

Seventh Session of the Assembly
26-27 October 2022, Almaty (hybrid)

Agenda Item 6.1

Updates on the On-going AFoCO Programs and Projects

I. Background

1. As of 26 October, a total of 32 approved projects composing of 23 individual projects, three (3) regional projects and six (6) AFoCO-NIFoS research projects are on-going including three (3) individual projects (AFoCO/029/2022, AFoCO/030/2022, AFoCO/036/2022) which are under inception arrangements. These projects have a total funding requirement of 44.6 million USD, fund execution of which are being facilitated as guided by the series of Donors' Meeting. The list and updates on the on-going projects including those that are under inception arrangements are summarized in Annex-1.
2. To facilitate inception arrangements for the six (6) individual projects and two (2) regional projects, i.e. forest fire management project under the AFoCO-ASEAN-Korea Cooperation Fund (AKCF) and AFoCO-NTFP project, the Secretariat organized: 1) pre-project inception, 2) technical meetings, and 3) pre-feasibility study were conducted since January 2022, in collaboration with the Implementing Agencies (IAs) of each participating country. Likewise separate inception meetings have been arranged for the two (2) AFoCO-NIFoS research projects in Indonesia and Thailand.
3. Out of the five (5) approved projects in 5th Session of the Assembly, two (2) projects from the Philippines (AFoCO/029/2022) and Thailand (AFoCO/303/2022) are yet to be officially launched in view of the domestic governmental pre-inception requirements.
4. Two (2) projects (AFoCO/012/2019), AFoCO/010/2016, will be completed in 2022. The ex-post evaluation of each project will be conducted in Q4 of 2022 and Q1 of 2023, respectively, in accordance with the AFoCO Project Manual and Guidelines for Monitoring and Evaluation.
5. 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 2021.

6.1.1 Country-specific Projects

A. Updates on the Special Account (AFoCO Fund)

6. Pursuant to the recommendations of the 4th Donors' Meeting held on 21 December 2021, the Secretariat has been taking up follow-up actions to include but not limited to the following:
 - Provided regular status reporting on project fund execution the AFoCO projects to the Korea Forest Service.
 - The Project Steering Committee (PSC) meetings of respective on-going projects were held from October 2021 to June 2022, except for one (1) Timor-Leste project. Upon confirmation and circulation of the RoDs, the Secretariat has been facilitating the project fund transfer according to the Work and Budget Plan (WBP) for CY2022 approved by the PSC meetings.
7. As of 20 October 2022, a total of 2.846M US dollars have been executed (Table1). This amount accounts for 64.3% of 4,425M US dollars voluntarily contributed by the Korea Forest Service (KFS) in the 4th Donors' Meeting for FY 2022. 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.

Table 1. Summary of Project Fund Execution as of 20 October 2022 (unit: Thousand USD)

No.	Project Code	Country	Carry-over	2022 Work and Budget Plan (4th Donors' Meeting)		Remark
				Plan	Execution	
On-going Project						
1	AFoCO/007/2014, AFoCO-LP-2&4	MM/AMS	1,093	0	67	To be executed in Q4
2	AFoCO/006/2014	VN	79	0	31	To transfer Q3/Q4
3	AFoCO/005/2014	KH	223	89	89	
4	AFoCO/008/2014	LA	226	0	56	
5	AFoCO/010/2016	MY/TH	61	0	20	
6	AFoCO/012/2019	KH	0	0	0	
7	AFoCO/013/2020	VN	83	14	97	
8	AFoCO/017/2020	BT	0	312	312	
9	AFoCO/014/2020	MM	363	154	224	
10	AFoCO/015/2020	MM	596	221	361	
11	AFoCO/016/2020	PH	379	100	421	
12	AFoCO/018/2020	TL	114	125	0	To transfer Q4
13	AFoCO/023/2021	ID	225	179	273	
14	AFoCO/024/2021	VN	128	310	141	
15	AFoCO/025/2021	LA	353	110	86	To transfer Q4
16	AFoCO/026/2021	TL	599	92	110	
17	AFoCO/027/2022	KH		118	52	
18	AFoCO/028/2022	KZ		312	305	
19	AFoCO/031/2022	VN		233	143	
20	AFoCO/032/2022	CLMV	1,191	400	15	To transfer Q4/To procure equipment
21	AFoCO/035/2022	AMC		1,289	43	To transfer Q4
Sub-total			5,713	4,058	2,846	

Projects under inception arrangement and development						
22	AFoCO/029/2022	PH		209	0	to be launched in Q4
23	AFoCO/030/2022	TH		158	0	to be launched in Q4
24	ASEAN-ROK Garden	KH/others	4,537	0	0	to be launched in Q4
Sub-total			4,537	367	0	
Total			10,250	4,425	2,846	

B. Update on the projects in Myanmar

8. The two (2) projects (AFoCO/014/2020 & AFoCO/015/2020) have been initiated since 2020. Due to the COVID-19 and political situation in Myanmar, the fund transfer has been considerably affected/delayed specifically 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)
9. Based on the recommendations and outcomes of series bilateral meetings with the Forest Department of Myanmar from September 2021 and February 2022, the Secretariat successfully conducted the official missions from 12 April 2022 to 23 April 2022 and facilitated the following actions:
 - Project fund transfer for the (2) ongoing projects (AFoCO/014/2020, AFoCO/015/2020);
 - Site visit/selection for the newly approved projects, i.e. Forest Fire Management under the AKCF, Regional NTFP and ASEAN-Korea garden;
 - On-site monitoring of the on-going AFoCO projects.
10. The project activities for FY 2022 have been further facilitated, monitored and implemented under the AFoCO Project Manual and related guidelines.

C. Update on the projects in Timor-Leste

11. As a follow-up of the bilateral meeting between the Secretariat and Timor-Leste on 29 April 2022 in Seoul, Republic of Korea, Timor-Leste side has taken follow-up actions on the submission of a progress report (AFoCO/018/2020) and site validation (AFoCO/026/2021) since May 2022. For the remaining project related issues relative to the implementation of the two projects, the Secretariat concluded an official mission to Timor-Leste from 21 August to 26 August 2022 and facilitated the following:
 - 2nd PSC Meeting and on-site monitoring of AFoCO/018/2020 ;
 - MOU signing/Project Inception Meeting (PIM)/1st PSC Meeting of AFoCO/026/2021
 - Courtesy call to ROK embassy in Timor-Leste
12. Accordingly, USD 109,570 was transferred to AFoCO/026/2021 in September 2022. However, fund transfer to AFoCO/018/2020 will be made upon submission of remaining documents/requirements from the DGFCIP of Timor-Leste consistent with Records of Discussion of the 2nd PSC meeting.

D. Updates on the projects due for completion

13. Based on the AFoCO Project Manual, two (2) projects will be completed within CY 2022 as follows:
- Domestication of Endangered, Endemic and Threatened Plant Species in Disturbed Terrestrial Ecosystem in Malaysia and Thailand (AFoCO/010/2016)¹;
 - Registration of Small-scale Private Forest Plantation in Cambodia (AFoCO/012/2019)
14. Based on the submitted regular reports, said projects conducted the planned activities and achieved expected outputs. 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.

E. Update on the new projects in 2022

15. In CY 2022, six (6) individual projects are expected to be launched based on the AFoCO Project Manual. Out of the six (6) projects, the three (3) projects are 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);
 - Improving local community's livelihoods and engagement in sustainable forest and land management in Thailand through Forest Landscape Restoration (AFoCO/030/2022)
 - ASEAN-Korea Garden (AFoCO/036/2022)
16. AFoCO/029/2022 project requires the issuance of Special Presidential Authority (SPA). Upon approval of SPA, the Philippines side will facilitate the project inception arrangements including the MOU signing. Following the completion of the internal administrative procedures. For AFoCO/030/2022 project, the Royal Forest Department of Thailand informed the Secretariat of the signing MOU within Q4 of 2022.
17. The Secretariat conducted the official mission in Cambodia for the ASEAN-Korea Garden project from 15 August to 21 August 2022 to: 1) re-validate the project site in Siem Reap Province, Cambodia, in cooperation with the Forestry Administration of Cambodia and Korea-Mekong Forest Cooperation Center in view of the recent developments on its project context vis-à-vis Recreational Forest Project of the KFS; 2) to conduct market/cost survey for the construction of the ASEAN-Korea Garden in Cambodia, in cooperation with eligible design and construction companies, and 3) To conduct project consultation meeting with Forestry Administration (FA) of Cambodia. As an outcome of the bilateral Meeting with Forestry Administration of Cambodia the follow-

¹ The Secretariat is considering to nominate AFoCO regional projects as World Restoration Flagships (WRFs) of the UN Decade in the upcoming call for nominations in 2023. In particular, the regional project on the Domestication of EETS is a potential candidate project that the Secretariat hopes to present as an innovative restoration initiative that is scalable and potentially replicable in other regions. At the next call for nominations, the Secretariat will coordinate with the respective IAs to prepare the application documents.

up actions will be conducted: 1) preparation of design concept for the ASEAN-Korea Garden, 2) revise the project proposal including the reallocation of the budget plan while maintaining the approved project budget and targets, and 3) to conduct a feasibility study in the project site. Ongoing arrangements between the Secretariat and Forestry Administration of Cambodia seeks to conclude the signing of the project MOU within Q4 of 2022 and to develop a master plan for ASEAN-ROK Garden by February 2023.

F. Update on Annual Technical Workshop on Project Management and Performance Review

18. The 3rd Session of the Annual Technical Workshop was held in person on 29 April 2022, as part of the pre-congress events prelude the 15th World Forestry Congress held from 2 to 6 of May in Seoul, Republic of Korea. The workshop tackled the 2021 performance review of two (2) completed and 14 on-going projects, and included interactive discussions to help build networks and promote exchanges among the participants.
19. In summary, there was a collective affirmation of the continuous learning experience for projects to optimize rather than be distracted by the negative effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. The workshop participants also arrived at a general consensus on sustaining the utilization of online platforms in project implementation and development. At the core of project management, it was apparent that building the capacities of project implementers and Secretariat staff is crucial. For this, suggestions were made for the Secretariat to conduct a Project Management training at the regional level. Towards the same disposition, project staff development programs should be sustained at the level of the IA, implementing country and sub-region, while supplementary technical training (GIS, database management, etc.) may be conducted for project-specific purposes. Part of the capacity enhancement is the need to engage full-time regional project managers which are already being started with the 2 new multi-country AFoCO projects. Relative to the strengthening of AFoCO's visibility, the crucial part is the transition period (2023-24) where the establishment of project offices will allow AFoCO to play a bigger role in coordination within the implementing country. To further improve project management, ensuring a collective understanding of the importance of project site validation and/or feasibility studies during the project inception stage is crucial. In the same way, project sustainability remains a core aspect of project development, implementation, and evaluation. Henceforth, it is relevant to the ATW not only during mid-term and post-project evaluation, but throughout the entire project period, wherein suitable templates should be developed as the basis of communication, monitoring, evaluation, and reporting. Lastly, the program approach is seen to offer ample basis for the ensuing project development schedule.

6.1.2 Regional/multi-country Project

A. Update on NTFP Project

20. The Secretariat engaged Dr. Park Junghwan as the regional project manager on May 10, 2022. In order to facilitate the inception arrangements for the project (AFoCO/032/2022), a series of pre-inception meetings and technical/consultation

meetings have been organized with the participating countries and engaged consultants since June 2022.

21. As of October 19, eleven (11) countries, including Bhutan, Cambodia, Indonesia, Kazakhstan, Lao PDR, Mongolia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Thailand, Timor-Leste, and Vietnam, have completed their nomination on the Implementing Agency, the project focal persons, and commodity items for situational analysis. It was informed that Brunei would participate in regional activities only and not pursue country-specific projects. Following a review and finalization of the project document including project site information at the ground level, the Secretariat signed the project MOU with Viet Nam on 11 October, and Lao PDR on 19 October 2022, respectively. The Secretariat will subsequently proceed with the signing of MOUs with other participating countries. Project Inception Meeting back-to-back with the 1st Project Steering Committee Meeting will commence after MOU signing.
22. In parallel with the arrangement of project implementation, the Secretariat has also arranged a situational analysis of the NTFP of the participating countries. In the situational analysis, the engaged consultants collect and analyze information on the resource, related policies, value-adding processes, and market value chain of NTFP items recommended by participating countries. The Secretariat has engaged individual experts from NTFP-EP Asia for Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Myanmar, Philippines, Thailand, and Viet Nam as well as independent experts for Bhutan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Mongolia, and Timor-Leste. Upon completion of country reports the lead consultant will consolidate reports, analyze them at the regional level, and present it at a virtual workshop scheduled for December 2022. The final report will be delivered by January 2023, for online and hard copy publication. Based on the 2022 Work and Budget Plan, the Secretariat will organize the regional workshop for project focal persons to facilitate project implementation at the country level by sharing information on CBE development and management, and Sustainable Resources Management of NTFP in January 2023 in Bangkok, Thailand.

B. Update on AKCF Project

23. Dr. Youn HoJooing as the regional project manager was engaged on June 21, 2022 for AFoCO/032/2022. For the project inception arrangements, series of the pre-project inception meetings and technical meetings have been arranged with CLMV countries, ASEAN-ROK Programme Management Team (AKPMT) and ASEAN-Secretariat since January 2022.
24. The pre-feasibility study was conducted in Cambodia, Viet Nam, Myanmar and Lao PDR from January 2022 and May 2022 to validate the proposed sites for a forest fire monitoring center, forest rehabilitation and NTFP activities based on the criteria for the selection of project sites. The budget realignment request from AKPMT was approved on 23 August 2022. The Secretariat submitted Project Initiation Brief (PIB), Project Assignment List (PAL), and Project Implementation Plan (PIP) for the budget request on 10 September 2022. Accordingly, the ASEAN Secretariat (ASEC) will proceed with the disbursement of the approved budget with maximum 50% to be expected as the 1st payment within mid-September, 2022.

25. Pursuant to the AFoCO Project Manual, the Secretariat will prepare legal arrangements with CLMV countries and NTFP-EP Asia until October 2022. Upon receipt of the said approved budget from AKCF within October 2022, the Secretariat will develop a plan for a feasibility study and conduct the feasibility study until December 2022. Reflecting the outcomes and recommendations from the feasibility study and donor side, the Secretariat plans to procure required equipment for the integrated forest fire management including backpack water pumps and firefighting vehicles in Q4 of 2022.
26. As part of the regional activities, the preliminary workshop on the State of Forest Fire Management in ASEAN Countries" will be organized in January 2023 in Thailand. This workshop is aimed to share current status on forest fire management in ASEAN region and provide technical consultation to individual implementing countries for the successful implementation of the project.

6.1.3 The schedule of project evaluation will be arranged in consultation with the respective NFPs and IAs in due course.

II. Points for consideration

27. 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.
 - Request respective Representatives to provide further updates, as necessary.
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A-22-7-5-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/010/2016	MY/TH	Domestication of Endangered, Endemic and Threatened Plant Species in Disturbed Terrestrial Ecosystems in Malaysia and Thailand	2016-2022	1,200
AFoCO/012/2019	KH	The Registration of Small-scale Private Forest Plantations in Cambodia	2020-2021	249
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/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
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				41,600

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
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/036/2022	KH	ASEAN-Korea Garden	2022-2025	1,802
Subtotal				2,811

AFoCO-NIFoS- Research Project

AFoCO/019/2020	BH	Assessment of Adelgid diversity and distribution in conifer forest of Bhutan to mitigate future outbreaks	2020-2022	33
AFoCO/020/2020	KZ	Investigation of the resistance of black saxaul (<i>Haloxylon aphyllum</i>) forms to gall-forming insects in Kazakhstan	2020-2022	33
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				200
Total				44,611