

Eleventh Session of the Assembly  
30-31 October 2024, Seoul, Republic of Korea

### **Summary Record of the Eleventh Session of the Assembly**

#### **Introduction**

1. The Eleventh Session of the Assembly of the Asian Forest Cooperation Organization (AFoCO) was held in Seoul, Republic of Korea on 30-31 October 2024. The Assembly was attended by Bhutan, Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyz Republic, Lao PDR, Mongolia, Myanmar, Philippines, Republic of Korea (ROK), Tajikistan, Thailand, Timor-Leste, and Viet Nam as Parties, and the Secretariat.

#### **Item 1. Opening of the Session by the President of the Assembly**

2. The Session was in quorum with fifteen Parties present physically in accordance with Rule 10.1 of the Rules of Procedure of the Assembly.

3. In accordance with Rule 7.2 of the Rules of Procedure of the Assembly, the President presided over the session of the Assembly. The incumbent President is Brunei Darussalam represented by Ms. Noralinda Ibrahim, Deputy Permanent Secretary of Ministry of Primary Resources and Tourism of Brunei Darussalam and the Vice President is the Philippines represented by Mr. Alriehg J. Adorable, Assistant Secretary for Field Operations and concurrent Director of Forest Management Bureau of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources of the Philippines.

4. The President, in her opening remarks, expressed heartfelt appreciation on behalf of the Assembly to the host country, Korea, and the Secretariat for their efforts in organizing the 11<sup>th</sup> Session. She highlighted that the year 2024 is the 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of diplomatic relations between Brunei Darussalam and Korea. She looked forward to the special planting ceremony to be organized which the Secretariat helped to facilitate. Welcoming Tajikistan as new Member Country, she reaffirmed AFoCO's expanding influence in the Asian region including the ASEAN forest initiatives and recognized the Executive Director's leadership. She outlined the main agenda and officially opened the session.

5. Dr. Chongho Park, Executive Director of AFoCO, warmly welcomed the delegates and expressed gratitude for the support that enabled his journey over the past 22 months. He reaffirmed his commitment to advancing AFoCO's vision. He noted the attendance of Ms. Juliette Biao, Director of the UN Forum on Forests and H.E. Mr. Zhanybek Kerimaliev, Vice Minister of Water Resources, Agriculture, and Processing Industry, Kyrgyz Republic.

6. H.E. Vice Minister of Kyrgyz Republic shared the positive experience of the Friends of Asia and Asian Forests (FAAF) Forum organized on 29 October 2024, highlighting its role in uniting efforts toward conservation goals and fostering potential partnerships. He wished for productive discussions at the Assembly Session and shared his optimism for effective project implementation at both regional and national levels.
7. The Director of the United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF) extended congratulations to AFoCO for its achievements, emphasizing its vital role as an Observer to the UN Assembly and alignment with global forest goals. She highlighted AFoCO's recent contributions, including collaborating for the Forest Pavilion at the UNFCCC COP, and encouraged active engagement in upcoming UNFF sessions.
8. The Vice President expressed readiness to assist the Assembly, thanked Dr. Chongho Park for his preparations, and anticipated fruitful discussions among Member Countries, particularly in sharing successful project outcomes.
9. Cambodia commended the Secretariat's organization of the 11<sup>th</sup> session, expressed satisfaction with recent progress, and highlighted AFoCO's growing partnerships and resource mobilization under Dr. Park's leadership.
10. Indonesia expressed gratitude for the Secretariat for organizing the FAAF Forum and the Assembly and expressed hopes for productive discussions to achieve the Assembly's goals.
11. Myanmar expressed appreciation for AFoCO's ongoing support in forest conservation emphasized the value of collaboration and friendship among Member Countries.
12. The ROK welcomed all delegates to Seoul and congratulated Tajikistan for becoming a Party to AFoCO. The ROK further expressed gratitude to Dr. Park and the Secretariat for organizing the session and encouraged active participation from all Parties for a successful Assembly.
13. The President appointed Dr. Tong Il Kim, Director of Planning and Operations of the Secretariat as rapporteur, in accordance with the Rules of Procedure of the Assembly.

## **Item 2. Adoption of the Agenda**

14. The Assembly, taking note of the two items under the Other Matters, considered and adopted the agenda as contained in document **A-24-11-1**.

## **A. Organizational Matters**

### **Item 3. Information on the List of Parties and Observers**

15. In accordance with Article 5 of the Agreement and Decision 3-I-18R, the status of Parties and Observers was updated for information. The Assembly was further updated on the application submitted by Singapore for Observer status. The information is contained in document **A-24-11-2**.

16. The Assembly noted on the deposit of the Instrument of Accession by Tajikistan and its entry-into-force dated 12 July 2024. All Parties congratulated and welcomed Tajikistan as a full-fledged Party to AFoCO.

17. The Secretariat reported on Singapore's submission of application for Observer status after completing its initial five-year term, highlighting Singapore's beneficial role in biodiversity and potential climate initiatives.

18. The Assembly supported Singapore's application as Observer to AFoCO recognizing its role and potential contributions in the works of the Organization in the areas of forest cooperation and addressing climate change. While respecting Singapore's decision to remain as an Observer, the Parties expressed common views and anticipation for Singapore to consider its membership as a Party during its second term of Observer status, given its long-standing role.

19. The Assembly raised concerns regarding the duration, rights and responsibilities of Observer status. The Assembly further discussed financial implications and noted that participation of Observers should be mutually beneficial to the Organization and the Observer. The Secretariat clarified that the current Rules of Procedure of the Assembly do not prescribe on the maximum duration for Observer status. There are no fixed additional costs associated with participation of Observers. Any costs, in case any incur, related to engaging Observers are based on budget availability.

20. The Executive Director recalled the significance of engagement of all ASEAN Member Countries as the founding members of AFoCO since the initial phase under the ASEAN-ROK Forest Cooperation. He took note of the concerns raised by the Assembly. While focusing on current Parties and Observers for the coming years, he emphasized the need to assess financial resources for further expansion of Membership to additional countries.

21. The Assembly, based on no-objection, granted Singapore's Observer status as contained in **Decision 56-XI-24R**. The Assembly tasked the Secretariat to revisit the Rules of Procedure (ROP) of the Assembly to clarify the terms and duration for Observer status.

#### **Item 4. Information on Engagement of Partner Organizations and Cooperating Agencies**

22. The Secretariat updated the Assembly on the list of Partner Organizations and joint activities with cooperating agencies. The Assembly commended AFoCO's forest restoration efforts and welcomed partnerships particularly with ITTO and UNFF, emphasizing resource mobilization and expanding its portfolio with strategic partners. The Assembly expressed support for sustainable forest management and climate change mitigation projects as joint activities.

23. The Member Countries supported the joint program with ITTO on 'Advancing Nature-Based Climate Solutions' and welcomed UNFF's involvement in the Landscape Partnership Asia (LPA). The Member Countries expressed respective interests and willingness to participate and collaborate in the joint projects however highlighted the need for clear criteria and targets for respective projects.

24. The Assembly noted the information and endorsed the plan for the development of the joint programs with Partner Organizations as contained in **A-24-11-3**.

## **Item 5. Update on Private Sector Engagement**

25. The Secretariat updated the Assembly on developments related to the Friends of Asia and Asian Forests (FAAF) initiatives and engagement with the private sector as contained in **A-24-11-4**.

26. The Executive Director stressed the importance of maintaining project balance across 15 Parties, noting that the private sector partners often have specific interests in certain countries and types of projects. He requested the Parties to provide potential project sites to align with private sector interests, while ensuring balanced project management. The Assembly supported AFoCO's private sector engagement strategy, emphasizing the importance of genuine, long-term partnerships to implement AFoCO's 10-Year Climate Action Plan.

27. Brunei Darussalam highlighted its national climate change policy and reiterated the need for coordinated regional efforts to support sustainable development, looking forward to collaborations with Partners like the Gold Standard and others. The ROK drew attention to being cautious against the risk of greenwashing and suggested the establishment of verification and due diligence procedures to ensure genuine commitment.

28. The Assembly took note of the information. The Assembly further tasked the Secretariat to develop a private sector engagement strategy which includes mapping potential donors and developing guidelines to avoid greenwashing and establishing measurable, science-based goals for private sector partnerships.

## **B. Matters on Strategic Plan**

### **Item 6. Update on the AFoCO Strategic Plan 2024-2030**

29. Following the adoption of Decision 51-IX-23 regarding the AFoCO Strategic Plan 2024-2030 at the 9<sup>th</sup> Session of the Assembly, the action plan for its implementation was developed and reported for information as in **A-24-11-5**.

30. Brunei Darussalam expressed appreciation for the AFoCO Strategic Plan 2024-2030 and its clear goals in climate resilience, biodiversity conservation, sustainable livelihoods, and knowledge exchange.

31. Indonesia urged the prompt start of reforestation and mangrove rehabilitation efforts, proposing annual targets to meet conservation goals by the end of the Strategic Plan, and shared best practices for managing its extensive mangrove areas.

32. Cambodia supported the plan's key performance indicators (KPI) and proposed establishing a committee to monitor progress.

33. Myanmar praised the clarity of the Strategic Plan and suggested adjusting KPIs to track annual income rather than hourly earnings for more reliable community impact measurement.

34. Philippines advocated for the establishment of a Monitoring and Evaluation Committee to assess and report on progress.

35. The Assembly tasked the Secretariat to address the feedback provided, particularly Myanmar's recommendations, including establishing a committee, if needed, to evaluate and report progress to the Assembly.

#### **Item 7. Update on the Progress of Activities under the AFoCO Climate Action Plan**

36. The Secretariat presented update on the progress of activities under the AFoCO Climate Action Plan, including the proposal on Framework Development for the Climate Action Plan Implementation and the new initiatives under the Climate Action Plan, as contained in **A-24-11-6**.

37. The Framework Development for the Climate Action Plan Implementation serves as a flexible guide for aligning AFoCO's projects and programs with the AFoCO Strategic Plan (2024-2030) and Climate Action Plan (2025-2034), aiming for a vision of climate-resilient forests and communities, ensuring that strategic goals translate into effective projects and fostering collaboration and accountability among members and partners. The Assembly noted on the plans to finalize the Framework in consultation with the Member Countries and tasked the Secretariat to tailor tentative programs based on the Framework.

38. The Secretariat reported on four potential initiatives under the Climate Action Plan: Research and Development Initiative – Asian Forest Living Lab, Forest Fire Management in Asia Initiative (FFMA), REDD+ Readiness Initiative, and AFoCO Mangrove Initiative.

39. The Asian Forest Living Lab as a research and development initiative will bring together diverse stakeholders, including local communities, researchers, governments, local entrepreneurs, and impact investors, among others, to jointly develop practical solutions that address the urgent issues of climate change, deforestation, and biodiversity decline. The Secretariat shared the timeline for the implementation of the Asian Forest Living Lab starting with pilot projects in coordination with the National Institute of Forest Sciences of Korea.

40. The Secretariat highlighted the progress in AFoCO FFMA which is a comprehensive program focused on strengthening regional capacities and integrating advanced technologies to enhance the prevention, management, and mitigation of forest fires across Asia. The Secretariat updated that the pilot capacity building programs and technology deployment under the FFMA is in progress as a joint program among AFoCO, the ROK, and the French Government.

41. The AFoCO Mangrove Initiative is a strategic effort to address the critical needs of coastal ecosystem restoration and climate resilience in Asia. The Mangrove Initiative will be developed with the member countries and partners like ASEAN, the Global Mangrove Alliance, and potential donor countries.

42. The REDD+ Readiness Initiative provides overall support for the REDD+ readiness of the Member Countries, with the objective of assisting the countries in establishing the four key elements of the UNFCCC Warsaw Framework for REDD+. The Secretariat informed that activities under this Initiative will include donor-driven programs.

43. Brunei Darussalam commended AFoCO's commitment to the regional climate resilience through the Climate Action Plan and proposed to consider follow-up activities, including establishing a central database for the ASEAN Forest Living Lab, prioritizing training and community engagement in the Forest Fire Management initiative, holding REDD+ knowledge-sharing workshops, and coordinating a community-based mangrove management framework.
44. Bhutan highlighted its significant progress in its REDD+ Readiness Initiative and expressed eagerness to share experiences. Bhutan emphasized the need for stronger commitments to advancing REDD+ and welcomed the Climate Action Plan. Bhutan further expressed its support and interest in participating in the Forest Fire Management initiative.
45. Cambodia expressed appreciation for the Climate Action Plan's progress. Cambodia supported the REDD+ framework and extended its openness to further cooperation.
46. Indonesia acknowledged the Climate Action Plan's training on forest fires, which is expected to positively impact carbon emission management. Indonesia shared its development standard for identifying non-carbon benefits under the REDD+ Readiness Initiative and invited AFoCO to participate in the Indonesia's initiative on World Mangrove Center for mangrove management and information.
47. Lao PDR highlighted the importance of forest fire management under the Climate Action Plan, noting that the government considers this a priority. Regarding the REDD+ Readiness Initiative, Lao PDR noted its membership in the Forest Carbon Partnership Facility and progress in readiness implementation, now moving toward results-based payments. These initiatives would strengthen government sector capacities for implementing national strategies and achieving resource-based payments, particularly benefiting local communities dedicated to forest management.
48. Myanmar expressed appreciation for AFoCO's efforts in establishing four initiatives within the Climate Action Plan, noting alignment with the gap and current problems that need to be addressed in Asia.
49. The ROK extended gratitude for the preparation of the specific initiatives within the Climate Action Plan and cooperation with the French Government, which is anticipated to enhance collaboration with developed nations. The ROK highlighted ongoing discussions with various countries, including AFoCO Parties, related to nationally determined contributions of respective Parties, including the ROK. The ROK affirmed that AFoCO's REDD+ Readiness Initiative will be mutually benefit all Parties.
50. Viet Nam praised the Climate Action Plan's framework as it will help align relevant programs under the Framework. Viet Nam proposed to consider: focusing on results-based payments for the REDD+ initiative, strengthening community bioeconomics programs, commercializing forest ecosystem services, and enhancing training on forestry technology and digital applications.
51. The Assembly welcomed and endorsed the initiatives to support the Climate Action Plan.

## **Item 8. Updates on the Implementation of Projects**

52. The Secretariat updated that it is expanding the projects to engage diverse partners and stakeholders. The Secretariat informed the Assembly on the status and progress of ongoing programs and projects, including issues identified during project implementation and management, summary of the 2024 Annual Technical Workshop on Project Management and Performance (ATW), and updates in carbon-focused projects, as contained in [A-24-11-7](#).

53. ROK expressed gratitude to the project managers in all Parties for keeping AFoCO projects funded by the Korean Government on schedule. The ROK further emphasized its efforts to address the need for a stable budget for 2026, which will require inter-ministry consultations. ROK requested the Secretariat to develop performance indicators for completed and nearing-completion projects to support stable funding.

54. Respective Parties extended appreciation and updated the Assembly on relevant progress. Indonesia announced an upcoming the Final Coordination and Evaluation Meeting on 19 November 2024 in Bali. Viet Nam thanked AFoCO for its support in preparing the ASEAN-Korea Garden Project, which received official approval from the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development of Viet Nam on 21 October 2024. Viet Nam looked forward to working with the Secretariat for organizing the project inception meeting and financial procedures.

## **Item 9. Development of Projects and Programs**

55. The Secretariat presented information on new project developments as contained in document [A-24-11-8](#). For the new carbon-focused projects and programs under the Acorn Agroforestry Carbon Project in partnership with Rabobank, preparations and implementation are in progress in Kyrgyzstan, Cambodia, Lao PDR, and Viet Nam. While nature-based carbon project is explored based on the MOU between AFoCO and Climate Asset Management. The Secretariat also informed the update on project proposal to ADB and MKCF, as well as collaboration with other partners.

56. The Assembly took note of the information.

## **Item 10. Evaluation of AFoCO Projects and Development of the Information and Data Platform**

57. The Secretariat presented the 10-year evaluation of AFoCO projects and the launching of AFoCO Project Dashboard as contained in [A-24-11-9](#).

58. ROK acknowledged the development, noting it would enhance AFoCO's visibility and emphasized the need for more promotional materials to secure additional funding from the Korean Government.

59. The Assembly encouraged establishment of the data platform and noted on the impact of AFoCO activities.

## **Item 11. Updates on Capacity Development Activities and Future Plan**

60. The Secretariat provided an update on the progress of capacity development activities since the last Assembly as well as ongoing programs as contained in [A-24-11-10](#). The Secretariat leveraged both physical meetings and online platforms to effectively and efficiently deliver capacity-building programs.

61. ROK highlighted the increasing importance of disaster risk management due to climate change. ROK further noted that the Forest Fire Management in ASEAN (FFMA) program, with funding support from France, marked a new milestone in resource mobilization. ROK expressed gratitude to the Secretariat for successfully implementing this project.

62. Taking note of the information, the Assembly acknowledged the Secretariat's efforts in capacity-building programs, expressing appreciation for the Republic of Korea's support.

## **C. Administrative, financial, and institutional matters**

### **Item 12. Update on Operationalization of the Regional Office**

63. The Secretariat, following the endorsement of the 8<sup>th</sup> Session of the Assembly, updated on the progress of the operationalization of the Regional Office for Mekong in coordination with the Viet Nam government as the host country, as contained in [A-24-11-11](#). The Executive Director expressed gratitude to the Vietnamese government for supporting the establishment of the Regional Office, noting that it will cover six Mekong countries for project and program coordination.

64. ROK emphasized the importance of establishing the office with support from the Vietnamese government and urged close collaboration to expedite the process.

65. Viet Nam confirmed the updates from the Secretariat and expressed appreciation for Secretariat's coordination in establishing the Regional Office for Mekong in Viet Nam. Viet Nam proposed to prepare a draft MoU for a three-party agreement with the Department of Forestry and the Vietnamese Academy of Forest Sciences.

66. The President highlighted that the Regional Office for Mekong will provide a wider opportunity for project management well-being as a catalyst to expand resources. The Assembly took note of the information and tasked the Secretariat to take necessary follow-up actions to expedite the operationalization of the Regional Office for Mekong in close cooperation with Viet Nam as the host country.

### **Item 13. Report of the Executive Director Selection Committee in 2024**

67. In reference to Decision 4-I-18R and Paragraph 1 of Article 9 of the Agreement, the Secretariat informed the Assembly on the follow-through activities of the Executive Director Selection Committee as contained in [A-24-11-12](#).

68. Following the reconstitution of the Executive Director Selection Committee in 2024, the Committee deliberated on the renewal of the Executive Director's term. Based on the incumbent's

statement and review of his accomplishments and plans, the Committee reached consensus to recommend renewing Mr. Park Chongho's term for two years, from 1 January 2025 to 31 December 2026, as reflected in the Chairperson's letter.

69. The Committee also reiterated concerns raised in previous meetings regarding the duration of the term of 2 years for the Executive Director which is relatively short compared to other international organizations.

70. Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Myanmar, Philippines, Thailand, and Timor-Leste highly commended Dr. Park's leadership, achievements, and dedication to advancing AFoCO's mission.

71. Brunei Darussalam suggested the Secretariat to analyze the possibility of extending the Executive Director's term, considering best practices from similar organizations to enhance stability and support long-term initiatives.

72. The Executive Director took the opportunity to expressed deep appreciation to all Member Countries for the support. Reflecting on his journey with AFoCO, he highlighted his commitment to AFoCO's growth and to diversifying its financial resources. With the renewed term, he intends to focus on establishing a sustainable funding mechanism, building upon ongoing partnerships with Rabobank and other private entities. Additionally, he aims to secure a headquarters for AFoCO, noting discussions with the Yeongdeungpo District Mayor and possible funding from Korea Forest Service and Seoul Metropolitan City. He also emphasized his commitment to strengthening relations with Korea's relevant ministries and the National Assembly to ensure strong support for AFoCO's initiatives.

73. The Assembly supported and endorsed the renewal of Mr. Park Chongho's term as the Executive Director for two years, from 1 January 2025 to 31 December 2026.

74. Noting on the concerns raised regarding the duration of the term for the Executive Director, the Assembly agreed to take time to consider and discuss in the following sessions of the Assembly. The Assembly tasked the Executive Director Selection Committee to conclude its activities and reconstitute for the next round of Executive Director selection.

#### **Item 14. Human Resources Management and Development Guidelines under the Staff Regulations**

75. The Secretariat presented updates on the review of human resources management and development practices, proposed amendments to the Staff Regulations as well as the organizational structure of the Secretariat for the Assembly's consideration as contained in **A-24-11-13**. The amendments to the Staff Regulations are proposed considering recruitment and appointment procedures, flexible working arrangements, senior management structure, and accommodating diversity of professional pool from non-Parties.

76. The Executive Director further outlined plans for a senior management structure through introducing Assistant Executive Director role, which would operate on a rotation system among Member Countries aside from Korea, to ensure balance among the Parties.

77. Cambodia supported the initiative and suggested a recruitment timeline and procedures for the Assistant Executive Director selection.

78. The Assembly, after consideration, approved the proposed amendment of the Staff Regulations and adopted **Decision 57-XI-24R**. The Secretariat was tasked with developing specific guidelines, as needed, to support amendments to the Staff Regulations, including timelines, and criteria for recruiting the Assistant Executive Director. The President proposed to make the document a living document that can be revisited as needed to prevent limitations from rigid structures and accommodate future needs and agreements.

#### **Item 15. Amendment of the AFoCO Project Manual**

79. In accordance with the procedures and schedule for amending the AFoCO Project Manual, as reported at the 10<sup>th</sup> Session of the Assembly, the Secretariat prepared a draft amendment and finalized it in close consultation with all Parties, as authorized by the Assembly's Decision 17-II-19S. The progress and information on the amendment of the AFoCO Project Manual is contained in document **A-24-11-14**.

80. ROK supported the revised Project Manual, noting that it would effectively guide AFoCO projects. ROK appreciated and extended high regards to the Secretariat for consulting with the Parties and improving project review processes, which are expected to enhance proposal quality and align with funding needs. ROK anticipates that this revision will strengthen AFoCO's project management. Brunei Darussalam and the Philippines echoed their support, recognizing the benefits the amendments would bring in streamlining procedures and enhancing project effectiveness. Cambodia appreciated the Secretariat's responsiveness in preparing these amendments, noting the active collaboration with Member Country experts.

81. With no objections, the Assembly endorsed the amendment of the AFoCO Project Manual for its effectiveness.

#### **Item 16. Reallocation of 2024 Budget for Engagement of Joint Program with UNFF for the Forest Pavilion at UNFCCC**

82. The Secretariat shared information and updates on the establishment of the Forest Pavilion at the UNFCCC COP in which AFoCO is engaging as one of the co-organizers along with the UNFF. The Secretariat proposed reallocating the budget under the Provisions and Contingencies of 2024 Budget to support this joint activity with the UNFF. The Secretariat further updated on AFoCO's engagement plan at the UNFCCC COP 29 and UNCCD COP16. The information is contained in document **A-24-11-15**.

83. ROK supported joint events with UN organizations, noting they would enhance AFoCO's global visibility and attract cooperation with key stakeholders, including major global donors outside Asia. Indonesia supported this initiative, seeing it as a valuable opportunity for collaboration with UN organizations and broader engagement with global donors.

84. The Assembly took note of the information and supported AFoCO's engagement in the UNFCCC and UNCCD events in 2024. The Assembly considered and approved the reallocation of USD 60,000 under the budget for Provisions and Contingencies to Special Activity- Cooperation with UNFF on Forest Pavilion at UNFCCC COP as adopted in **Decision 58-XI-24R**.

#### **Item 17. Work Plan and Budget 2025**

85. In accordance with Paragraph 6 of Article 8 of the Agreement, the Secretariat presented the work plan and budget for the year 2025, along with the indicative budget for the year 2026, as contained in document **A-24-11-16**.

86. ROK expressed gratitude to the Secretariat for its efforts and supported the proposal while suggesting that the Secretariat focus on mobilizing resources beyond Korea's contributions.

87. The Assembly considered and approved the proposed work plan and budget for 2025 as adopted in **Decision 59-XI-24R**.

#### **D. Procedural Matters of the Assembly**

##### **Item 18. Election of Succeeding Officers**

88. The Secretariat presented the information on the procedure for the succeeding officers as contained in **A-24-11-17**. The Assembly, in accordance with Rule 7 of the Rules of Procedure of the Assembly, elected the Philippines and Lao PDR as the incoming President and Vice President.

89. As the incoming President, the Philippines, represented by Mr. Arleigh J. Adorable, expressed sincere appreciation for the trust and confidence placed in the Philippines to assume this role. He affirmed the Philippines' commitment to serve the Assembly with dedication and to work collaboratively with all Member Countries in advancing the objectives of AFoCO.

90. The Executive Director warmly welcomed the Philippines as the incoming President. He further expressed appreciation for the open and inclusive leadership of the outgoing President, noting that her guidance had enabled numerous outcomes over the past year. He conveyed heartfelt gratitude to Ms. Noralinda Ibrahim for her support and contributions.

##### **Item 19. Date and Venue of the Next Sessions of the Assembly**

91. The Secretariat proposed holding two sessions of the Assembly in 2025: one special session in April or May, and one regular session in October, subject to the decision of the Assembly. Unless otherwise decided, the venue for both sessions will be Seoul, Republic of Korea.

92. Cambodia observed that, in practice, the Assembly convenes one regular session annually in Korea and one special session in April, hosted by a volunteer Party. Cambodia suggested that it may be premature to determine the venue for the upcoming special session and recommended that the Secretariat either invite expressions of interest from the Parties at a later stage or allow them to indicate their willingness in due course.

93. The Secretariat will communicate with the Parties to invite offers to host the special session by the end of the year. The Secretariat clarified that, if held in Korea, the special session may be organized in a city other than Seoul. The Assembly took note that the 12<sup>th</sup> Session of the Assembly is tentatively scheduled in April or May 2025. The Assembly tasked the Secretariat to communicate the detailed arrangements including the venue in due course.

#### **E. Other Matters**

94. ROK shared information on its plans to build a Mangrove Exhibition Hall as part of the 'National Saemangeum Arboretum Project', highlighting the potential for educational, conservation, and research opportunities. ROK invited the Assembly's consideration for possible collaboration and engagement from the Parties to enhance the impact of this project.

95. ROK further shared information on the 11th International Congress on Education in Botanical Gardens (ICEBG) to be organized on 9-13 June 2025 in Seoul. The Congress will be held under the theme 'Education for Change: Botanic Gardens' Role in Addressing Global Challenges' and will focus on subtopics including enhancing health and wellbeing; breaking down silos through interdisciplinary partnerships; harnessing technology for learning and engagement; empowering youth as key stakeholders in climate action; and promoting equity, inclusion, and community engagement in botanic gardens. ROK invited participation from the Parties and emphasized the importance of the support of all Parties.

96. The information on the Other Matter is collectively contained in **A-24-11-18**.

#### **F. Summary Record of the Session**

97. The Assembly considered and adopted the Summary Record by circulation.

#### **Item 20. Closing of the Session**

98. In closing, the President conveyed sincere appreciation to all delegates for their valuable participation and constructive contributions. The Eleventh Session of the Assembly was held in the spirit of cooperation, mutual respect and shared commitment to AFoCO's objectives.

*Adopted on 26 December 2024 by circulation.*