



Asia-Pacific Network for Sustainable Forest Management and Rehabilitation

First Meeting of the APFNet Council Summary of Decisions, Recommendations and Discussions

27-28 April 2015

Taungoo meeting room, Grand Amara Hotel
Nay Pyi Taw, Myanmar

Present

17 Member economies

Bangladesh
Cambodia
Canada
P.R. China
Fiji Islands
Hong Kong, China
Indonesia
Lao PDR
Malaysia
Mongolia
Myanmar
Nepal
Papua New Guinea
The Philippines
Sri Lanka
Chinese Taipei
Thailand

5 Member organizations

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)
International Tropical Timber Organization (ITTO)
RECOFTC – The Center for People and Forests
Secretariat of the Pacific Community (SPC)
The Nature Conservancy (TNC)

Observer

European Forest Institute (EFI)
APFNet Kunming Training Center

Secretariat

Mr Qu Guilin, Executive Director
Mr Xia Jun, Assistant Executive Director

Facilitator

Ms Rosalie McConnell, APFNet consultant

Minutes taker and secretariat support

Ms Chen Lin, APFNet secretariat
Ms Luo Xi, APFNet secretariat
Ms Alexandra Wu, APFNet secretariat

The APFNet Council was formally established during its first meeting on 27-28 April in Nay Pyi Taw, Myanmar. By combining the previous Interim Steering Committee and the Working Mechanism for APFNet Focal Points, the Council is composed of the representatives of 31 APFNet members (see annex 1). Participants representing 22 members (see annex 2) attended the meeting. The decisions and discussions are summarized below.

Opening session

The meeting was opened by U Win Tun, Union Minister of Myanmar's Ministry of Environmental Conservation and Forestry (MOECAF) and Mr Qu Guilin, Executive Director of APFNet.

The Union Minister warmly welcomed all participants and thanked APFNet secretariat for the opportunity to host the first meeting of its Council. He noted that, for more than seven years, APFNet has been supporting economies to achieve APEC's goal to increase forest cover in Asia-Pacific by at least 20 million hectares by 2020. Myanmar is proud of its association with APFNet since its launch in 2008.

Mr Qu Guilin thanked Myanmar for hosting this first meeting of the Council and for its strong support to APFNet since it launched operations in 2008. He informed the Council that the Board of Directors met China's Vice Premier of the State Council, Mr Wang Yang, when it held its first meeting in Beijing in early April. At that time, the Vice Premier expressed appreciation for APFNet's work and confirmed the Chinese government's continued support.

With the closing of the opening session, the Council of APFNet was formally established.

Organizational matters

Participants received the *list of Council representatives and contact persons* [APFNet/Council/ENG/2015/01] upon registration, as part of the package of documents. The facilitator asked them to review the information and to inform the Secretariat, before the end of the meeting, if changes were required. An up-to-date version will be posted on APFNet's website. Members of the Council then introduced themselves.

Adoption of the agenda [APFNet/Council/ENG/2015/02]

The facilitator informed the Council of the need to include an item under other matters, in the closing session - suggested revisions to APFNet's Operational Framework. With this addition, a motion was duly made and seconded to adopt the agenda.

Session 1

Rules of Procedure of the APFNet Council [APFNet/Council/ENG/2015/03]

The facilitator introduced this item by highlighting the key points. During discussion, members commented on the text, requested clarification of certain items and suggested the rules listed below be revised as follows:

Rule 3 b): screen nominations which have been submitted by individual Council members to fill vacancies on the Board and select the Directors who were given majority support, starting with those who received the greatest number of votes;

Rule 7: Members are considered to be active at the first meeting of the APFNet Council. However, a member who fails to attend two consecutive Council meetings, or does not appoint a representative to the Council or does not update information regarding their Council representative and contact person(s) will be considered inactive. (Participation could be either in person, through electronic means or through the submission of written comments on meeting documents. However, face-to-face participation is strongly urged.) Such members shall not be included when calculating the quorum as per Rule 17 and shall have their rights suspended until such time as they inform the Secretariat that they wish to resume active membership and take the steps required to do so.

Rule 20: The Secretariat will disseminate the provisional agenda to all members and observers no later than three weeks after the meeting is announced.

Rule 26: Documents which are agreed to at a Council meeting but are in need of further revisions will be circulated electronically among members for approval. A document will be considered final when no comments regarding further amendments are received within two weeks of circulation.

Rule 29 (formerly Rules 30 and 31): Each member of APFNet has the right to cast one vote. Observers will have no vote. Any proposal that receives more than one half of the total votes from the members present at a Council meetings will be considered to have majority support. If the number of total votes is even, the majority support will require one-half of the votes, plus one.

Rule 30 (formerly Rule 29): A representative or participant(s) authorized to express the member's views at the Council meeting can state his/her agreement or objection to the matter

under discussion and abstain when the call for consensus is made. Abstention will not be considered an objection for purposes of determining whether or not a consensus is reached. A participant with observer status is free to give his/her opinion during discussion but is not eligible to make a statement once a call is made for decision by consensus.

Rule 32: English will be the official language of resolutions, recommendations, formal decisions and documents. However, when the Secretariat submits reports to the host economy, it may need to translate relevant meeting documents into Chinese.

On motion duly made and seconded, the Council agreed to adopt the Rules of Procedure in principle (see annex 2).

Decision C.01/01 *The Council adopted, in principle, the Rules of Procedures of the Council [APFNet/Council/ENG/2015/03].*

With regard to Section IV of the Rules of Procedure on the subject of meetings, a question was raised about APFNet's current policy to compensate only member economies for their attendance at Council meetings. It was agreed that consideration would be given to providing support to international organizations as well, upon request.

Nomination and election of the Chair and Vice-chair of the Council

The Council nominated Thailand as Chair and Papua New Guinea as Vice-chair of the Council. After both nominations were duly seconded, the positions were filled by acclamation. Dr Preecha Ongprasert of Thailand's Royal Forest Department expressed appreciation for the confidence members showed in him and promised to perform his functions as Chair to the best of his ability. Ms Magdalene Maihua also thanked members for electing Papua New Guinea as the Council's first Vice-chair and echoed the Chair's commitment to fulfil her duties as best she can.

Session 2

Update on the progress of APFNet's work [APFNet/Council/ENG/2015/04]

At the Chair's invitation, Mr Qu Guilin gave an overview of APFNet's activities in 2014 and described areas of work for 2015. Mr Xia Jun of the Secretariat updated members on the program to assess the progress towards the APEC Forest Cover Objective. The final compilation and editing of the findings will be completed in September for transmission to APEC senior officials in October. The Secretariat reminded members of the need to accelerate the preparation of the reports.

Comments on APFNet's work

Following Mr Qu and Mr Xia's updates on these two information items, the Chair opened the floor for comments. The need was raised to have a solid monitoring and evaluation system in place now that the Secretariat is becoming more stable under the new governance structure. Aspects should include an examination of how APFNet's activities are inter-linked among the 4 pillars and how intended project outcomes are connected. It was also suggested that information exchange between APFNet and its member economies, organizations and other partners be strengthened to avoid duplication. In addition, experiences and lessons learned from pilot demonstration projects could be disseminated more broadly.

Presentation of five APFNet projects

To give Council members an overview of some APFNet projects, presentations were made on the following five initiatives:

1. Sustainable Forest Rehabilitation and Management for the Conservation of Trans-boundary Ecological Security in Montane Mainland Southeast Asia (China/Yunnan, Lao P.D.R. and Myanmar), presented by Dr Ei Ei Swe Hlaing, Forest Research Institute, MOECAAF, Myanmar
2. Sustainable Forest Management in the Northern Provinces of Lao P.D.R., presented by Dr Savanh Chanthakoummane, Ministry Agriculture and Forestry, Lao P.D.R.
3. Three projects in Nepal, presented by Mr Bishwa Nath Oli, Ministry of Forests and Soil Conservation, Nepal:
 - Sustainable Forest Management with Community Participation in Nepal
 - Support to Develop a New Forest Sector Policy and Strategy through Consultation with Civil Society Organizations and Local Communities in Nepal
 - Support to Community-based Sustainable Forest Management and Economic Empowerment of Women in the Central Region of Nepal

After each report, the Chair invited Council members to ask questions and provide comments to the presenters. A rich exchange of information ensued.

Session 3

Review of Board Decisions [APFNet/Council/ENG/2015/05]

The Council's Vice-chair invited Mr Qu to review decisions made at the first meeting of the Board of Directors. He highlighted some of the key ones, including giving the Council authority to review and approve the membership development procedures.

The importance of identifying APFNet's strategic advantages was also mentioned, for example, its access to APEC leaders, its role in facilitating high level policy dialogue and its unique ability to connect with other regional networks. Not only should these aspects be incorporated into projects, but projects should be linked to the 4 pillars and such linkages monitored.

***Decision C.01/02** The suggestion to build on APFNet's comparative advantages to avoid duplication and to ensure projects are more closely linked to the 4 pillars will be brought to the Board's attention.*

Session 4

Terms of Reference of the Project Appraisal Panel [APFNet/Council/ENG/2015/06]

The facilitator highlighted the composition and selection of members, their functions and main task, and the process by which the terms of reference could be amended. She then noted the need for Council to consider amending Article 4.4.7 d) and Article 4.5.2 of the Operational Framework to take into account the suggestions contained in the draft strategic plan regarding the frequency of the call for proposals and the length of time that members could serve.

During discussion, the following points were raised:

2.2 In addition to stating the maximum number of members (11), this section should stipulate the number required for a quorum to ensure appropriate representation. (No figure was proposed.)

4.4 a) With regard to project assessment criteria, the Secretariat will endeavour to include an evaluation of the extent to which proposals are linked to one or more of the 4 pillars.

4.8 This section should include a reasonable timeframe by which the Secretariat will inform project applicants of the appraisal results.

***Decision C.01/03** The Council recommended to the Board that the Terms of Reference of the Project Appraisal Panel be amended as suggested above.*

Session 5

Draft framework for the strategic plan 2016-2020 [APFNet/Council/ENG/2015/07]

Mr Qu introduced this item, noting that Council will have an opportunity to comment on the first draft in June. He explained that an assessment of the current plan was done through an online survey, interviews and an analysis of official records.

The floor was then opened for discussion and the Council made the following suggestions to the drafting team of experts for possible inclusion in the first draft:

- add a section in the background on what sets APFNet apart from other organizations, i.e., its comparative advantage and added value to the region;
- expand APFNet’s involvement in trade and legality issues, given that they are a driving force in the region;
- include research and development as a component of capacity building and demonstration projects;
- add “to the extent possible” at the end of 3.2)a), given that some economies have little in common in terms of tenure and ownership, for example.
- strengthen capacity building by ensuring that training is not a one-time event but is followed up with additional opportunities for continuous learning;
- provide a monitoring and evaluation framework to project participants so they are aware of what is expected in terms of outputs;
- articulate how APFNet’s implementation tools are connected, why they were selected, and what the linkages are to its goals;
- note the need to gather data from a wide range of sources, in terms of both quantity and quality;
- add a section on international cooperation and on how APFNet intends to build partnerships;
- describe the system used to monitor and evaluate APFNet’s activities and overall performance;
- develop joint strategies with individual member economies to address areas of common interest which help to achieve APFNet’s goals within the region.

Session 6

Membership development procedures [APFNet/Council/ENG/2015/08]

The facilitator introduced this item by stating that, with the establishment of a permanent governance structure for APFNet, it is time to review the procedures for accepting new members. During discussion, the following comments and suggestions were made:

- change the title of the document to better reflect the intended purpose, i.e., to describe admission requirements and conditions for membership;

- in section I, delete reference to categories A, B and C as this breakdown no longer serves a useful purpose, but list the eligible entities in the same order;
- in section I, change (c) to read “international intergovernmental and international/regional non-governmental organizations operating in the Asia-Pacific region”;
- in section II, change the chapeau to read “An applicant must.”;
- add “suspension” in the title of section IV;
- with regard to dealing with groups d) and e), two views were expressed. One option is to have national entities apply directly to APFNet and have the member economy make a recommendation to the Council. However, it was recognized that this approach is problematic if the economy does not have a seat on Council. The other option is to have a national entity apply for membership through the economy where it is headquartered and provide proof of endorsement as part of its submission. With either process, however, some concern was expressed about giving economies a greater say in deciding on new memberships than other Council members.

Session 7

Application for new membership [APFNet/Council/ENG/2015/09]

Based on the uncertainties surrounding the future treatment of new membership applications, Council requested the Secretariat to produce an amended version of the procedures before deciding on the application submitted by Kyrgyzstan’s Rural Development Fund.

***Decision C.01/04** The Council decided to postpone a decision on the application of Kyrgyzstan’s Rural Development Fund until it reviewed and endorsed a new draft of the membership procedures.*

Other matters: Suggested revisions to APFNet’s Operational Framework (OF)

[APFNet/Council/ENG/2015/10]

The facilitator explained the rationale for seeking to amend Articles 1.1, 2.2, 2.5, 4.4.7, 4.5.2 and 5.2. The proposed changes will allow APFNet to operate as an international body under Chinese law by removing the restrictions it currently has, including to transfer large sums of money to projects outside China and to recruit long-term international staff. She added that they do not affect the nature of APFNet or of its membership and they maintain the governance structure described in the Operational Framework. The Council also agreed to amend 4.4.7 d) and 4.5.2 concerning the project appraisal panel.

Decision C.01/05 *The Council accepted all amendments to the Operational Framework [APFNet/Council/ENG/2015/10], as follows:*

1. In Article 1.1, take out “is non-legally binding and does not give rise to any right or obligation under international law”. The sentence will read as follows:

This Operational Framework is based on the Framework Document which was adopted and released when the Asia-Pacific Network for Sustainable Forest Management and Rehabilitation (hereinafter referred to as “APFNet”) was launched in September 2008.

2. In Article 2.2, take out “under Chinese law”. The sentence will read as follows:

APFNet is registered as an entity with the legal personality needed to fulfill its functions.

3. In Article 2.5, take out “under Chinese domestic law”. The sentence will read as follows:

In furtherance of its objectives, APFNet holds the following powers:

4. In Article 4.4.7, delete “annual” in the item d). The sentence will read as follows:

d) manage the process for receiving and approving project proposals, including the call and independent technical appraisal by the Project Appraisal Panel;

5. In Article 4.5.2, delete “staggered”. The sentence will read as follows:

Panel members will be appointed for terms of three years, and not serve more than two consecutive terms.

6. In Article 5.2, change the latter part of the sentence to “according to the standard practice of an international organization”. The sentence will read as follows:

The Board of Directors should decide the start date of APFNet’s fiscal year and conduct financial matters according to the standard practice of an international organization.

Please see annex 4 for the amended Operational Framework with the revised Membership Development Procedures.

Time and venue of next meeting

Cambodia offered to host the second meeting of the Council, at a date and venue to be determined.

Decision C.01/06 The Council accepted Cambodia's kind invitation and looks forward to having the date and venue of its second meeting confirmed in due course.

Close of the meeting

There being no further business, the Chair called the meeting to a close.

On 29 April, participants went on the field visit to Yedashe Township. Sites they saw included an agroforestry and community forest, a teak plantation and teak seed production area, a nursery and an elephant camp.

- Annexes:
1. List of Council representatives and contact persons
 2. List of participants of the First Council Meeting
 3. Rules of Procedure of the Council (revised)
 4. Terms of Reference of Project Appraisal Panel (revised)
 5. Operational Framework (with amendments and revised Membership Development Procedures (revised))