



Asia-Pacific Network for Sustainable
Forest Management and Rehabilitation
亚太森林恢复与可持续管理组织

Report of the Fourth Meeting of the APFNet Council

25 March 2018 Beijing, China

1. Call to order

Dr. Preecha Ongprasert (Thailand), the outgoing Chair, and Mr. Dambis Kaip (Papua New Guinea), representing Ms. Magdalene Maihua, Vice-chair, opened the fourth meeting of the APFNet Council. After welcoming participants, they informed them that, with 17 member economies and 4 member organizations in attendance, a quorum was achieved. Representatives from Kyrgyzstan, the European Forest Institute (EFI) and the International Union of Forest Research Organizations (IUFRO), as well as some Directors of the Board were present as observers.

See annex 1 for the list of participants.

2. Adoption of the agenda

The outgoing Chair called for adoption of the provisional agenda [APFNet/Council/ENG/2018/01(v2)]. A request was made by Australia to add one item of APFNet's review of past 10 years: lessons learned and next steps. The Council adopted the agenda, with the addition of the proposed item under "Other matters". (*Decision C. 04/01*)

See annex 2 for the adopted agenda.

3. Election of officers

Before stepping down, the outgoing Chair and Vice-chair expressed their appreciation to members for their support over the past three years. Motions were made and duly seconded to nominate Dr. Preecha Ongprasert (Thailand) as Chair for another term and Dr. Sokh Heng (Cambodia) as Vice-chair.

Dr. Preecha Ongprasert and Dr. Sokh Heng were both elected by acclamation (*Decision C. 04/02*) and expressed their appreciation for the confidence members showed in them, promising to perform their functions to the best of their ability.

4. Report of the Executive Director 2017

Dr LU De provided an overview of work done in 2017, stressing the importance that the Secretariat placed on APFNet's mission and objectives, as outlined in the Operational Framework. He also noted the need to implement the decisions and recommendations made by the Board and the Council. Highlights of the year are as follows.

- (1) Efforts were made to build closer ties with Greater Central Asia (GCA) and the Americas to balance resources and activities among APFNet's seven sub-regions. Five GCA economies obtained observer status on the Council and they designated focal points for official communication and future collaboration. In addition, a contact point was established to liaise with members on a regular basis, especially in South America.
- (2) The Inner Mongolia Agriculture University and the Northwest Agriculture and Forestry University joined APFNet Scholarship Program (ASP), which now covers the GCA.
- (3) Policies, guidelines and document templates were reviewed and partially revised to improve project design, monitoring of implementation, and assessment of outcomes. Assistance was also given to project proponents to develop sound proposals.

- (4) Efforts to draw on alumni of the ASP and project partners, along with several initiatives, resulted in significantly strengthened networking to facilitate the flow of knowledge and experience.
- (5) Partnerships were enhanced through, for example, joint collaboration with FAO and RECOFTC, renewal of a MoU with ITTO, visits to IUFRO and participation in their events.
- (6) Considerable efforts were made to enhance the Secretariat's capacity by sending 2 staff members to universities for master's programs and seconding one to FAO-RAP in Bangkok. In addition, one intern from Cambodia and 2 more employees from Germany and the United Kingdom were hired and are helping not only to improve language skills and knowledge of forestry, but also to broaden the mindset of the young team and encourage creative thinking.
- (7) Full implementation and monitoring of financial and accounting policies, directives and standards has improved financial management and control and an accounting information system is tracking and analyzing the extent to which the use of APFNet's resources is efficient.

Dr LU De then briefed participants on efforts made to improve the engagement of the Council and Board in APFNet's activities, stressing the crucial role they play in the development of the organization. He emphasized that their involvement extended beyond approving work plans and budgets. These bodies should be a platform to exchange information on new developments, including policies such as those related to forestry reforms in China. APFNet is eager to tap into the expertise/knowledge of members on global issues and expressed the possibility of having them assist with project evaluations. If this latter activity were deemed appropriate, rules of procedure would have to be developed to authorize the Secretariat to cover travel expenses.

In response to comments and suggestions on how to improve the quality of projects, he added that rules governing the project cycle would be updated, along with a full set of document templates. Revisions aim to enhance the relevancy of these initiatives to APFNet's objectives and priorities and ensure that expected outcomes are better designed, achieved and measured. Results will be reported at the Council's next meeting.

5. Progress report on APFNet initiatives

Ms. Lu Qian (the Secretariat) briefed participants on the major work and outputs of 2017 under 3 initiatives, namely the Forestry Planning Network (FPN); the Asia Pacific Forestry Education Coordination Mechanism (AP-FECM); and the Trainers in Forestry (TIF) Network. She also introduced a soon-to-be-launched Trans-boundary Wildlife Conservation Mechanism (@Wild) which targets policy makers in Great Mekong Sub region. The aim is to provide them with new ideas on capacity building to improve wildlife protection.

She emphasized the shared purpose of these initiatives is to facilitate networking and the exchange of information/knowledge to help economies deal with issues they have in common, to various extents, in these areas. She also stated that concrete actions are supporting efforts, including specific projects. When the floor was open for comments, the importance of effective networking that such APFNet initiatives bring about was noted, along with the need to assess their effectiveness. In terms of @Wild, participants looked forward to hearing more about it and cautioned that ways be sought, including through collaboration and linkages, to ensure that it complements other programs, conservation efforts, law enforcement and networks in the region.

See annex 3 for details of the 4 APFNet initiatives.

6. Progress report on APFNet Capacity Building

Ms. Hu Chuyu (the Secretariat) reviewed the capacity building program, noting that the current priorities are education, research and training. She also stated that closer attention is being paid to designing activities which respond to the needs of recipients.

- (1) Education: In 2017, the ASP sponsored 29 students to pursue a Master's Degree in 4 host universities and improvements were made to curricula, teaching and facilities. In addition, the AP-FECM produced a report on the status and potential for future development of forestry education and 5 online courses were

promoted to help bridge the gap in regional education.

- (2) **Research:** Following consultations in 2017, the China-ASEAN Network of Forestry Research Institutes (CANFRI) would be launched in 2018 to facilitate collaboration in research. Four programs will be offered under this initiative, namely APFNet Conference Attendance Support, Research Fellowship, Small Research Grant and Early Career Academics Forum.
- (3) **Training:** Thirty participants received training under the themes of Forest Rehabilitation and Management and Forestry and Rural Livelihood Development. Another 10 people were taught ways to rehabilitate degraded grasslands in Inner Mongolia. One report was produced to identify future trends in skill requirements and to suggest what and how the Secretariat can contribute to next steps.

See annex 4 for details of APFNet's capacity building program.

7. **Project updates**

Ms. Sun Weina (the Secretariat) provided an overview of APFNet-funded projects in terms of allocation, themes and geographic distribution. She also reported on the status of projects in 2017.

- (1) Implementation, monitoring and evaluation of 17 projects involved more than 20 forest government agencies, close to 30 research institutes, 6 international organizations and more than 10 civil society organizations.
- (2) Improvements in project design and planning as well as a shift in focus from process-based forest management to impacts/outputs have made the management cycle more technically appropriate and administratively easier.
- (3) Key components of APFNet's implementation of thematic priorities were as follows:
 - Priority 1: Demonstration sites covering 600 ha were established, adding to APFNet's efforts to promote afforestation and rehabilitation of degraded forests.
 - Priority 2: Forest management planning, silviculture and forest fire control were given added weight in projects to promote sustainable management.
 - Priority 3: Investments continued in areas such as alternative energy, community forest enterprises and forest-based ecotourism to improve the socio-economic values of forests.
- (4) Project deliverables were a combination of results of policy testing, capacity building of project partners, knowledge transfer, improved forests and ecosystems as well as increased income from forest management.
- (5) Challenges related to the project cycle include long delays in the approval process before start-up, inaccurate financial reporting, changes in project personnel and weak communications.

See annex 5 for details of APFNet project updates.

Prof. Baatarbileg Nachin (Mongolia) then reported on the final project outcomes and impacts of *Monitoring Forest Cover Change in Mongolia with Participatory Approach*.

Details of the project are found in annex 6.

When the floor was opened for comments and questions, members expressed their appreciation for the work that APFNet accomplished in the last decade and encouraged efforts to enhance networking with its various partners. They were also grateful for being given information on project concept notes and proposals, stating that such exchanges were an effective way to keep the Council and Board in the loop. It was also suggested that opportunities to submit projects be broadly advertised through existing channels, including APFNet's partner organizations. The importance of sharing lessons learned from the projects was highlighted and the need to give careful consideration to promoting different types of projects and outcomes was underscored. Challenges and issues arising from project management required constant attention and reports providing

information on and analysis of these aspects would be useful to bring to the Council and Board for their inputs and support. Finally, it was suggested that opportunities be given to project agencies to attend Council and Board meetings to share information, even at the start-up stage.

8. APFNet's work plan and budget 2018

The Vice-chair opened the floor for comments and questions from Council on the proposed work plan and budget for 2018 [APFNet/Council/ENG/2018/04]. Members appreciated the document prepared by the Secretariat but expressed concern over the diverse range of activities. They noted the need to play to the strengths of APFNet and to complement, rather than duplicate, efforts performed by governments and other organizations.

Requests were made to clarify certain items, including the outcomes/impact of the First GCA Meeting of Ministers Responsible for Forestry (activity 9); the effort and resources required to maintain the database of regional forest laws and policies(activity 11); the aim of sharing research findings on the fragmentation of forest governance(activity 12); APFNet's role in FAO's Asia-Pacific Forestry Sector Outlook Study III and in the Forest Landscape Restoration Program(activity 13); the planned actions to enhance cooperation with partner signatories to Memoranda of Understanding (activity 14), and the Council's involvement in reviewing the second 5-year strategic plan (2016-20) (activity 23). In terms of projects, it was suggested that common denominators be identified and synthesized, for example, community participation and landscape management. Similar lessons/findings pertaining to different themes, models and innovations could then be extracted so that recommendations could be communicated to a wide audience and applied more broadly.

After the Secretariat provided additional information and clarification on document APFNet/Council/ENG/2018/04, the Council recommended the work plan and budget 2018 to the Board for its approval but again noted the need to focus on areas where the organization can add value and avoid duplicating initiatives and programs that are already in place in the region. (*Decision C.04/03*)

9. Nomination and selection of Board members 2019-2022

The Secretariat informed participants that it consulted both the Council and the Board on the eligibility criteria and on the process for nominating and selecting candidates to the Board of Directors. By 10 March 2018, it received seven nominations which it subsequently forwarded to members for their consideration.

The facilitator answered questions on the proposed procedures [APFNet/Council/ENG/2018/09] and asked for approval in principle of the document, stating that edits would be done to improve clarity but that substance would not be changed. Based on comments, she took note of the need to ensure that the future composition of the Board reflects diversity and balance, including gender, profession, ethnicity, race, age and geography. She also undertook to improve the wording on the timing of nominations (section 3) to make the rationale more clear.

The Council approved the document, in principle, noting that edits to the text would be made to improve clarity but that changes would not be substantive. (*Decision C.04/04*)

The Council selected the following 4 candidates to fill vacancies on the Board: W.T.B. Dissanayake (Sri Lanka), John James Leigh Vetter (Peru), Nor Akharrudin Bin Mahmud (Malaysia) and CTS Nair (FAO retiree and independent consultant). (*Decision C.04/05*)

See annex 8 for the revised procedures.

10. The Council's work and future meetings

The facilitator invited suggestions from the floor on how the Council could better advise APFNet on both institutional and substantive matters.

Organizing focused discussions in smaller groups during meetings was thought to be one way of better drawing on the expertise of members on issues such as improving project effectiveness, monitoring and evaluation, coordination with other organizations, forest rehabilitation and forest fire. Resource persons outside APFNet could be invited to make presentations and/or lead deliberations, as appropriate. As well, it was suggested that one or more working groups be established to address specific topics and perform other functions between meetings, such as on-site visits to support projects. In this regard, the Secretariat should draft terms of reference, in consultation with the Council and the Board. Such terms should include the means by which the group's outputs would feed into the work of the Council and the Board.

The idea of sharing information on good practices, challenges, potential solutions, work priorities and new developments was considered a good one but should be shared in a strategic way and should lead to concrete outcomes and outputs. Members also remarked that many were already promoting APFNet but would be willing to become more involved, with support from the Secretariat. As a final point, it was suggested that a high level review of project outcomes be undertaken so that findings could be taken into account when drafting work plans and determining the organization's strategic direction.

One observer repeated a point that was made at the last meeting, that sessions should be used to enhance mutual learning and capacity building among APFNet members by sharing impacts, strengths and weakness of projects and activities. In addition, minutes and reports of future Council and Board meetings should contain specific suggestions and advice rather than broad sentiments.

11. APFNet 10th anniversary

Dr LU De briefed meeting participants on the events to celebrate APFNet's 10th anniversary, including the Conference on Forest Rehabilitation and several concurrent meetings.

12. Date and venue for next meeting

Papua New Guinea repeated its kind offer to host the Council's fifth meeting in 2019. Members also welcomed an offer from the representative of Mongolia who pointed out that, to date, all sessions have been held in Southeast Asia. He hoped that, if chosen, Mongolia could showcase forestry developments in Central Asia.

The Council noted, with appreciation, the kind offers of Papua New Guinea and Mongolia to host the next meeting. Details will be confirmed in due course, after the Secretariat has further discussions with the two economies. (*Decision C.04/06*)

13. Other matters: APFNet's review of past 10 years: lessons learned and next steps

Mr Huang Kebiao (the Secretariat) reported on visits to Australia, Cambodia and Thailand in 2017 to review APFNet's activities over the past 10 years. Staff met with Council and Board members, contact persons, local partners and organizations. Ideas and comments were collected on matters related to 1) the niche of APFNet; 2) organization and governance; 3) members and partners; 4) assessment of impacts; 5) linkages among the 4 pillars; and 6) diversity of the Secretariat staff. Follow-up efforts focused on the planning and design of APFNet projects and on improving communications with the Council and Board to increase transparency.

14. Adoption of decisions and recommendations

At the request of the Chair, the facilitator summarized decisions and recommendations. The Council adopted the decisions and recommendations, as summarized by the facilitator.

15. Reflections

Time did not allow for each Council member to express his/her views on one or two of the issues discussed or decisions taken at the meeting. This item will be added to the next provisional agenda and Council's views will be sought on its inclusion.

16. Adjournment

The Chair and Vice-chair expressed appreciation to participants for their active engagement in achieving good outcomes. The Chair also thanked the Executive Director and the Secretariat for their many efforts to make this event a success. There being no further business, he called the meeting to a close.

Decisions and Recommendations

Decision C.04/01

The Council adopted the agenda, with the addition of one item under “Other matters”: APFNet’s review of 2017 activities: lessons learned and next steps.

Decision C.04/02

Dr. Preecha Ongprasert and Dr. Sokh Heng were elected as Chair and Vice-chair of the Council, with their term expiring in April 2011.

Decision C.04/03

The Council recommended the work plan and budget 2018 [APFNet/Council/ENG/2018/04] to the Board for its approval but again noted the need to focus on areas where the organization can add value and avoid duplicating initiatives and programs that are already in place in the region.

Decision C.04/04

The Council approved the proposed Procedure of Nomination and Selection of Members of APFNet Board of Directors [APFNet/Council/ENG/2018/09], in principle, noting that edits to the text would be made to improve clarity but that changes would not be substantive.

Decision C.04/05

The Council selected the following 4 candidates to fill vacancies on the Board in 2019:
W.T.B. Dissanayake (Sri Lanka), John James Leigh Vetter (Peru), Nor Akhirrudin Bin Mahmud (Malaysia) and CTS Nair (FAO retiree and independent consultant).

Decision C.04/06

The Council noted, with appreciation, the kind offers of Papua New Guinea and Mongolia to host the next meeting. Details will be confirmed in due course, once the Secretariat has further discussions with the two economies.

Procedures for the Nomination and Selection of Members to APFNet's Board of Directors

Rules of Procedure of the Board of Directors (Rule 8, Nomination and Rule 9, Selection) and of the Council (Rule 3, Powers) outline the nomination and selection of members to the Board of Directors in general terms. These procedures provide additional guidelines to the Council when required.

1. Responsibilities and terms of office

Responsibilities

Directors will serve on the Board in their personal capacity to provide general oversight of APFNet operations and make decisions in areas such as its strategies, objectives, priorities, regulations and the organizational framework. Members will also select the Executive Director and assess his/her performance, in addition to engaging in fund raising activities and promoting the organization, as needed.

Such responsibilities will be carried out by attending Board meetings and undertaking specific missions as part of its mandate to guide and improve APFNet's governance.

Terms of office

The term of a Board member is three years and can be renewed once, by consensus of the Board.

Remuneration

All non-executive Board members will serve without remuneration but APFNet will cover eligible expenses incurred to attend meetings or perform other duties requested of them. Additional details can be found in the Rules of Procedure of the Board of Directors.

2. Eligibility

- (1) The eligibility of candidates nominated should be determined by the extent to which their qualifications are consistent with the functions of the Board and the extent to which they can meet the objective of enhancing APFNet governance. These criteria and those listed below should be reviewed on a regular basis.
- (2) Candidates should:
 - Be a citizen or resident of an economy which is a member of APFNet;
 - Hold or have held a senior position as an official, high ranking professional, expert, or executive from government, an international organization, an academic institution or an enterprise in APFNet member economies and organizations;
 - Is considered influential in the forest or relevant sectors and shows a strong capability to network and mobilize resources;
 - Has proven leadership skills and a good knowledge of forests and forestry or related fields in the region;
 - Is aware of developments in and processes of relevant international forestry fora;
 - Has knowledge, experience and skills in governance, policy development, financial matters and

strategic planning;

- Be representative of a group which brings to the Board diversity and balance, including but not limited to gender, profession, ethnicity, race, age and geography;
- Demonstrate the willingness, interest and passion to substantially support APFNet and have the time to do so;
- Have a strong command of the English language; and
- Have experience in serving on boards of either for-profit or non-profit organizations (desirable).

3. Nomination

- (1) Call for nominations will normally be launched eighteen (18) months prior to Board vacancies so that names can be collected, screened and selected six (6) months prior to the next meeting. The new member will then begin his/her term one year later when the vacancy opens.
- (2) Individuals should be nominated for their personal qualifications and commitment.
- (3) Council representatives will submit nominations to APFNet.
- (4) Any Council member may submit one (1) nomination which includes a completed nomination form that states the nominee accepts the nomination and the nominee's resume/CV.
- (5) Any Council representative can nominate themselves.
- (6) Nominations must be emailed or faxed to the APFNet secretariat by the deadline date. Late submissions will not be considered.
- (7) Early submission of nominations is encouraged to allow time for review before selection at the Council meeting.

4. Selection

- (1) Nominations will be distributed electronically to all APFNet members via Council representatives for review and consideration.
- (2) Voting will only take place if a quorum is present at the Council meeting. Each member in attendance is eligible to vote for up to the number of vacant seats. The Council Chair will accept delivery of the completed ballots and sign to confirm receipt.
- (3) Council representatives who are candidates are allowed to vote on behalf of his/her economy.
- (4) The number of candidates, equal to the number of open seats, who receive the highest number of votes shall join the Board of Directors. In the case of a tie, another vote should be conducted to reach a majority decision.
- (5) If the number of nominations is equal to or less than the number of vacant seats, the Council Chair will preside over the review and discussion of each candidate regarding their qualifications to sit on the Board. Decisions in this regard may result in a down-sizing of the Board, in which case the Council is encouraged to seek the views of the Board before exercising this option.
- (6) Details of the election, including the number of votes for each candidate and any tie resolution, shall be recorded in writing and signed by Chair of the Council. The newly elected Board members should be announced to the Board of Directors and membership in due course.