

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

Agenda Item 14

Updates on Capacity Development Activities and Future Plan

I. Ongoing Capacity Building Activities

A. Updates on Education and Training Programs

1. In the year 2025, the Secretariat conducted two (2) distinct capacity-building programs, namely the Science and Technology Exchange Partnership (STEP) and the Keep Eternally Your Seeds for Future (KEYS) Program, from 9 to 20 June 2025 in the Republic of Korea. The programs were jointly organized by the AFoCO Regional Education and Training Center (RETC) and the Korea Arboreta and Gardens Institute (KOAGI). Under the KOAGI, Sejong National Arboretum conducted the STEP program and the Baekdudaegan Global Seed Vault (BGSV) conducted the KEYS program, respectively.
2. The STEP Program focused on enhancing technical competence in arboretum management, biodiversity conservation, and public engagement. Three (3) officials from Kazakhstan and the Kyrgyz Republic participated in lectures and practical sessions on nursery design, arboretum planning, greenhouse operations, and propagation techniques, complemented by field visits to leading botanical gardens.
3. The KEYS Program emphasized seed conservation and propagation practices, engaging eight (8) participants from Bhutan, Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar, Thailand, and Viet Nam, along with three (3) participants from Small Island Developing States supported by the Seed Vault. Training covered seed viability testing, specimen preparation, germination methods, and the development of draft national seed deposit plans in alignment with BGSV standards.
4. As joint activities, all participants attended the Opening Ceremony of the STEP and KEYS Programs during the Eleventh (11th) International Congress on Education in Botanic Gardens (ICEBG) on 9 June, and participated in a working-level meeting hosted at the AFoCO Secretariat on 10 June to establish the Seed Management Working Group. This new mechanism is expected to foster regional cooperation in ex-situ seed conservation, seed banking strategies, and policy dialogue among AFoCO Member Countries.
5. Building upon these activities, the Secretariat, in collaboration with the National Institute of Forest Science (NIFoS) of the Republic of Korea, successfully implemented the inaugural Young Forest Scientists Awards. The program was held in Seoul, Republic of Korea, from 29 to 30 September 2025, with the participation of ten (10) selected young professionals from Member Countries.

6. The program aimed to cultivate the next generation of forest scientists by engaging students, recent graduates, and early-career researchers in regional forest and climate-related discourse. Participants presented their research on topics such as climate change adaptation and mangrove ecosystem restoration, while also engaging in group discussions and a field visit. Through this program, the young scientists gained professional recognition, developed networks with policymakers and experts, and contributed to shaping future strategies for forest resilience. Certificates were awarded to all participants, with special recognition given to outstanding research presentations.

7. The summary of training and education programs in 2025 is in **Annex-1**.

B. Update on AFoCO Fellowship Program

8. In the year 2025, the Secretariat extended a warm welcome to a total of seven (7) Fellowship Officials from Bhutan, Kazakhstan, Mongolia, Myanmar, the Philippines, and Thailand. These Fellowship Officials commenced their assignments at the Secretariat Headquarters in February 2025, with a designated service period ranging eleven (11) months, concluding in December 2025. One (1) Fellowship Official selected in 2025 will start the duty in 2026.

9. The Secretariat arranged study visit programs to relevant agencies in the forestry sector of the Republic of Korea in order to provide the Fellowship Officials with opportunities to explore and share expertise that can be applied to their professional work. These included: (i) Forest Fire Management Training and Drone Education at the Korea Aviation Headquarters; (ii) Sustainable Forest Management Training at the Baekdudaegan National Arboretum (BDNA), the Seed Vault, and the Sejong National Arboretum; among others.

10. Pursuant to Decision 59-XI-24R on the Work Plan and Budget for 2025, adopted by the Eleventh (11th) Session of the Assembly, the Secretariat is currently under process of selecting the 2026 batch of Fellowship Officials. Taking into account the expected workload and budget availability, the Secretariat will select six (6) Fellowship nominees across two (2) categories.

11. The status of the Member Countries participating in the Fellowship Program is in **Annex-2**.

C. Update on the Landmark Scholarship Program

12. Building upon the achievements of the Landmark Scholarship Program, which has supported a total of ten (10) doctoral and twenty (20) master's students since its inception in 2014, the Secretariat has advanced to the next stage of program development in 2025. Drawing on the outcomes of the colloquiums and the round table meeting held in 2024, the Secretariat has initiated the design of the Landmark Scholarship Program 2.0.

13. This new phase is being conceptualized with a view to expanding the geographical scope, diversifying research disciplines, and embedding a stronger mechanism for academic exchange. Preparatory work in 2025 has therefore focused on establishing the programmatic framework, defining revised guidelines, and aligning the scholarship scheme with AFoCO's long-term Capacity Building Roadmap 2030 (A-23-9-11). By doing so, the Secretariat aims to position the Landmark Scholarship Program 2.0 as a more comprehensive platform for developing future forestry leaders in the region.

14. The status of the Member Countries participating in the Landmark Scholarship Program is in **Annex-3**.

II. Regional Education and Training Center (RETC) Operation and Achievements

A. Operation and Management

15. Currently, the Regional Education and Training Center (RETC) is under limited operation, and its security measures are supported by the Forest Department (FD) of Myanmar. The RETC's maintenance is overseen by 20 seconded governmental officials from the FD, along with the contribution of nine (9) local staff members. Following the relaxation of immigration policies in September 2022, the RETC has been conducting training programs aimed at enhancing local livelihoods and addressing educational concerns. These programs include the Eco-school Program, which focuses on increasing environmental awareness among young students, as well as livelihood improvement training for local communities in Myanmar. Additionally, the RETC has tailored programs to meet the needs of forest education experts who express an interest in visiting the center.

16. To ensure the continued effective management and sustainable operation of the RETC, the Secretariat has extended the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) for the Landmark Program with the FD of Myanmar for an additional five years, now valid until 31 July 2029. This extension also supports the ongoing process of finalizing the Host Country Agreement for the RETC. In 2026, the RETC will remain fully operational, delivering a total of twenty-two (22) programs across eight (8) categories, including short- and long-term training, community development training, the Eco-School Program, in-house capacity building, workshops and conferences, as well as partnerships and promotional activities, to be conducted both at the RETC and in AFoCO Member Countries.

B. Signboard Installation at AFoCO Study Forest

17. In 2025, the RETC successfully completed the installation of a total of seventeen (17) information boards at the AFoCO Study Forest (formerly known as the 'AFoCO Experimental Forest'), including one (1) entrance board, one comprehensive information board, five (5) directional boards, four (4) main zone boards, and six (6) sub-zone boards. Metal-based materials were applied to ensure long-term durability under local climate conditions. This activity was carried out as part of the phased infrastructure development of the Study Forest, following the completion of road improvement works in 2023.

III. Points for Consideration

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

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)*

Summary of Training and Education Programs

Table 1. Status of Training and Education Programs in 2025

No.	Date/Venue	Courses	Number of Trainees* (Male/Female)	Number of Countries*
AFoCO Regular Training (short-term)				
1	Mar/TH	AFoCO-French MOFA Forest Fire Suppression Training	19 (13/6)	4
2	Apr/ID	AFoCO-French MOFA Forest Fire Suppression Training	19 (17/2)	4
2	June/ROK	Forest Fire Management and Drone Training for Fellowship Officials at Forest Aviation HQ	5 (3/2)	5
3	June/ROK	Study visits for Fellowship Officials	5 (3/2)	5
4	Aug/KZ	AFoCO-French MOFA Forest Fire Suppression Training	22 (21/1)	5
AFoCO Regular Training (long-term)				
4	Aug/ROK	AFoCO-BDNA STEP & KEYS Program	11 (7/4)	10
5	Nov/FR	AFoCO-France FFMA STEP Program	(To be updated)	
Community Development Training				
6	Jan/RETC	Agroforestry training	20 (18/2)	1
7	Jan/RETC	Organic fertilizer making training	20 (18//2)	1
8	Oct/RETC	Bamboo handmade products	20 (M/F)	1
9	Dec/RETC	Mushroom production	20 (M/F)	1
Eco-School Program				
10	Jan-Dec/RETC	Eco-School Program	1,260 (484/776)	1
Workshop & Conference				
11	Sep/Seoul	AFoCO-NIFoS Living Lab Working Group Prep Meeting (Mangrove Restoration)	17 (11/6)	9
12	Sep/Seoul	AFoCO-NIFoS Living Lab Working Group Prep Meeting (Climate Change Adaptation)	15 (8/7)	14
13	Sep/Seoul	AFoCO-NIFoS Young Scientist Program	10 (6/4)	5
Partnerships & Promotion				
14	Jun/Seoul	The 11th International Congress on Education in Botanic Gardens (ICEBG)	17 (11/6)	11
In-house Capacity-building Program for RETC Staff				
15	Jan-Dec/RETC	Capacity building for RETC staff (4 courses)	63 (47/16)	1
Customized Training & Others				
16	TBD/RETC	Cooperative study-visit program with World Bank	To be updated	To be updated

Table 2. AFoCO RETC Trainees of the Member Countries (2019–2025)

Country	Number of Certified Trainees*							Total
	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	
Bhutan	14	2	11	12	8	1	8	56
Brunei Darussalam	6	2	5	11	9	-	-	33
Cambodia	13	6	22	25	6	3	5	80
Indonesia	14	8	66	20	18	5	10	141
Kazakhstan	8	-	13	6	2	6	13	48
Kyrgyzstan	-	-	-	5	4	5	7	21
Lao PDR	10	6	9	5	6	-	7	43
Malaysia	-	-	6	17	25	-	3	51
Mongolia	6	4	9	8	3	2	6	38
Myanmar	24	10	14	10	9	4	8	79
Philippines	8	2	43	16	3	-	6	78
Republic of Korea	-	-	-	3	4	-	-	7
Singapore	2	2	5	3	8	-	-	20
Tajikistan	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	3
Thailand	15	8	16	11	6	13	17	86
Timor-Leste	10	6	25	10	6	1	3	61
Viet Nam	14	8	12	11	8	1	2	56
Total	144	64	256	173	125	41	98	901

Note:

*Number of speakers, facilitators, and other countries' participants are not included.

Table 3. AFoCO STEP Researchers of the Member Countries (2019–2025)

Country	Number of STEP Researchers							Total
	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	
Bhutan	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
Brunei Darussalam	1	-	1	-	1	-	-	3
Cambodia	1	-	1	-	-	-	-	2
Indonesia	-	1	-	-	1	1	-	3
Kazakhstan	-	-	1	-	-	3	1	5
Kyrgyzstan	-	-	-	-	-	2	2	4
Lao PDR	-	1	-	-	-	-	-	1
Mongolia	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	1
Myanmar	1	1	-	-	-	-	-	2
Philippines	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	1
Tajikistan	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0
Thailand	-	-*	1	-	-	1	-	2
Timor-Leste	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	1
Viet Nam	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	1
Total	5	3	4	-	4	8	3	27

Note: *The nominee who did not participate the STEP program is not included.

Table 4. AFoCO KEYS Researchers of the Member Countries (2019–2025)

Country	Number of KEYS Researchers							Total
	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	
Bhutan	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1
Brunei Darussalam	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0
Cambodia	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1
Indonesia	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	1
Kazakhstan	-	-	-	-	-	3	-	3
Kyrgyzstan	-	-	-	-	-	2	-	2
Lao PDR	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	2
Mongolia	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	1
Myanmar	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1
Philippines	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0
Tajikistan	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0
Thailand	-	-	-	-	-	1	2	3
Timor-Leste	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	0
Viet Nam	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	1
Total	-	-	-	-	-	8	8	16

Note: *The nominee who did not participate the KEYS program is not included.

Table 5. AFoCO-NIFoS Young Scientist Program Participants (2023–2025)

	Number of Young Scientist Program Participants			Total
	2023	2024	2025	
Bhutan	2	-	-	2
Brunei Darussalam	-	-	-	0
Cambodia	-	-	1	1
Indonesia	2	-	5	7
Kazakhstan	2	-	-	2
Kyrgyzstan	-	-	-	0
Lao PDR	-	-	-	0
Mongolia	-	-	-	0
Myanmar	-	-	2	2
Philippines	-	-	1	1
Tajikistan	-	-	-	0
Thailand	-	-	-	0
Timor-Leste	-	-	-	0
Viet Nam	2	-	1	3
Total	8	-	10	18

AFoCO Fellowship Officials of the Member Countries (2015–2025)

Country	Number of Fellowship Officials										Total
	2015	2016	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	
Bhutan	n/a	n/a	1	1	1	1	1	-	1	<i>tbd</i> **	6
Brunei Darussalam	-	-	-	-	-	1	-	-	-	<i>tbd</i>	1
Cambodia	1	-	1	1	1	-	-	1	-	<i>tbd</i>	5
Indonesia	-	1	-	-	1	-	1	2 (1*)	-	<i>tbd</i>	5 (1*)
Lao PDR	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	<i>tbd</i>	1
Kazakhstan	n/a	n/a	-	-	-	1	1	1*	-	<i>tbd</i>	3 (1*)
Kyrgyzstan	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	-	1	-	<i>tbd</i>	1
Malaysia	-	1	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	<i>tbd</i>	1
Mongolia	n/a	n/a	-	-	1	-	-	-	1	<i>tbd</i>	2
Myanmar	-	-	1	-	1	1	1	1	2 (1*)	<i>tbd</i>	7 (1*)
Philippines	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	<i>tbd</i>	2
Singapore	-	-	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	<i>tbd</i>	-
Tajikistan	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	-	<i>tbd</i>	-
Thailand	-	1	-	-	-	1	-	1	1*	<i>tbd</i>	4 (1*)
Timor-Leste	n/a	n/a	-	-	1	1	-	-	1	<i>tbd</i>	3
Viet Nam	-	1	1	1	1	-	-	-	-	<i>tbd</i>	4
Total	3	4	4	3	7	6	4	7	7	<i>tbd</i>	45

(*Category II official) (**tbd: to be determined)

(n/a: not applicable for the duration of non-Party)

AFoCO Landmark Scholarship Recipients of the Member Countries (2014–2025)

Country	Number of Scholarship Recipient		Total
	Doctoral	Master's	
Brunei Darussalam	-	-	-
Cambodia	1 (KNU)	2 (YU PSPS)	3
Indonesia	3 (UOS / KNU / SNU)	1 (YU PSPS)	4
Lao PDR	1 (CNU)	2 (KWNU / YU PSPS)	3
Malaysia	-	-	-
Myanmar	1 (SNU)	4 (CBNU / CNU / YU PSPS / UOS)	5
Philippines	1 (CNU)	4 (2 DKU / 1 SNU / 1 YU PSPS)	5
Singapore	-	-	-
Thailand	2 (SNU / YU)	2 (YU PSPS / SNU)	4
Viet Nam	1 (CNU)	5 (YU PSPS / KMU / SNU / KNU / KWNU)	6
Total	10	20	30

Abbreviation

KNU: Kookmin University

YU PSPS: Yeungnam University, Park Chung Hee School of Policy and Saemaul

UOS: University of Seoul

CNU: Chungnam National University

KWNU: Kangwon National University

SNU: Seoul National University

SNU PC: Seoul National University Pyeongchang Campus

CBNU: Chungbuk National University

DKU: Dongguk University

YU: Yeungnam University

KMU: Kookmin University