

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

Agenda Item 11.2

Forest Fire Management in Asia (FFMA) Initiative

I. Background

1. The Forest Fire Management in Asia (FFMA) Initiative is a regionally coordinated effort aimed at strengthening the capacity of Member Countries to prevent, respond to, and recover from increasingly frequent and severe forest fires. By investing in technical competencies, institutional linkages, and knowledge exchange, the FFMA Initiative aims to build a skilled workforce and foster regional cooperation for effective forest fire prevention, response, and recovery.
2. In 2025, the FFMA Initiative advanced its pilot phase activities, institutional governance, and the formulation of a five (5)-year Consolidated Work Plan and Budget for 2026–2030. Jointly supported by the Governments of the Republic of Korea and the French Republic, the five (5)-year FFMA program is designed to address the increasing frequency and severity of forest fires across Asia by integrating training and capacity development, advanced education, and collaborative research into a coherent long-term platform.

II. Progress Update

A. Achievements During the Pilot Phase (2023–2025)

3. During the pilot phase (2023–2025), prototype Training of Trainers on Forest Fire Suppression (TOTFFS) sessions were conducted in Thailand, Indonesia, and Kazakhstan in collaboration with the Royal Forest Department of Thailand, the Ministry of Forestry of Indonesia and IPB University, and the Committee of Forestry and Wildlife of Kazakhstan. Each session was tailored to tropical forests, peatland ecosystems, and dryland and mountainous environments respectively.
4. A total of one hundred and four (104) participants from multiple Member Countries successfully completed the courses, resulting in the development of standardized yet adaptable curricula. Key lessons included the importance of simulation-based training, the establishment of cross-country trainer pools, and the incorporation of localized field exercises.
5. To highlight these achievements, a consolidated summary of participants and training information is presented in **Annex-1**.
6. Beyond training, the Science and Technology Exchange Partnership (STEP) program with French Ministry for Europe and Foreign Affairs (French MOEFA) enabled four (4) practitioners from

three (3) countries to complete a six (6)-week intensive course in France in 2024. In parallel, the AFoCO–PSL Master’s Degree Program in Forest Fire Management was launched, with two students from ASEAN countries commencing studies in September 2025. These programs mark the institutionalization of advanced education under the FFMA Initiative and strengthen the linkage between field-based training, academic grounding, and policy-oriented approaches.

7. AFoCO has also initiated preparatory work for research and exchange activities, identifying priority themes such as post-fire vegetation restoration and the use of unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) for fire monitoring. Initial contacts have been made under the ASEAN Agreement on Transboundary Haze Pollution (AATHP), and exploratory discussions with Australia and Canada are underway as prospective partners for expanded collaboration.

8. The First Project Steering Committee (PSC) Meeting was convened on 22 September 2025 in Seoul, Republic of Korea, hosted by the Korea Forest Service (KFS) with the participation of the AFoCO Secretariat and the French MOEFA. The meeting, facilitated by AFoCO, formally adopted the Rules of Procedure as the Initiative’s governance structure and endorsed the Consolidated Work Plan and Budget for 2026–2030, together with the Annual Work Plan and Budget for 2026.

B. Official Launch of Five-Year FFMA (2026–2030)

9. Beginning in 2026, annual Training of Trainers sessions will be organized in selected Member Countries, complemented by advanced training modules every two (2) years in France or the Republic of Korea. The AFoCO–PSL Master’s Program will continue to provide academic grounding for practitioners, while research will expand to include fire ecology, rehabilitation of fire-affected areas, and the application of remote sensing, UAV monitoring, and early warning systems.

10. Regional coordination will be reinforced through data sharing, cross-country collaboration, and the establishment of participatory monitoring and evaluation systems to ensure transparency, accountability, and responsiveness to both national and regional needs. A special session will be organized at the Thirteenth (13th) Session of the Assembly in October 2025 to commemorate the official launch of the main phase, raising visibility and reinforcing the Initiative’s role as a regional platform.

11. The key outputs envisaged under the five (5)-year plan are summarized in **Annex-2**.

12. The Initiative will continue to be supported through joint contributions from the French MOEFA and KFS with annual disbursements reviewed. The Committee underscored the importance of timely reporting, clear communication, and effective visibility measures, including testimonies from beneficiary countries, as critical enablers to sustain continued financial support and to demonstrate the Initiative’s added value to regional and global agendas.

III. Plan for 2026

13. In 2026, the first year of main phase, the Initiative will operationalize the Consolidated Work Plan through structured activities under three (3) key components.

- a. Training and Capacity Development will include three (3) Regional Training of Trainers on Forest Fire Suppression (TOTFFS) sessions: (i) tropical forests in Thailand (January), (ii) peatland ecosystems in Indonesia (April), and (iii) dryland and mountainous areas in Kazakhstan (August). Approximately sixty-six (66) participants will be trained across these sessions, combining theoretical modules, simulation exercises, and localized field practice.

An Advanced TOTFFS will be convened in France (October–November) for high-performing alumni, with a focus on advanced suppression systems, specialized equipment, and institutional coordination mechanisms.

- b. Advanced Education will feature the delivery of the STEP MOEFA Fellowship in southern France (November–December) for up to fourteen (14) practitioners, providing an intensive six (6)-week program on forest fire risk and management. In parallel, the French Republic–Republic of Korea Joint Degree Program will commence its first cohort in September 2026, enrolling four (4) students in a two (2)-year curriculum jointly delivered in both countries.
- c. Research and Exchange will be initiated with the placement of four (4) Ph.D.-level fellows for three-to-ten (3–10) months at research institutions in France and the Republic of Korea. In addition, the First (1st) FFMA Policy Symposium will be convened in November 2026 with approximately forty (40) participants, including representatives from AFoCO Member Countries, the ASEAN AATHP Secretariat, and international partners such as Australia and Canada, to strengthen regional governance and promote cross-border collaboration.

14. Governance will be reinforced through the Annual PSC Meeting, systematic monitoring and evaluation against predefined indicators, and the dissemination of results through annual progress reports.

15. In 2026, targeted efforts will be made to promote the FFMA Initiative through international platforms, including its presentation at side events during ASEAN and UN meetings, as well as enhanced communication via AFoCO's official website and outreach channels. These promotional activities are intended to expand stakeholder engagement, attract new partners and donors, and raise the visibility of FFMA's contributions to regional forest fire capacity building, climate resilience, and transboundary cooperation.

IV. Points for Consideration

16. The Assembly may wish to:

- a. Take note of the substantive progress achieved during the pilot phase, including the implementation of training programs, the institutionalization of advanced education, the preparation for research activities, and the outcomes of the First PSC Meeting;
- b. Encourage Member Countries to nominate trainees and experts best suited to the thematic focus and responsibilities of the program, to ensure meaningful contributions to the Initiative; and,
- c. Endorse the official launch of the FFMA main phase in 2026 under the Consolidated Work Plan and Budget for 2026–2030.

Queries on the content of the document may be addressed to:

*Soozin Ryang, Capacity Building and Evaluation Team, Planning and Operations Division
(Phone: +82 2 785 8966; Email: soozin.ryang@afocosec.org)*

Consolidated Performance Highlights in 2023-2025

N o.	Component	Activity / Location	No of Count-ries	No of Participants (M/F)	No of Trainers Mobilized	Key Outputs
2023						
1	Component 1	TOTFFS Tropical Forest (Thailand)	14	24 (19/5)	4	<i>14 trainees certified</i>
2024						
2	Component 1	TOTFFS Tropical Forest (Thailand)	10	21 (21/0)	6	<i>21 trainees certified</i>
3	Component 2	STEP MOEFA (France)	3	4 (3/1)	-	<i>Developed 4 national action plan</i>
2025						
4	Component 1	TOTFFS Tropical Forest (Thailand)	4	18 (12/6)	6	<i>18 trainees certified</i>
5	Component 1	TOTFFS Peatland (Indonesia)	4	19 (17/2)	8	<i>19 trainees certified</i>
6	Component 1	TOTFFS Dryland (Kazakhstan)	5	22 (21/1)	7	<i>22 trainees certified</i>
7	Component 2	PSL Master's Program (France)	2	2 (1/1)	-	
8	Component 3	Preparatory Research & Networking	-	N/A	-	<i>Exploratory meeting with ASEAN AATHP on FFMA cooperation</i>

Consolidated Summary of Expected Outputs (2026-2030)

No.	Component / Activity	Location	Outputs
Component 1 – Training & Capacity Development			
1	TOTFFS Tropical Forest	Thailand	140 trainers
2	TOTFFS Peatland	Indonesia	95 trainers
3	TOTFFS Dryland	Kazakhstan	95 trainers
4	TOTFFS – Advanced	France / Republic of Korea	75 trainers
Component 2 – Advanced Education			
5	STEP MOEFA	France	70 experts
6	Joint Degree Program	France / Republic of Korea	20 recipients
Component 3 – Research & Exchange			
7	Research & Networking	-	20 researchers 5 symposiums