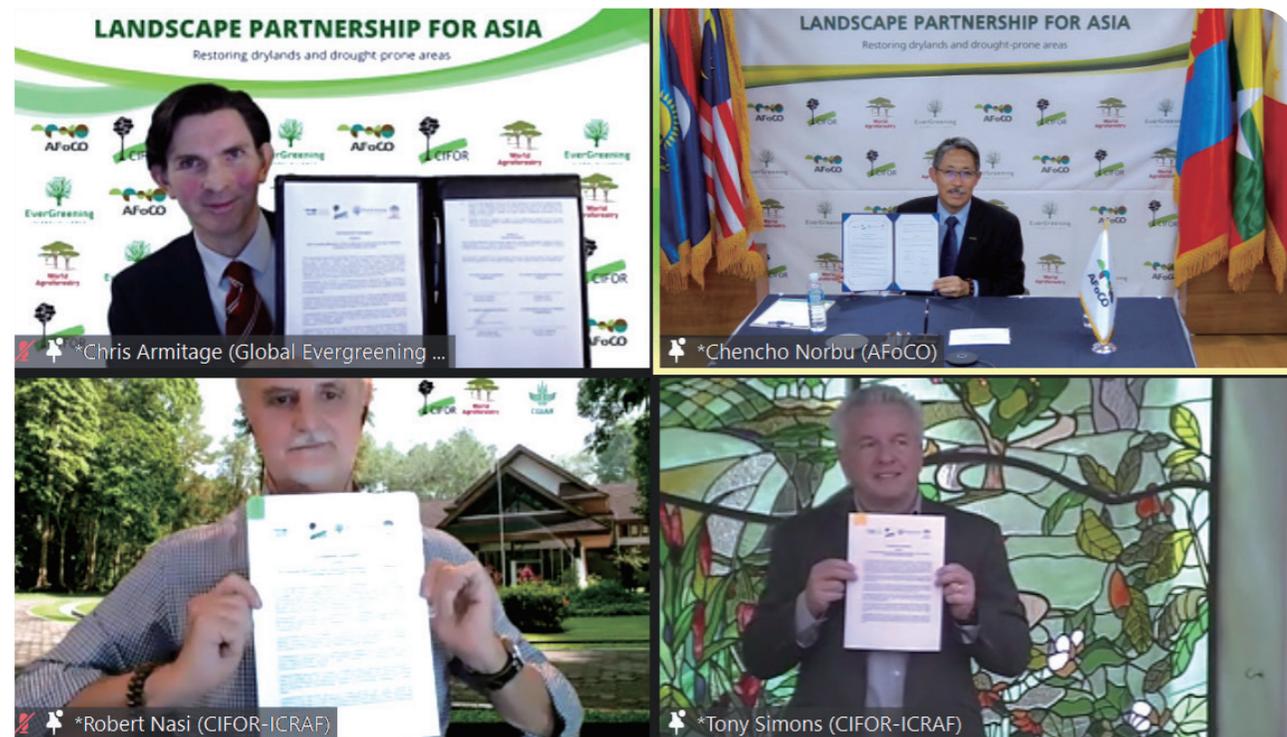


MOU signed with the Korea Forest Welfare Institute (FoWI) (represented by Dr. Lee Changjae) in 2019



Trilateral MOU signed between AFoCO, the Korea Foundation for International Healthcare (KOFIH), and the KFS in 2020

AFoCO will be working with the Center for International Forestry Research, World Agroforestry, and Global EverGreening Alliance to restore drylands and drought-prone areas in Asia through the Landscape Partnership for Asia.



Virtual signing of the partnership agreement by representatives of the four founding organizations, October 2020



Secretariat team after the signing ceremony

• Exploring and sharing knowledge & technology

Cooperation between organizations and institutions in the region also makes it easier for forestry professionals and researchers to share their expertise with their peers, students, and the public. To facilitate this process, AFoCO has sought to create platforms to showcase the knowledge and technology of both the region and the global scientific community to benefit stakeholders at all levels and develop best practices to protect and nurture forests.

Engagements at the 4th Asia-Pacific Forestry Week in Incheon, June 2019



Mr. Chencho Norbu, Executive Director of AFoCO, speaking at the 3rd Plenary Session of APFW2019



AFOCO and CIFOR staff posing for a photo after the MOU signing event



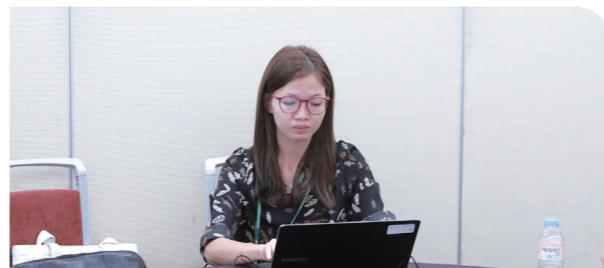
Dr. Oupakone Alounsavath from the Department of Forestry of Lao PDR delivering a presentation on forest landscape restoration strategies in the country



Mr. Htain Lin, former AFOCO Senior Project Manager, delivering a presentation at the side event, 'Restoring Forests for Building Peace & Future'



Dr. Lee Seonghan, Ms. Lee Hyekyung, and Mr. Nguyen Xuan Huu (AFOCO Fellowship Official), manning the AFOCO exhibition booth



Ms. Kemly Ouch, AFOCO Fellowship Official, rapporteuring for a side event

AFOCO Regional Education and Training Center

To develop the capacities of member countries to deal with forestry and environmental issues, AFOCO has established a Regional Education and Training Center in the Yangon region of Myanmar. Training courses are conducted regularly for government officials from member countries, university students, and members of local communities. The RETC was built under the AFOCO Landmark Program at a cost of approximately US\$6 million. The government of Myanmar provided around 2.8 hectares of land in Yangon for the construction of the center. Equipped with modern training facilities to cater to the needs of different training programs and events, the two-story facility has meeting halls, lecture rooms, laboratories, and dormitories.



Dr. Kim Jaehyun, then Minister of the KFS, during a visit to the AFOCO RETC



Mr. Choi Sungho, AFOCO representative based at the RETC, oversees the operation of training courses and building management



Dr. Bae Kikang with the participants of the Project Development Training



Ms. Hwang Jungwon facilitating a community-based forest management training activity



Mr. Orlando Panganiban, Director of AFOCO's Project & Cooperation Division, leading the Project Development Training



Participants of a community development training on rattan furniture-making posing with their certificates in front of the AFOCO RETC

In-house consultations, workshops, and seminars

In addition to formal courses, Secretariat staff and participants from member countries attended workshops, seminars, and meetings that were designed to enhance expertise and build networks among the forest professionals of member countries.



In-house brainstorming session on the vision and mission of AFoCO



Internal workshop on project progress and outputs



Seminar on the restoration of Kazakhstan's Aral Sea by Prof. Son Yohwan from Korea University



Mr. Marlon M. Atienza, sharing best practices from the Philippines, at the International Workshop on Achievements and the Way Forward for AFoCO



AFoCO team with participants from member countries during the technical consultation on the five-year strategic plan of AFoCO in Thailand, 2019

AFoCO Fellowship and STEP Programs

The Fellowship and Science Technical Exchange Partnership (STEP) Programs are flagship programs that have connected many young professionals and researchers from member countries by providing opportunities to work at the AFoCO Secretariat or receive training in select forest institutes in the Republic of Korea. Selected candidates are provided with an official residence and living allowance, including a dependency allowance. The STEP program is currently supported by the Baekdu-daegan National Arboretum of the Republic of Korea.



2019 AFoCO Fellowship Officials
Ms. Kemly Ouch from Cambodia, Ms. Kinley Dem from Bhutan, Ms. Thet Myat Yadanar from Myanmar, and Mr. Nguyen Xuan Huu from Viet Nam



2019 STEP Program Participants at the Completion Ceremony
Mr. Meng Loth from Cambodia, Ms. Swe Swe Win from Myanmar, Ms. Trieu Thi Thu Ha from Viet Nam, Mr. Kencho Rigzin from Bhutan, and Ms. Nurul Hazlina from Brunei Darussalam



2020 Fellowship Officials posing with Mr. Orlando Panganiban (3rd from left), Director of AFoCO's Cooperation and Project Division

04. LANDSCAPES

Landscapes highly vulnerable
to climate change in member countries



Mountainous regions

The view from the top of Mount Hallasan, the Republic of Korea's highest peak on Jeju Island, shows massive dieback of fir trees. Some scientists claim that Korean firs (*Abies koreana*), a species native to Korea, began withering some twenty years ago due to warmer winters and spring droughts brought about by climate change.



Glaciers and Glacial Lakes



Lunana, Bhutan

Thorthormi Glacial Lake located some 4,400 meters above sea level, is highly likely to outburst flood due to global warming.



Kazakhstan

Big Almaty Lake is 1.6 km in length and stretches from 0.75km to 1 km in width. It is the main source of drinking water for residents of Almaty, and therefore swimming is forbidden in the lake.

Coastal Areas



Republic of Korea

Dokdo Island was formed by volcanic rock (hardened lava) from an eruption that occurred millions of years ago. The rocks are mostly composed of trachyte, basalt, and trachyandesite.

Project Sites



Viet Nam
A mangrove plantation in Thai Binh Province



Zambales Province, Philippines
An AFoCO project site Candelaria



Vientiane, Lao PDR
Fragmented land use observed in Sangthong District



Siem Reap, Cambodia
A seed orchard at the AFoCO project site in Khun Ream



Lampung Province, Indonesia
An agroforestry plantation at an AFoCO project site

Cultural Sites in Member Countries



Yangon, Myanmar

Shwedagon Pagoda, also known as the Golden Pagoda, stands at 114 meters tall. Built about 2600 years ago, it is regarded as the most sacred Buddhist Pagoda in Myanmar.



Bhutan

Paro Taktsang, also known as Tiger's Nest, was built in 1692. Guru Padmasambhava, who introduced Buddhism in Bhutan, was said to have meditated in this cave for four months in the 8th century.



Kazakhstan

Nur-Astana Mosque in Nur-Sultan is the third-largest mosque in central Asia. It has a capacity of 5000 worshippers.



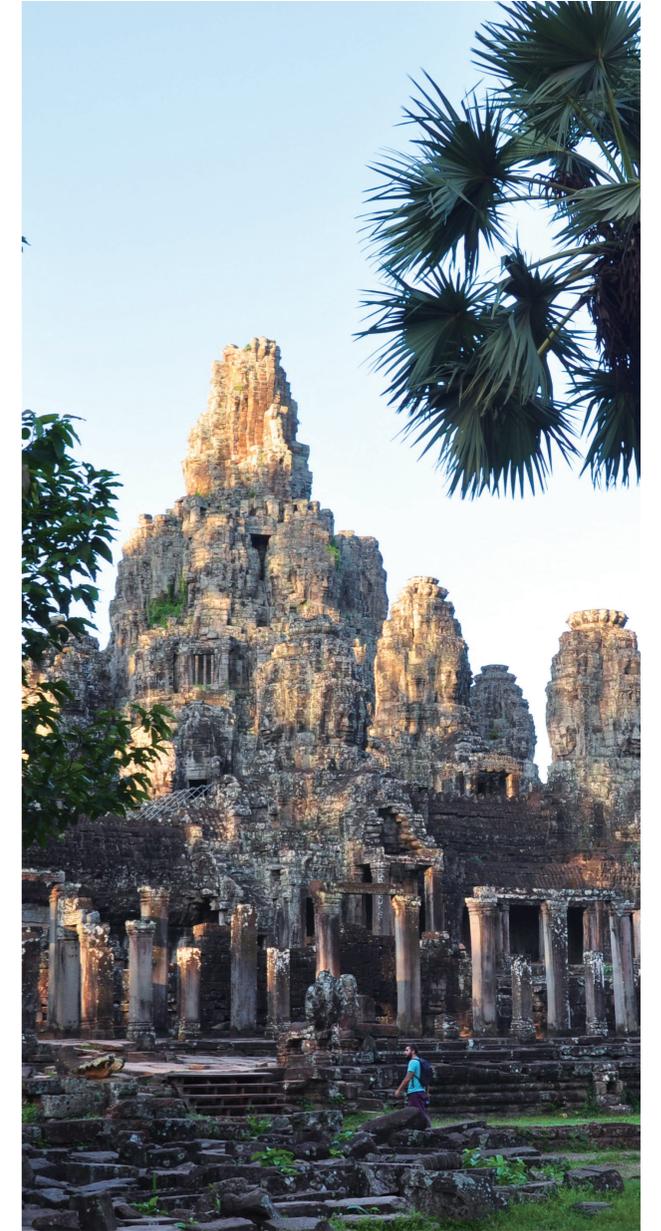
Vientiane, Lao PDR

Patuxai, literally meaning Victory Gate, has five towers that represent the Buddhist principles of thoughtful amiability, flexibility, honesty, honor, and prosperity. Its construction began in 1957 and was completed in 1968.



Seoul, Republic of Korea

Myeong-dong Cathedral in Seoul is the birthplace of the Roman Catholic church community in Korea. The Korean government designated the cathedral as a historic site in 1977.



Siem Reap, Cambodia

Built in the early 12th century, Bayon Temple at Angkor Thom is known as the state temple of Mahayana Buddhist King Jayavarman VII.

AFOCO Agreement

Article 5 – Membership

Clause 3: The membership in the Organization is open to a country which is geographically located in Asia.

Article 6 – Observers

Clause 1: Observer status may be granted by the Assembly to:

- a) Signatory Countries which have not deposited instruments of ratification, acceptance of approval;
- b) Other Asian countries which have submitted an application to be an Observer;
- c) International organizations and non-governmental organizations acting in the field of forestry.

Date of Deposit of Instruments of Ratification by Parties of AFOCO

1.	Republic of Korea	November 4, 2016
2.	Viet Nam	March 14, 2017
3.	Timor-Leste	July 25, 2017
4.	Bhutan	December 8, 2017
5.	Myanmar	March 28, 2018
6.	Cambodia	August 10, 2018
7.	Brunei Darussalam	August 23, 2018
8.	Philippines	February 20, 2019
9.	Lao PDR	May 28, 2019
10.	Thailand	June 26, 2019
11.	Indonesia	July 8, 2019
12.	Kazakhstan	September 4, 2019
13.	Mongolia	July 1, 2020

Observers

1. Singapore
2. Malaysia

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