

Thirteenth Session of the Assembly
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Agenda Item 7.2

Updates on the Implementation of Projects — Special Projects

I. Background

1. In accordance with Decision 43-V-21R and Decision 49-VIII-23S of the Assembly, the Secretariat has developed the AFoCO Strategic Plan (2024–2030) and the AFoCO ten (10)-year Climate Action Plan (2025–2034), aligned with global climate and development objectives.
2. Pursuant to these Plans, AFoCO has been developing and implementing Special Projects since 2023, based on legal arrangements with the concerned countries. Special Projects collectively refer to Projects developed through opportunities other than the regular call for project proposals. While they are not subject to Assembly approval, they adhere to donor requirements and AFoCO's internal project management standards, including safeguards, due diligence, and consistency with the AFoCO Project Manual (Decision 17-II-19S).
3. As of 29 October 2025, AFoCO is implementing a diversified portfolio of Special Projects financed through multilateral, and bilateral, and private partnerships. These projects are at various stages of development and implementation across Member Countries.
4. The Secretariat continues to coordinate closely with Implementing Agencies (IAs) and Partners to address operational issues through regular meetings, technical missions, and on-site supervision, in accordance with the AFoCO Project Manual.

II. Private Sector Projects

A. ESG/CSR Projects

- a. **AFoCO-KT&G Project for Forest Restoration in Wildfire-affected Areas of Abai Region, Kazakhstan**
5. In December 2024, AFoCO and KT&G Corporation signed an MoU establishing a general framework for cooperation. Building upon this general framework, a project-specific MoU for the restoration of wildfire-affected forests in the Abai Region, Kazakhstan was signed on 22 April 2025 by AFoCO, KT&G, and the Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources of the Republic of Kazakhstan.

6. Supported by KRW 1 billion over three (3) years from KT&G, the project aims to restore 100 hectares of wildfire-damaged forest in the Abai Region. Approximately 60,000 hectares of the region were severely affected by wildfires in 2023.
7. In 2025, the Secretariat worked closely with the Implementing Agency (the Committee of Forestry and Wildlife of Kazakhstan) and received technical consultancy from the Korea Association of Forest Enviro-conservation Technology (KAFET) to develop a detailed reforestation design and establish ten (10) hectares of experimental plots.

b. AFoCO-Yuhan Project for Forest Restoration in Wildfire-affected Areas of Batsumber Region, Mongolia

8. In support of Mongolia's national "Billion Trees" movement, the Secretariat signed an MoU on 8 September 2025 with Yuhan Corporation, National Forest Agency of Mongolia, and Billion Trees Socially Oriented NGO to restore wildfire-affected forests in the Batsumber Region, Mongolia. Since 2000, wildfires have affected about 18% of Batsumber's forest area (26,419 hectares), posing a major threat to Mongolia's primary forest ecosystems.
9. The Project Inception Ceremony was subsequently held on 30 September 2025 at the project site with active participation from local communities. With Yuhan Corporation's commitment of KRW 1 billion over five (5) years, the project will plant 36,000 trees annually to restore wildfire-damaged forests in the Batsumber Region.

B. Carbon Projects

a. AFoCO x Acorn Agroforestry Carbon Project in Kyrgyzstan

10. As of September 2025, around 14,000 farmers have been onboarded across Jalalabad, Osh, Chui, Talas, and Issyk-Kul Provinces under the AFoCO x Acorn Agroforestry Special Project. In June–July 2025, a total of twenty (20) Training of Trainers (ToTs) were organized, through which 1,000 farmers received training on sustainable agroforestry practices, strengthening local capacity and awareness. AFoCO and Acorn organized Carbon Removal Unit (CRU) payment ceremonies in Issyk-Kul, Jalalabad, and Batken Provinces in August and September 2025, marking the first direct distribution of carbon incentive payments to participating farmers.
11. The Secretariat will continue to expand farmer participation and prepare for the first validation and verification (V/V) scheduled in 2026. It will ensure international credibility of the project results.

b. Mekong REDD+ Project–P1 (MRP 1) in Cambodia

12. The Mekong REDD+ Project–P1 (MRP 1), jointly implemented by the Forestry Administration of Cambodia and AFoCO with support from Woori Bank, has been under implementation since January 2024 to generate forest carbon credits through avoided deforestation and community-based restoration across fourteen (14) Community Forests in Stung Treng Province. The

second (2nd) Project Management Committee, held in December 2024, endorsed integrating the Stung Treng and Kratie areas under a single registration and agreed to conduct a one (1)-time financial audit upon project completion.

13. The project is making steady progress in community forest boundary demarcation, land registration, and livelihood enhancement through NTFP enterprises, community savings, solar-powered water systems, and ecotourism activities. AFoCO and the Forestry Administration of Cambodia are aligning project registration and project design document (PDD) development with Verra's update of Cambodia's jurisdictional datasets. These datasets — including baseline, risk map, and reference region shapefiles — are currently under revision and review and the update is expected to be completed by Q3 2025. Once these datasets are finalized, the project will proceed with registration and PDD development under the VM0048 methodology. Although Woori Bank initially suggested conducting annual financial audits, it was later agreed that, instead of following that initial suggestion, AFoCO's finance officer would participate in the 2025 monitoring mission to strengthen on-site financial review and transparency.

III. Public Sector Projects

A. Multilateral Development Bank

Green Resilient Landscapes (GRL) in Mongolia Supported by World Bank

14. In 2025, under the “Mongolia Green Resilient Landscapes (GRL)” technical assistance project supported by the World Bank, AFoCO has advanced activities to develop carbon accounting tools and to estimate the carbon potential of the Billion Trees National Movement (BTNM). These outputs will enhance the design and operationalization of large-scale forest landscape restoration efforts to address climate change and support the implementation of BTNM. In the final phase through March 2026, AFoCO will develop green investment plans for BTNM interventions, integrating carbon finance potential. Planned outputs include operational and financial models, benefit-sharing mechanisms, and an investment forum to mobilize resources and scale up implementation.

15. AFoCO has also strengthened Mongolia's carbon finance readiness through training and knowledge exchange. Training of Trainers (ToT) sessions in Ulaanbaatar and Lun Soum engaged officials, academics, and practitioners, combining classroom instruction with field exercises such as biomass measurement. The ToT approach ensures sustainability by enabling participants to train local forestry staff and communities, thereby expanding long-term capacity to implement high-integrity carbon projects.

B. Agroforestry Project in Timor-Leste Supported by European Union (EU)

16. Following the approval of the EU Delegation, AFoCO will launch the project “Unlocking the Potential of Agroforestry for Climate Resilience and Sustainable Development in Timor-Leste (AFCLIM-TL)” with an inception meeting in Dili in early November 2025. To ensure smooth implementation, the Secretariat will finalize contracts with project staff in consultation with the Government of Timor-Leste and hold further discussions for the project's inception, thereby strengthening coordination and facilitating effective implementation.

C. International Cooperation Funds

a. Mekong-Korea Cooperation Fund (MKCF) Project (AFoCO/037/2023)

17. The Secretariat has been implementing the Project "ICT for Climate Change Adaptation and Forest Fire Management in the Mekong Region" since 2023, following the sixth (6th) Call from the Mekong Institute. Cambodia and Vietnam are participating countries in the project, with a total budget of USD 996,031. Cambodia has approved the project in May 2023, and Vietnam followed with approval in June 2024.

18. The project focuses on developing an ICT system that provides a Forest Fire Danger Rating Index project sites, offering real-time forest fire information. In addition, it aims to establish forest fire prevention policies that utilize fire risk information, implement capacity-building programs for relevant stakeholders, and conduct awareness campaigns to promote forest fire prevention among local communities.

19. Currently, the forest fire danger rating system has been developed and customized for project sites in both Cambodia and Vietnam. Training workshops targeting government officials were successfully conducted in both Cambodia and Vietnam to promote the effective use of the ICT-based Forest Fire Management System (FFMS). Additionally, workshops were conducted to explore the integration of forest fire risk information generated by the ICT-based FFMS into national forest policy planning.

20. Notably, Cambodia achieved a significant milestone by utilizing this project as an opportunity to develop a new national-level long-term forest fire management strategy. The outcomes and lessons learned from this project will be shared with other Mekong region countries through an upcoming workshop and learning visit program.

b. ASEAN-Korea Cooperation Fund (AKCF) Project (AFoCO/032/2022)

21. The Secretariat is currently executing the project "Capacity Building on Enhancing Resilience to Forest Fire, and Local Livelihood and Market Linkages." This project is strategically supported by the ASEAN-Korea Cooperation Fund (AKCF) and the Korea Forest Service (KFS), in collaboration with the Non-Timber Forest Products Exchange Programme (NTFP-EP) across the CLMV countries (Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar, and Vietnam).

22. Significant infrastructure development has been completed, notably the installation of forest fire lookout towers equipped with early detection devices. To date, six (6) lookout towers have been deployed across Cambodia, Lao PDR, and Myanmar, with planned installations to follow in Vietnam. In terms of material support, Cambodia and Myanmar each received two (2) fire engines and one hundred (100) backpack pumps with fire retardants. Lao PDR was provided with one (1) fire engine and a pickup truck as per project plan. The requisite equipment for Viet Nam will be supplied imminently, as domestic procedural clearances have recently been finalized.

23. Capacity-building efforts focused on local livelihood enhancement and market linkages have been spearheaded by NTFP-EP Asia. These activities encompass a wide range of engagements,

including market summits, specialized workshops, training sessions, and exchange visits. Furthermore, the Third (3rd) Mekong-Korea Forest Fire Symposium is scheduled to be organized in Lao PDR in November 2025. This event will feature crucial field training on fire suppression techniques and facilitate essential knowledge sharing among participating countries.

24. The Secretariat is actively pursuing synergy with the Mekong-Korea Cooperation Fund (MKCF) Project. Both projects share the overarching objective of enhancing target countries' capacities in forest fire management systems and operational skills. Participating countries are collaborating effectively to realize the project's objectives through the mutual sharing of information and infrastructure, such as centralized forest fire information servers, mobile applications, and specialized devices.

25. The Secretariat has formally reported the progress of the project at key ASEAN meetings, including the ASEAN Working Group on Forest Management (AWG-FM) and the ASEAN Senior Officials on Forestry (ASOF). Moving forward, the participating countries and the Secretariat are expected to actively engage in and enhance public awareness and promotional activities at both the national and regional levels.

D. Others

a. Sustaining an Abundance of Forest Ecosystems (SAFE) Project (AFoCO/041/2023)

26. The Sustaining an Abundance of Forest Ecosystems (SAFE) project is a collaborative project between the KFS and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP). The SAFE project encompasses three (3) primary objectives, referred to as Outputs:

- (i) Conserving and restoring vulnerable forest ecosystems;
- (ii) Establishing monitoring frameworks; and
- (iii) Promoting local livelihoods that contribute to the health and resilience of forest ecosystems.

27. Through an agreement with UNEP, the Secretariat has been working on the development of Country-level Implementation Plans (CLIP) for Output 1, "Conserving and restoring vulnerable forest ecosystems," from June 2023 to May 2024. Under this Plan, project sites in Cambodia, Lao PDR, and Vietnam have been successfully identified.

28. From June 2024 to February 2025, the focus shifted to developing five (5)-year Community Forest Management Plans (CFMP) for the project sites identified in the CLIP. Bhutan joined the project in 2024 and simultaneously developed its CLIP in parallel with the CFMP.

29. Due to UNEP's internal procedures, full-scale restoration project activities under the CFMP officially commenced in July 2025 in Bhutan, Cambodia, Lao PDR, and Viet Nam. The first (1st)-year implementation phase is scheduled to conclude by June 2026.

b. Assuring the Future of Forests with Integrated Fire Management (AFFIRM) Project (AFoCO/046/2023)

30. The Assuring the Future of Forests with Integrated Fire Management (AFFIRM) Project, led by Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations, is being implemented in partnership with AFoCO, the Regional Community Forestry Training Center for Asia and the Pacific (RECOFTC), and other stakeholders. At the global level, FAO headquarters is undertaking the development of the Global Fire Hub, while the regional component, involving Cambodia, Lao PDR, Thailand, and Viet Nam, focuses on producing a Review and Analysis Report on the status of forest fire management in the respective countries.

31. AFoCO participates in this regional component as a key partner and has been specifically tasked with developing the chapter on Legislation and Institutional Frameworks. The project is scheduled to be implemented from June 2024 to November 2025.

32. To develop the chapter, AFoCO requested participating countries to nominate national experts. The experts developed country-specific reports under the Chapter. After reviews and feedback from the AFoCO Secretariat and FAO, the reports were compiled, finalized, and submitted to FAO as a consolidated draft report.

33. FAO is planning to convene country workshops to discuss the draft Review and Analysis Report of respective countries. Feedback and recommendations from the workshop will be incorporated into the final version of the Report, to be issued as an official FAO publication in 2026.

IV. Points for Consideration

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

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