

Thirteenth Session of the Assembly
29-30 October 2025, Seoul, Republic of Korea

Agenda Item 7.1

Updates on the Implementation of Projects — Regular Projects

I. Overview

1. Over the past fourteen (14) years (2012–2025), AFoCO supported forty-one (41) Regular Projects across Member Countries. These were fully financed by the Korea Forest Service (KFS) through the first phase of its long-term voluntary contributions under the AFoCO Agreement, amounting to USD 44.9 million (approximately KRW 62 billion). All projects, despite diverse internal and external challenges, particularly the unforeseen COVID-19 pandemic, have successfully achieved the majority of their intended outputs and outcomes through the timely formulation and implementation of contingency and catch-up measures.
2. In 2025, a total of twenty-five (25) approved projects has been implemented, with a combined value of USD 36.1 million. These include twenty-four (24) Individual Projects — four (4) of which are implemented under the AFoCO Landmark Program — and one (1) Regional/Multi-country Project, as listed in **Annex-1**. Pursuant to the AFoCO Project Manual (Decision 17-II-19S) and related guidelines, the Secretariat has been facilitating the project implementation to achieve planned targets in close cooperation with respective National Focal Points (NFPs) and Implementing Agencies (IAs) under the guidance of the Project Steering Committee (PSC).
3. Of the twenty-five (25) on-going projects, two (2) Individual Projects (AFoCO/015/2020 for Myanmar & AFoCO/030/2022 for Thailand) have been successfully completed, and six (6) other Individual Projects (AFoCO/017/2020 for Bhutan, AFoCO/024/2021 for Viet Nam, AFoCO/028/2022 for Kazakhstan, AFoCO/036/2022 for Cambodia, AFoCO/039/2023 for Mongolia, and AFoCO/044/2024 for Kazakhstan) are scheduled to be completed by the end of this year as approved in their respective plans. The remaining seventeen (17) projects are scheduled for phased completion by the end of 2026.

II. Implementation Status of On-Going Projects

A. Individual Projects

4. The Secretariat has monitored project progress and performance through its review of Mid-Year/Annual Progress Reports submitted by the IAs, complemented by on-site validation. Based on

the observations from project monitoring, most ongoing projects were assessed to be on track with no material delays. As of October 2025, approximately 143% of the annual planned budget had been executed, in accordance with the Annual Work and Budget Plan (AWBP) approved by the respective Project Steering Committees (PSCs). The status of fund execution is summarized in **Annex-2**.

5. However, for projects involving construction (AFoCO/029/2022, AFoCO/042/2024 & AFoCO/044/2024), delays were observed in most cases, stemmed from technical problems in the design and procurement/tender processes or from administrative delays. The delays rendered extensions of the implementation period unavoidable. To ensure that the original project objectives were not compromised, the Secretariat took timely measures by convening special PSC and technical meetings to mobilize the required technical support and prepare catch-up plans.

6. The Secretariat will be conducting on-site project monitoring for additional five (5) projects to be completed by the end of this year (AFoCO/024/2021 for Viet Nam, AFoCO/028/2022 for Kazakhstan, AFoCO/036/2022 for Cambodia, AFoCO/039/2023 for Mongolia, and AFoCO/044/2024 for Kazakhstan) in conjunction with the Final Coordination and Evaluation Meeting.

B. Regional/Multi-Country Project

Non-Timber Forest Product (NTFP) Project (AFoCO/035/2022)

7. As of September 2025, eleven (11) countries, including Bhutan, Cambodia, Indonesia, Kazakhstan, Lao PDR, Mongolia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Thailand, Timor-Leste, and Vietnam, have signed project implementation agreements and are actively implementing the NTFP Project with selected commodities. The Secretariat is currently monitoring the project progress by visiting the respective project sites of the participating countries.

8. To strengthen the capacity of country project teams, two (2) Regional Workshops have been held under the themes of "Country-level Road Map Development with CBNE Modeling" and "The Refresher Course for CBNE Development and Management, SRM, and Market Study." These Workshops took place in Bali (November 5-8, 2024) and Bangkok (June 9-12, 2025). In parallel with the Regional Workshops, a customized mentoring program for project teams from participating countries has been operating in collaboration with NTFP-EP Asia since 2024. The mentoring program is conducted through both online sessions and in-person meetings during site visits.

9. As participating countries commenced project activities at different times and their progress has varied considerably, it is difficult to conclude all project activities uniformly by the originally scheduled end date of 2025. Although the budget allocated to support country-level activities has been fully disbursed by 2025, the final phase of the project—focusing on the operation of Incubator Centers to share and disseminate best practices derived from project outcomes—will continue through 2026. Each participating country is therefore expected to complete its remaining activities within this final phase.

III. Implementation Challenges and Mitigation Measures

10. The primary sources of project delay remain to be (a) technical constraints and (b) internal administrative procedures, including government permits and approvals, and the internal steps required to commit and disburse funds. Moreover, frequent turnover of project officers within some

IAs further disrupts continuity and erodes institutional memory. In certain cases, misalignment between national regulations and AFoCO's rules has also created compliance uncertainty and operational bottlenecks.

11. To address these challenges, the Secretariat strongly encourages IAs
 - a. To adopt proactive procedural readiness by mapping permit pathways, maintaining permitting calendars, and pre-clearing documents;
 - b. To streamline post-transfer standard operating procedures for fund utilization by systemizing delegated authorities and pre-approved procurement plans; and
 - c. To strengthen staff continuity through measures such as formal handover protocols and targeted onboarding.
12. Governance bodies (PSC/project-related national council) and ad-hoc technical sessions should be utilized to surface issues early on, define clear escalation windows, and ensure timely course correction and coordination.

IV. Updates on 2025 Annual Technical Workshop (ATW)

13. The sixth (6th) Session of Annual Technical Workshop (ATW) on Project Management and Performance Review was successfully held from 15 to 16 September 2025 in Seoul Botanic Park, in cooperation with Seoul Metropolitan Government. Aiming to revisit the year's achievements, assess project progress, and facilitate the sharing of lessons learned among the IAs, the workshop was attended by more than ninety (90) participants, including Project Managers/Staffs from twenty-eight (28) projects and National Focal Points (NFPs) from thirteen (13) Member Countries.

14. Over two (2) days, the Workshop featured two (2) Sessions: (i) Project Management and Performance Review and (ii) Interactive Thematic Dialogues. As a key highlight of the Workshop, the Project Management and Performance Review Session focused on key achievements and lessons learned, providing a valuable platform to take stock of progress, surface challenges, and explore innovative solutions. The Interactive Thematic Dialogues examined blended finance, with an emphasis on the strategic integration of Market-based Solutions (MbS) into Nature-based Solutions (NbS) through ODA-funded interventions.

15. The Second (2nd) AFoCO Project Photo Exhibition was held concurrently with the Workshop. A total of twenty-six (26) entry photos, representing twenty-four (24) Individual Projects and two (2) Regional Projects, were submitted. Participants explored the projects through photos and contributed to the selection of the winners via a public vote. By combining the public vote and jury scores, six (6) winners were selected.

V. Points for Consideration

16. The Assembly may wish to take note of the information and provide further guidance and recommendations, as appropriate.
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