

Third Session of the Assembly
28-29 October 2019, Seoul

Agenda Item 3.4

Update on the Proposal of Special Self-Governing City Sejong (SSCS) for Relocation of the Secretariat

1. Recalling the Record of Discussion of the 2nd session of the Assembly, the Secretariat reviewed the proposal by the Special Self-Governing City Sejong (SSCS) and visited the site in May 2019.
 2. Following the field visit and internal consultation, the Secretariat is in view that further consideration is needed for the strategic move of the Secretariat considering that:
 - a. AFoCO is in the initial stage of reaching out to internal and external institutions;
 - b. Views of the Parties need to be considered; and
 - c. The diplomatic missions of the Parties are located in Seoul.
 3. Domestic legal matters including the Headquarters Agreement between AFoCO and the Host Country is under progress.
 4. The review report is in Attachment-1 for information.
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Attachment-1

Update on the Proposal on Relocation of the Secretariat by Special Self-Governing City Sejong (SSCS)

A. BACKGROUND

In 2018, Special Self-Governing City Sejong (SSCS) approached the Secretariat to propose the relocation of the Secretariat based on the city's strategies of becoming a hub of international business and smart city networks. The city was inviting the international organizations which have the headquarters already in Korea. The city proposed the Secretariat of immediate relocation to a temporary office and to wait until the new building has been constructed. The development plan for the international business zone of the city is not confirmed and it seems to take time at least four to five years for the construction. The initial proposal was reported to the 2nd Session of the Assembly and the Secretariat was tasked to review the proposal and report the review result to the Assembly. By the Assembly's guidance at its 2nd session, the Secretariat has reviewed the proposal and the overall review summarized as below.

B. SUMMARY OF PROPOSAL

1. The invitation is based on the development plan of SSCS
2. Benefits and incentives
 - a. office space in the new building subject to be constructed
 - b. approximately 1,406 square meters of a temporary office space until the new building is constructed (it may take 4 to 5 years)
 - c. facilities for meetings and conferences owned or operated by the city or the government of Korea
 - d. special quota on housing for the staff
 - e. secondment of officer(s) from the city to the Secretariat subject to negotiation

C. VIEW OF THE SECRETARIAT

Pros

The proposal may reduce the financial burden of running costs to a certain extent for example rental fees and maintenance-related costs. Partly, the relocation of the Secretariat may increase possibilities of close consultation with the government of the Republic of Korea. The special quota for housing for the staff, who have to move their residences to SSCS, may be beneficial temporarily. The facilities in the government complex will be shared with other Korean government agencies and institutes. Many of the forest-related agencies of ROK can be reached in 2 to 3 hours since the city is located in the middle of the country.

Cons

The city can be reached by a 3-hour drive from Incheon International Airport and 1.5 hours from Seoul. The Embassy of all member countries and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the ROK are located in Seoul. Most of the partner organizations of AFoCO have their main offices in Seoul. The GCF is also headquartered in Seoul and Incheon. The physical distance from the capital city may increase the inefficiency of the day-to-day work and cost of the Secretariat for a certain period of time. It may increase not only the travel time but also travel expenses as well. There is a limited number of hotels

and accommodation facilities in the city for organizing important meetings such as the Assembly and international conventions.

D. CONCLUSION

The overall condition of the proposal needs to be carefully considered since the relocation of the Secretariat is not only a matter of financial consideration but also the issue related to AFoCO's vision, mission, and overall long-term management of the Organization such as security of the Headquarters, communication with diplomatic channels of the Parties, and the staff's settlement, etc. The views of the Parties should be considered and respected.
