Asia-Pacific Forestry Planning Network

Workshop on New Developments in Forest Planning and Policies in Response to the Glasgow Endorsement in Forest Restoration

Workshop Report

12 July 2022

Online Meeting

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Executive Summary

Forest restoration policies, planning and implementation is constantly changing as it needs to respond to international developments swiftly and flexibly. One such development is the formal endorsement of forest restoration during the Glasgow meeting at the COP26. In this endorsement, leaders of 141 economies stated that they will "conserve forests and other terrestrial ecosystems and accelerate their restoration ", sending a strong global signal that forest restoration needs to be significantly higher on the political agenda than it ever has been.

In this context, now a year after the endorsement itself, the Asia-Pacific Forestry Planning Network (FPN) aimed to take stock not only of the progress that has been made on existing forest restoration, but to give a special attention to what kind of "transformative actions" the FPN members are now planning to take.

During the Sixth Meeting of the FPN, members clearly showed how much has been achieved already, be it in terms of reforestation already down with millions of trees planted via the different large-scale reforestation programs, or via other complementary measures, such as an increased focus on establishing more protected areas that will ultimately give degraded forests the space to recover on their own with only minimal intervention.

The new developments in forest restoration since the Glasgow Endorsement were, however, even more exciting. A number of new large-scale reforestation programs, such as the "One billion tree movement" were initiated in response to Glasgow and several key laws and policies, such as the Forestry Law in Cambodia are now being updated to respond to the new commitment and also improve institutional collaboration in forestry. But mere updates were not the only developments members introduced, many are currently trying out entirely new schemes. Aiming to increase the significance of forestry and forest restoration to the local political agenda, China, for instance, introduced the new Forest Chief Scheme, which will involve political leaders in forestry more directly. In order to encourage new forms of income derived from forests and improve reporting at large, many economies also improved on their monitoring systems. The Philippines, in particular, introduced a whole flurry of new monitoring programs, including the *Carbon Accounting, Verification and Certification System* (CAVCS) that will help provide the baseline for future carbon trading.

In the final part of the workshop, members discussed the potential future work of the FPN, verifying its important contribution to forestry planning in the Asia-Pacific Region and its need to facilitate capacity building and supplying members with information about new forest policy developments. The participants supported a potential future study on assessing the implementation of policies, legal provisions and programs for forest restoration.

1. The Sixth Meeting of the FPN (Online)

The workshop itself was an all-day online event, held on June 12 via the Zoom platform, due to the ongoing COVID-19 crisis. This online meeting was attended by 33 participants from 11 economies, all of them members of the Asia-Pacific Forestry Planning Network Additionally, some staff from the APFNet secretariat, Ms Anna Finke, who acted as the moderator, and Mr Joshi Mahendra, who developed the report "Forest Restoration in the Asia-Pacific Region: Stocktaking Study on Policies, Legal Frameworks and Programmes" attended as well.

The workshop itself began with an opening speech given by Ms Liu Wei, the Director of APFNet's Planning Division, and who had worked with the FPN from very early on. She introduced

Fig. 1 The participants of the online workshop

the goal of the meeting, which was to analyze the progress that has been made since the Glasgow Leader's Declaration on Forests and Land Use in 2021, as well as to look at future actions to be taken to ensure the achievement of the 2030 goal and highlighted the important work the FPN can deliver through facilitating sharing and networking amongst forestry planners. In this context she gave the example of how some of the ideas discussed during a previous FPN meeting actually made their way into China's Five-Year-Plan for forestry, one of the most important policy documents for China. This clearly shows the potential of the FPN to now further facilitate dialogue to ensure that all members grasp the larger changes behind the commitment and systematically assess their implications.

In order to refresh the memory and update members on activities of the FPN, Ms. Pan Yao who is in charge of Policy Dialogue Division gave a short introduction of the FPN, its most recent work and its newest studies. One study in specific, the "Forest Restoration in the Asia-Pacific Region: Stocktaking Study on Policies, Legal Frameworks and Programmes", was introduced by its lead writer, Mr. Joshi Mahendra.

In order to facilitate this understanding, the morning session of the meeting was dedicated to economy-presentations given by a representative of each member economy. Each presenter
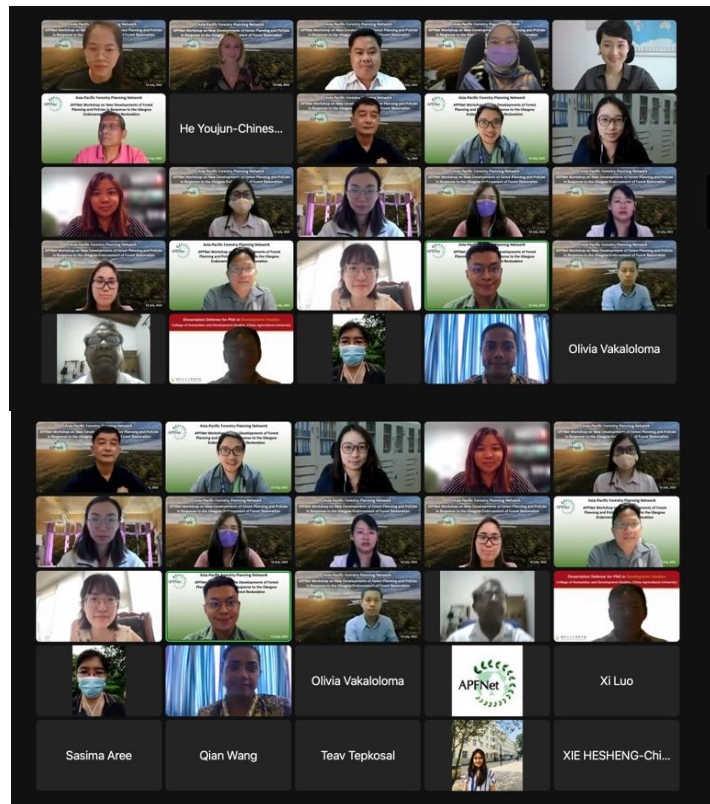
explored new progress made on achieving current national forest goals, policies, strategies and action plans related to forestry and forest restoration in his or her respective economy. Additionally, any new developments in the same realm were introduced and needs and potential areas for collaboration identified.

Finally, the afternoon session was designed as an open discussion to further explore relevant new developments of various regional economies introduced in the morning, covering several important issues, such as how the different economies responded to the Glasgow commitment in the context of the other international commitments (e.g.the SDGs or the Paris Agreement), and which transformative actions and strategies they were planning to achieve the commitment. Finally, the members discussed how the FPN could further enhance cooperation in the region in this realm and what its next activities could be.

2. Progress in Forestry Pre-Glasgow

One of the workshop's key goals was to take stock of the progress made in forest restoration by participating economies, particularly focusing on their individual goals, targets and legal frameworks. As such, it is imperative to first obtain an overview of at least some of the key regulations and laws that currently guide forestry in those economies.

2.1 Stocktaking of Forest Restoration Policies

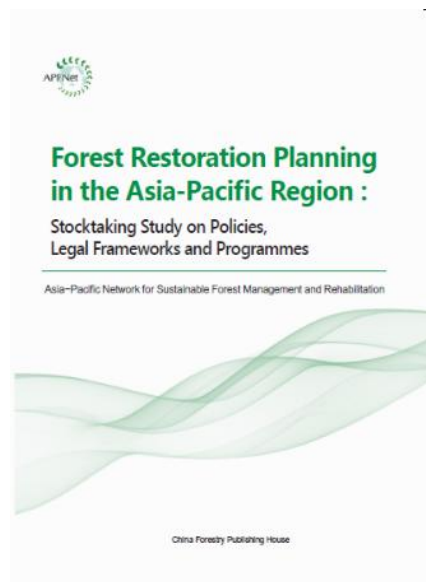
Fig. 2 The latest FPN study

The latest FPN publication, the results of which were presented to the members during the workshop, took stock of information relevant to forest restoration in the studied economies on current policies, legal frameworks, sectoral plans; institutions involved and their coordination mechanism and made recommendations to the participating economies and APFNet. The study, based on 7 economies, namely Cambodia, China, Lao PDR, Mongolia, Myanmar, Nepal and the Philippines did, as a stocktaking study, not assess the technical aspects or quality of the restoration activities, laws, policies and institutions, but rather aimed to see what was there in the first place. Some of the most important findings included that all economies had some policies and laws regarding forest management, including forest restoration, which were all linked to a broader development agenda and some form of M&E system. Usually, the Ministry or a similar government agency is responsible for forest management and restoration at the central level and is usually sub-divided into several relevant departments and bureaus. There were some cases where more than one agency is responsible for forest management, which can easily lead to overlap.

2.2 Progress in the Larger Forestry Sector

Taking into account the abovementioned existing policies, some key progress from select economies should be highlighted, especially as it may serve as an inspiration for other economies.

Biodiversity

In the realm of biodiversity conservation, a number of economies have made concerted efforts to either stop the loss of biodiversity or restore biodiversity, or at times, both.

Many economies have specific plans for preserving biodiversity, such as **Fiji's** National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan, or **Myanmar's** "Conservation of Biodiversity and Protected Areas Law (2018) and Rules (2019)".

As such, **Brunei Darussalam**, for instance, aims to reduce biodiversity loss by both researching effects of drainage on peatlands, restoring important local species and blocking areas that are drained to avoid further degradation.

A number of economies have been doubling down on their efforts to strengthen the protection of conservation areas or expand on those altogether. For instance, in 2019 **China** issued the "Guidelines on Establishing a System of Protected Areas with National Parks as the Main Body", of which it already established 5 new national parks to date, taking an important step in effectively protecting key species. Similarly, **Sri Lanka** dedicated via its Forestry Act about 20% of its area as some sort of protected area, emphasizing that natural forests are firstly allocated
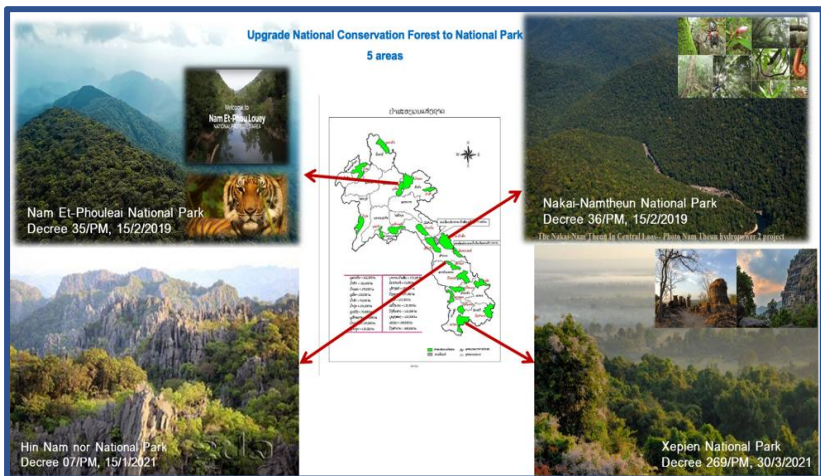
Fig. 3 The upgraded national parks in Lao PDR in 5 key regions

for conservation and only secondly for multiple-use production forestry. **Lao PDR** also upgraded National Conservation Forests to National Parks in 5 key areas to increase their level of protection. Likewise, **Nepal** takes a large-scale conservation approach, focusing on conserving pristine ecosystems at landscape scale while collaborating with local communities.

A number of economies, such as **China** and **Sri Lanka** currently use the tools of logging bans on natural forests to protect natural forests and enable them to naturally regenerate its biodiversity.

Local Communities

Local communities are key to forest conservation and their increasing engagement marks progress on the overall protection of forests. **Fiji** currently involves communities more strongly by promoting NTFPs and integrated agroforestry systems. Meanwhile, **China** continues to achieve success with its long-term PES "Grain to Green" program that pays farmers to rehabilitate and restore barren lands or abandon fields by planting their suitable tree species. **Nepal**, famous for its people-centric approach has doubled down on furthering community forestry (CF) within its borders. **The Philippines** have been working on increasing the rights of local communities issuing 3,907 tenure permits covering 2,397,427 ha and involving them more in monitoring via the community-based protection and monitoring (CBPM) approach. And **Thailand** has both increased its efforts in involving and educating urban populations and approved over 10,000 CFs to date.

Timber Trade

Member economies have been intensively working on improving their timber trade regulations to prevent forest degradation. For instance, **Myanmar** has had a ban on round log experts since April 2014 and generally does not allow unsustainably harvested timber to be exported. **China** published a new Forestry Law that created a legal basis for international timber trading in China as it established a ban on purchasing, transporting, and/or processing illegally sourced timber, contributing lowering incentives of cutting rare species in other economies and thus helping to preserve their biodiversity.

Watershed Conservation

Preserving watersheds is integral to comprehensively protecting forests in the Asia-Pacific region. As an example, **the Philippines** started a "Save our watershed" movement and created a Watershed Management Council, as well as a watershed monitoring program to further progress on watershed protection.

2.3 Progress in Forest Restoration

All member economies have made increased efforts to promote forest restoration in recent years, opting for numerous methods to do so.

Overarching Targets and Strategies

Virtually all economies have set specific targets in the realm of restoration that are usually part of a national forest strategy or some related program or are in the progress of doing so (new policies and targets post-Glasgow are covered in Chapter 3).

Brunei Darussalam launched the "Brunei National Climate Policy" in 2020, which includes several strategies, especially Strategy 2, which focuses on increasing forest cover. The policy, with a target of planting 500,000 new trees by 2035 to increase carbon sink capacity, annually plans to plant 35,700 trees and maintain them for at least one year. So far in the first two years, about 57,707 trees have been planted. Although this number is below the annual target due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, the survival rate remains at around 95% in average to date. Importantly, the new strategy identifies collaboration with the private sector as a key component. In addition, it encourages private companies to approach the government

Fig. 4 Brunei Darussalam's new strategies in the Brunei National Climate Policy, including Strategy 2: Forest Cover

(e.g. as part of their CSR) for trees planting and the government allocates land for them to plant on. The companies can purchase the seedlings themselves from the Forest Department or a local nursery, and have to maintain the trees for at least 1 year. This tree planting is entirely voluntary, but highly encouraged.

Lao PDR, for instance, in its Forest Strategy 2005-2020, set a target to increase forest cover from 41.5% (9.8 million ha) in 2002 to 70% (16.5 million ha) in 2020, specifically aiming to manage and protect 9.8 million ha of forest from being destroyed, rehabilitating 6 million ha of degraded forest and planting trees on 500,000 ha of barren forest land. Evaluating its previous efforts, it reported that 75% of those targets were achieved, the reforestation of barren forestland even reaching 98% of the plan (490,330 ha).

Nepal committed itself to maintaining 45% of the economy under forest cover, while managing 50% of Tarai and Inner Tarai forests and 25% of middle hills and mountain forests sustainably by 2030. So far, the forest cover has indeed increased from 39.6% in 1994 to 45.31% at the time of the Glasgow pledge.

Thailand reported that their goal of a forest cover of 55% of the economy (with 35% reserve forests, 15% economic forests and 5% urban forests), established in their 20-year National Strategic Plan from 2018 to 2037, already reached 31.64% forest cover.

Arbor Day and Tree Planting Campaigns

A number of member economies, such as **Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, China, Myanmar** and **Thailand** used the International Day of Forests or their own nationally determined Arbor Day, to involve the public into mass tree planting activities. In **Cambodia**, it is even required by law for people to participate in tree planting. In **China**, new innovative methods are also being tried to move beyond traditional tree planting by using digital platforms (e.g. Ant Forest). There people can virtually plant trees via sustainable actions, such as exercise, earning points with which ultimately a real tree will be planted. **Thailand** put major emphasis on large-scale campaigns, such as "Unite People to Plant 100 Million Trees for Country", which ran from 2019 to 2022, and other public outreach campaigns.

Fig. 5 Thailand's "Unite People to Plant 100 million Trees for Country" campaign

Large-Scale Reforestation Programs

Predominately led by the public sector, most economies implemented large-scale reforestation programs to achieve the economy's forest targets including forest restoration.

In **Brunei Darussalam** the "Reforestation and Forest Rehabilitation Program", which ran from 1997 to 2021 and was part of the national forest policy, arrange monthly tree planting programs under the Forestry Department and mass tree planting activities under the National Development Plan (as part of the greening program), specifically focused on rehabilitating degraded areas that were the result of forest fires. At point of reporting, via this program 14,616.5 ha of forests were rehabilitated.

China, already known for some of the largest-scale reforestation programmes in the world, such as the Three-North Shelterbelt Program or the Grain for Green program, reported now increased efforts in the greening of identified key regions, such as the Yellow river, the Yangtze river and the three-north region. Additionally, for the Western, Northern and Central region of China different programs with different priorities were designed. Furthermore, in the context of a greater focus on increasing the forest quality rather than just area it is improving on its urban greening via national forest city clusters, such as the Beijing-Tianjin Hebei area of the Pearl River Delta metropolitan greening. Furthermore, the idea of "Land Greening in a Scientific Way" with new integrated restoration methods, for which also an official guideline was developed in

2021, is currently being piloted in several key locations, such as the lower reaches of the Yellow river in Shandong or in the loess plateau of Shanxi and many more. If successful, it is expected to be scaled up nationwide.

Fiji introduced its "30 Million Trees in 15 Years (30MT15Y)" large-scale reforestation program in 2020, which was an upgrade from the original 4 million trees in 5 years goal and aims to plant 30 million trees within 15 years between 2020 and 2035. In this count, Non-Timber Forest Products (NTFPs) with their associated trees in agroforestry models, are included in order to also generate income for local communities. 30M15Y does not have separate targets or goals for specific forest types, although the government does have annual planting quotas for certain native and exotic species. At the point of presentation already about 11,315 ha or approximately 12.6 million trees had been planted. This was tracked via an innovative monitoring system called the "National Tree Planting Dashboard" that is updated daily and allows for live tracking of the implementation. In Fiji, currently most forest restoration projects are done in cooperation with key international partners, such as ITTO, FAO, World Bank and GEF.

In **Myanmar** the "Myanmar Reforestation and Rehabilitation Programme", which started in 2017 and runs until 2027, reached its mid-way point and the economy made significant progress on reaching its target for reforesting 4.1 million ha of forest. Specifically, of the sub-target of establishing more than 142,000 ha of state-owned plantations, around 36% have been established, while about 20% of the aimed for private plantations have been established. Of the community forests more than half have been established. Another program, the "Re-establishing Natural Habitats Programme", lasting from 2019 to 2029, aims to put 10% of the total national land area under protection by restoring wildlife corridors, repairing ponds and salt lakes, re-introducing wildlife, restoring habitats and so on.
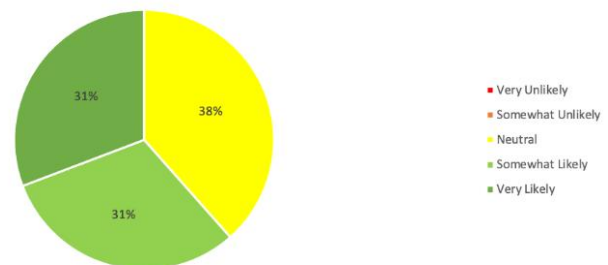
The Philippines expanded on their National Greening Program, which was initiated from 2011-2016 and aimed to plant and grow 1.5 billion trees on 1.5 million ha with the "Enhanced and Expanded National Greening Program" that engages local communities even more. It also introduced the "Intensified Forest Protection Program", which focuses on protecting the

economy's forests by preventing illegal logging and forest fire via continuous forest patrolling through its new Lawin system.

3. Post-Glasgow: New Policies, Laws and Plans

During the workshop, participants were asked whether they believe the Glasgow commitment will new action in the realm of forestry (Fig. 6). About two thirds of participants stated that it would be very likely or at least somewhat likely, while 38% remained neutral. However, nobody considered this development unlikely. In a follow-up question where participants were asked to estimate in which areas in forestry the Glasgow commitment will assert its largest influence, forestry planning received the most votes amongst all options (30%), a good indicators that a workshop to assess those changes was indeed necessary. Other areas that may be significantly influenced include international forest restoration tools, such as FLR and REDD+ and international and regional cooperation.

How much do you agree with the following statement: The commitment on forest restoration in Glasgow in relation to other existing commitments will spur new action.

31%   38%
31%

- Very Unlikely
- Somewhat Unlikely
- Neutral
- Somewhat Likely
- Very Likely

In which areas do you think the Glasgow commitment will most influence forestry?

5%
16%
30%
11%
5%
19%
14%

- Forestry planning
- Forest monitoring
- Use of international forest restoration tools (e.g. REDD+, FLR, PES)
- National forestry financing
- International forestry financing
- International/regional cooperation
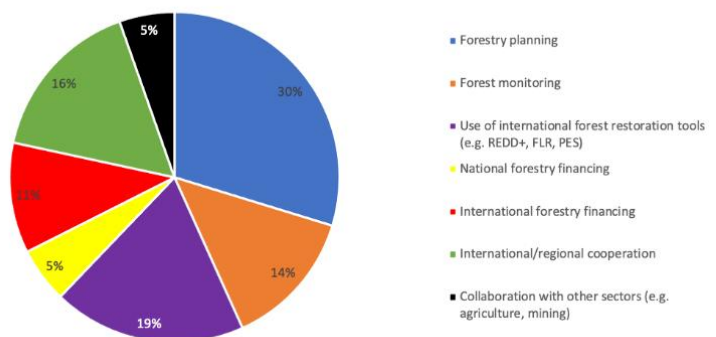- Collaboration with other sectors (e.g. agriculture, mining)

Fig. 6 Surveys on the Glasgow commitment's potential to spur new action in the forestry sector

As can be seen below a number of forestry policies, laws and strategic plans have indeed emerged either in direct anticipation of in response to the COP26 Glasgow pledge. These policies are introduced here, including a preview of the ones currently still under formulation.

Brunei Darussalam

Brunei Darussalam is currently working on a new ***Biodiversity Order*** that will facilitate the implementation of biodiversity conservation and management in the economy.

Cambodia

Cambodia has since the Glasgow meeting committed itself to **reduce deforestation by half by 2030 and achieve net zero carbon emissions by 2030** and have developed the *Long-term*

Strategy for Carbon Neutrality outlining the next steps. Importantly these goals were published under the Ministry of Environment (MoE), which is now leading on these matters.

In this context, Cambodia is currently also working on **updating their Law on Forestry** from 2002, as in recent years responsibilities between the Forestry Administration (FA) under the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (MAFF) and the Ministry of Environment (MoE) have shifted, MoE focusing on conservation and the FA focusing on forest development and research. Consequently, an array of aspects of the forestry-related law do not apply any longer and have to be adjusted. Furthermore, the new law is aimed to fill other gaps to effectively respond to current challenges in forestry and will place a greater focus on forest restoration by creating an enabling environment to attract investors to invest in forest restoration. Finally, the new law is also intended to strengthen law enforcement itself.
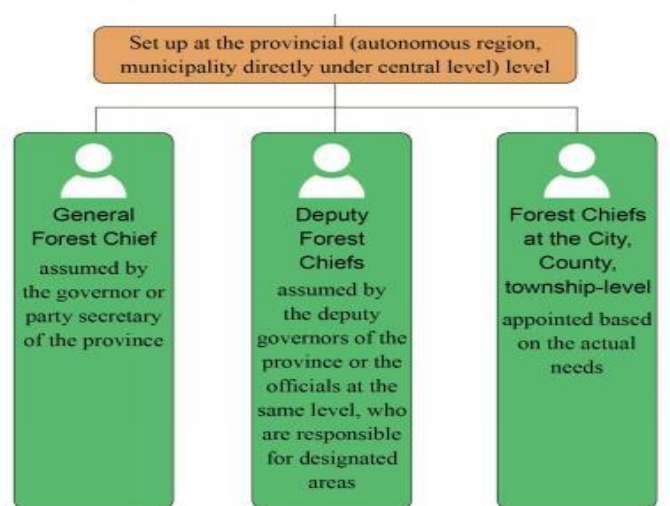
China

China, in the context of its **overarching climate goal to achieve peak carbon emissions by 2030 and carbon neutrality by 2060**, has committed itself to a forest goal that aims to protect, **restore and plant 70 billion trees by 2030 and increase the forest stock volume by 6 billion m³ in 2030 over 2005**. Aside from these obligatory goals, there are also a number of anticipatory goals outline that range from how much vegetation cover in grassland areas should be established, to the number of national parks, which key species should be protected, at which level the fire damage and pest disturbance rate should be held, how much value the forest and grassland sector should aim to produce and how many ecosystem services the forests should provide.

In order to break the overarching goals into manageable pieces, there are also a number of sub-goals to be achieved in its current 14th 5-year plan, lasting from 2021 to 2025, which include as **key targets to achieve a forest cover of 24.1% of forest cover** and a **forest stock volume of 18 billion m³**. In

NO.	Indicator	2020	2025	Type of Indicator
1	Forest cover (%)	—	24.1	Obligatory
2	Forest stock volume (100 million m³)	—	180	Obligatory
3	Arbor forest per unit stock volume (m³/ha)	96.17	99.52	Anticipatory
4	Comprehensive vegetation coverage of grassland (%)	56.1	57	Anticipatory
5	Protection range of wetland (%)	52	55	Anticipatory
6	Land cover of protected areas including national parks (%)	—	>18	Anticipatory
7	Area of desertified land treated (100 million *mu* [6.67 million ha])[①]	—	1	Anticipatory
8	Protection rate of the number of species of national key wild animals/plants (%)	73/66	75/80	Anticipatory
9	Forest/grassland fire damage rate (‰)	≤0.9/≤3	≤0.9/≤2	Anticipatory
10	Forest/grassland pest disturbance rate (‰/%)	≤8.5/≤10.33	≤8.2/≤9.5	Anticipatory
11	Gross output value of the forest and grassland sector (RMB trillion)	8.17	9	Anticipatory
12	Value of forest ecosystem services (RMB trillion)[②]	15.88	18	Anticipatory

Fig. 7 Main targets for the 14th 5-year plan

Forest Chief Scheme

Set up at the provincial (autonomous region, municipality directly under central level) level

General Forest Chief
assumed by the governor or party secretary of the province

Deputy Forest Chiefs
assumed by the deputy governors of the province or the officials at the same level, who are responsible for designated areas

Forest Chiefs at the City, County, township-level
appointed based on the actual needs

Local forestry and grassland authorities at all levels are responsible for

Fig. 8 The new Forest Chief Scheme

terms of restoration, China aims to achieve around 6,686 ha of plantations, afforest via aerial seeding nearly 850,000 ha of land, practice ANR by closing 5.8 million ha of mountains and restore more than 4.6 million ha of degraded forests. China has also doubled its effort to strengthen the protection of germplasm resources and speed up the selection and breeding of superior seedlings. Finally, in 2021 the **new Forest Chief System** was introduced, which is a major innovation to the supervision and governance of forest and grassland resources. Through this new scheme, responsibilities in forest management are now shared among the local party committees and governments and the forest management department via the installment of Forest Chiefs, a role that will be filled by the governor and deputy governor of the province, as well as Forest Chiefs at city, prefecture and township levels. This direct involvement of political representatives makes good forest management as part of their political tasks and puts it higher on the political agenda.

Fiji

Fiji is currently in the progress of updating its **Forestry Act** from 1992, a process that started in 2016, but was delayed for various reasons. The new Forestry Act will include stipulations on carbon trading and emissions reductions programs. It has been reviewed in consultation with stakeholders and will soon be brought to the cabinet.

Lao PDR

Lao PDR has updated its original **Forestry Law** from 2007, filling in gaps and re-allocating responsibilities between different authorities, such as shifting the responsibility of wood processing from the Ministry of Trade to the Ministry of Forestry and Agriculture. Furthermore, a set of previously vague stipulations have been worked on in greater detail and new important plants that have emerged since 2007, such as the National Socio-Economic Development Plan, the National Land Management Master Plan and the Forestry Strategy, have been integrated with the forestry law.

With the update of the forestry law, other decrees are now being updated, such as the **Decree on the Protection of Forests** (originally from 2010), the **Decree on the Protected Areas** (from 2015) and the **Decree on the Sustainable Management of Production Forest Areas** (from 2015). Especially the updated of the last decree is important to re-align the aforementioned wood processing responsibility shifts. The decrees will also aim to incentivize an increase in forest investment and update plantation pricing for investors.

Mongolia

Mongolia, in response to the Glasgow Endorsement, initiated a whole host of new measures. The new **Vision 2050**, validated in 2021, emphasizes green development and contributing to climate change. This new Vision 2050 has also invalidated a number of policy documents (around 30-40)

that are now being updated to align with the vision, which is expected to be finished towards the end of 2022.

In its new **Strategic Plan 2022-2024,** it aims to **increase the forest area to 8.6% of the total land** area via seven objectives that include general reforestation and forest management, the reforestation of saxaul forests and oases, regulating water, increasing city green, cluster farming, the preservation of germplasm resources and finally capacity building.
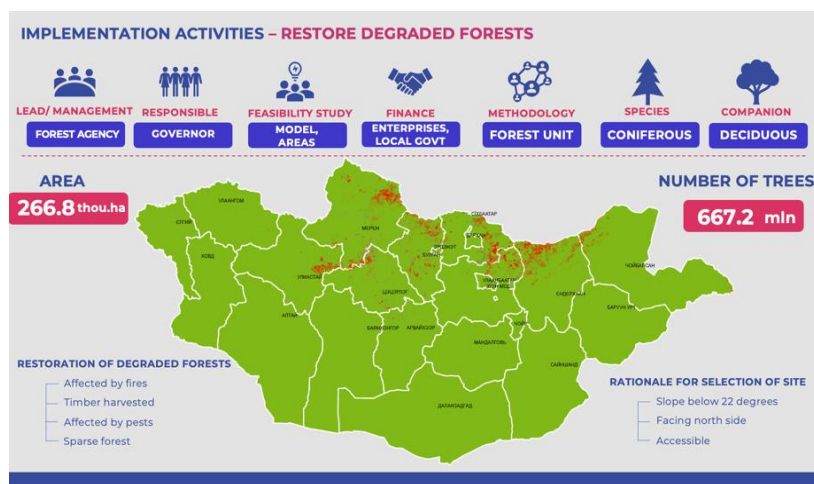

Fig. 9 Targets for degraded forests in the 1 Billion Tree National Movement

One of the most significant developments after the COP26 was the development of the **Billion Tree National Movement**, which, at the point of the workshop, had finished the drafting stage, but had not been approved, yet. It was implemented via Decree Nr. 58 and established by the Ministry of Environment and Tourism. Aiming to plant 1.5 billion trees by 2030, it provides a specific breakdown in terms of how many trees and ha are to be planted using which key species. The breakdown is as following: 667.2 million trees (or 266,800 ha) are to be planted to restore degraded forests, using a mixture of coniferous and deciduous species; 220.6 million trees (73,500 ha) are to be planted to restore saxaul forests, with saxaul as the dominant species and tamarisk as the companion species; 209.4 million trees are to be planted along railroads and roadways; 165.9 million poplars on 60,400 ha are to be planted to reforest major river basins; 130.8 million trees of various species are to be planted to create and enhance urban green spaces; 26.2 million trees are to be planted in orchards and agroforestry systems using species such as apple, pear, apricot and prunes; 23.3 million poplars on 6,660 ha are to be planted to protect springs and headwaters and, lastly, 2.7 million trees on 915 ha are to be planted to restore oases, mainly using Euphrates poplar as the main species and tamarisk as the companion species. Progress on the reforestation efforts will be monitored every 2 years and be presented to the national committee on climate change and desertification mitigation.

In order to facilitate this enormous undertaking, Mongolia is also currently in the process of **establishing an entirely new agency, the Forest Agency**, which will coordinate the movement. At the point of the workshop the Forest Agency was already officially approved and will be established under the Ministry of Environment and Tourism within the next few months of 2022.

Myanmar

In response to the Glasgow pledge, Myanmar set its conditional national determined contribution (NDC) goal to achieve a 50% net emissions reduction by 2030 then against a 2005-2015 baseline, with 27% to be achieved by 2025. The annual emissions reductions from forest and land use change (FOLU) are to contribute 6.9% annually. Myanmar's unconditional target stipulates a 25% net emissions reduction by 2030 with 11% achieved by 2025 and an annual FOLU reduction of 2.8%. A decrease in deforestation should remove 163 million metric tons (MMT) of CO_2, while via reforestation about 93 MMT of CO_2 are to be removed.

In order to achieve the above-mentioned targets, in 2022 Myanmar started a new National Initiative that aims at **increasing reserve forests and public protected forests to 30%** (compared to the 25.8% they currently occupy) and **enlarging the number of protected areas to 10%** from currently 6.43%. Furthermore, it aims to establish more large-scale plantations and **920,000 ha of community forest** (from 296,963 ha in 2021) and increase private sector investment, as well as re-establish its national habitat program.

Nepal

In line with the Glasgow Declaration, Nepal is currently developing the **National Action Plan for Forest and Landscape Restoration**, which is supported by FAO and will include restoration methods to be used for different restoration goals, identify restoration areas and target numbers, as well as develop the timeline for forest restoration.

The Philippines

The Philippines are currently working on **updating the Philippine Master Plan for Climate-resilient Forestry Development**, which covers the time period from 2016 to 2028, aiming to align it with the Glasgow commitment. This master plan includes a forest restoration goal and generally will integrate their initiatives more closely to international mechanisms.

Sri Lanka

Since the year of the Glasgow Declaration, Sri Lanka has announced its forest cover goal of **achieving 32% forest cover by 2030**. Furthermore, a number of new policies and plans, such as the **National Mangrove Policy** and the **Landscape Management Plan** to promote forest landscape restoration, have been introduced.

Sri Lanka is currently working on updating a variety of important plans to further achieve forest restoration goals. For instance, the **Forestry Sector Master Plan** is being updated now and will cover a 10-year period. Its content will be aligned with the Glasgow Declaration and the Forest Goals and tackle sectors, such as biodiversity conservation, production forestry, livelihood improvement, NTFP utilization, watershed conservation and forestry exchange. Using this plan, the government is planning to prepare an investment plan for different sectors and then submit it to donors for funding. Besides, as part of the Master Plan, the **Reforestation and Forest**

Restoration Plan will divide restoration goals and approaches based on different socio-economic and ecological functions, such as restoration for biodiversity conservation, restoration for coastal protection via mangroves, restoration for timber production and restoration for livelihoods via agroforestry. Also, the **Master Plan for Natural Forests**, mostly focusing on protected areas, is also under preparation.

Finally, the process of updating the **Forestry Legislation** has also been started.

Thailand

Thailand has committed itself to **achieve carbon neutrality by mid-century** and **achieve a forest cover of 55%,** for which in order to do this it has introduced a number of new initiatives. A new program, which is called **the Forest Plantation Promotion in Private Property**, running from 2022-2023, aims to incentivize farmers to plant trees in a manner similar to China's Grain for Green Program. As such, farmers can choose amongst a number of

Fig. 10 Thailand's "1 million Trees for Bangkok Greening" program

different campaigns depending on their situation and preferences to receive support from the government. For instance, they can receive $ 625 US dollars per hectare within 5 years for fast-growing wood species via the industry campaign, and around 5,000 seedlings/ha of fast-growing species in the renewable energy campaign. In the campaign for watershed improvement, the farmers can receive about $ 625 US dollar per hectare within 3 years for planting economic tree species. Meanwhile, in areas that don't belong to a watershed farmers can obtain USD 187.5/ha for planting economic tree species. In the rubber plantation campaign, farmers can obtain seedlings for free, about 312 per ha. The overall goal of the government is to distribute 50 million good quality seedlings per year.

As Thailand puts much emphasis on urban forestry, the new **1 Million Trees for Bangkok Greening** program, launched in 2022 and lasting until 2023 has an aspirational goal of planting a million trees in Bangkok city. This program relies strongly on the help and support of the public and the private sectors. In this context, the government of Thailand offers corporate social responsibility (CSR) opportunities for the business sector via trees planting activity.

4. New Ideas and Strategies Tested

A multitude of new developments and ideas were discussed during the workshop, as such this section will only serve to highlight some innovative ideas from the plethora.

Monitoring

Several economies tried new, innovative monitoring approaches. **The Philippines** launched several different monitoring methods, each complimenting each other and focusing on different monitoring aspects. These include the Watershed Monitoring Instrumentation Program, the Lawin Forest and Biodiversity Protection System, which is a community-based protection and monitoring (CBPM) approach, as well as the new National Forest Monitoring System (NFMS) and the Carbon Accounting Verification and Certification system (CAVCS) to encourage support and investments in activities that sequester carbon dioxide and avoid emissions from deforestation and forest degradation. **Mongolia** established its *National Tree Planting Dashboard* that is updated daily and allows for the live tracking of the implementation of its One Billion Tree National Movement.

Forest Restoration Approaches

The idea that forest restoration cannot be done in a one-size-fits all type of approach, finds increasing support and understanding amongst members. **Thailand** particularly elaborated on how they differentiate between afforestation/reforestation and forest restoration, stating that each approach has to be used in the right context. As such, afforesting with re-establishing trees with economic value should be a focus in economic plantations, while full forest restoration working with a multitude of species and advanced methods, such as the framework species approach, should be the preferred method in protected areas as the focus is much more on the ecosystem on the whole. **China** also emphasized the importance of considering site-adaptiveness and water carrying capacity prior to any reforestation attempts and the importance of giving priority to indigenous tree and grass species. Furthermore, **Sri Lanka, Thailand** and **Fiji** are formally promoting forest landscape restoration (FLR) and Sri Lanka is attempting to develop a plan to do this.

Meanwhile, **Brunei Darussalam** recognized how important a fundamental understanding of ecosystem dynamics in peat swamps is, thus bolstering research funds to understand how

Fig. 11 Thailand elaborating on its forest restoration approach

drainage affects peat swamps and their carbon fluxes, aiming to further protection based on the obtained understanding.

China clearly showed how important top-level support and a holistic approach of promoting ecosystem conservation and rehabilitation is, with its highest leader Xi Jinping putting it into formal thought with the political slogan: "Clear waters and green mountains are mountains of gold and silver.", alluding to the fact that intact ecosystems are invaluable assets. This slogan has been a leading guideline for all people in China. Additionally, as for the Forest Chief Scheme, political leaders below the top-leader level are even more directly involved in protecting the environment, making it an essential part of their political agenda.

Cooperation and Coordination

During the discussion part of the workshop, **Sri Lanka** emphasized that any comprehensive approach to curbing deforestation and forest degradation goes beyond just the forestry sector and has to involve other sectors and ministries more strongly.

This remark's implementation can already be seen to some extent in several economies', such as in **Lao PDR** and **Cambodia**, where new newly clarify responsibilities between different ministries, such as the Ministry of Trade, the Ministry of Environment and the Ministry of Forestry and Agriculture in order to optimize and streamline processes. **Mongolia** is even establishing an entire new agency (the Forest Agency) in order to coordinate reforestation better.

Cambodia also furthermore promotes Public-Private Partnerships (PPP) and **Lao PDR** is dedicated to promote forestry-related businesses, such as plantation tree processing, ecotourism and forest carbon trading.

Meanwhile, a number of economies are doubling down on collaboration with a variety of institutions. For instance, **Brunei Darussalam** is via the Carbon Exchange and Forest Dynamics of Tropical Peat Forest Project collaborating with the Singapore-Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) to obtain more knowledge and also works with the ASEAN Peat Swamp Forest Communities (BRU-NAPC).

Financial Incentives and Easements

A number of economies are trying out different financial incentives in order to encourage people to plant more trees. For example, **Mongolia** provides tax exemptions for land used for tree plantations and exemption of charges for water used in tree planting and nurseries. **Thailand** gives several financial compensations to farmers in its Forest Plantation Promotion in Private Property program.

Certification and Carbon Trading

The ideas of certification or earning money via the carbon stored by forests are increasingly gaining popularity among the Asia-Pacific economies. **Thailand**, for instance, aims to put

around 10% of the total forest under the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) scheme. **Brunei Darussalam** is also currently developing frameworks needed for the carbon market and looking into forest certification at large. **Myanmar** plans to engage more in REDD+. **Lao PDR** is also furthering its work in this area via the National REDD+ Strategy 2030. **The Philippines** established their Carbon Accounting, Verification and Certification System (CAVCS) to encourage support and investment activities that sequester carbon dioxide and avoid emissions. **Fiji's** new Forestry Act will also include stipulations on carbon trading specifically.

5. Collaboration Opportunities

Many economies identified a number of opportunities for collaboration with each other. For instance, **China** introduced the One Belt One Road Forestry Collaboration Platform, which aims to implement a cooperation mechanism between the Greater Mekong Subregion (GMS) economies. In this context, China is also now establishing best practice models in Yunnan Province for tropical forest management, wildlife protection and forest fire prevention

Specific ideas of forest restoration cooperation

➤ Establish a "One Belt & One Road Initiative" forestry cooperation platform, implement the cooperation mechanism of China, Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar, Thailand and Vietnam, to promote the integrated management planning and demonstration project of the Greater Mekong sub region

➤ Relying on the advantages of Yunnan Province in tropical forest management, wildlife protection, forest fire prevention, etc., it has formed a comprehensive management and demonstration plan of forest ecosystems in six economies (China, Thailand, Vietnam, Laos, Myanmar, Cambodia)

➤ Provide best practices for demonstration vegetation restoration and forest resource management in forestry development in the Greater Central Asia region.

Fig. 12 Some of China's ideas for potential collaboration

for the GMS economies, as well as best practices for vegetation restoration in dry areas, which will be relevant for economies in Greater Central Asia. China also reminded participants that specifically in the context of the Glasgow commitment, there was conversation about a Glasgow Forest Restoration Fund. China fully supports the establishment of this fund, but also pointed out that the fund would be more of a global effort as it cannot be solely provided by China.

The **Philippines** supported the idea of furthering collaboration in the realm of FLR as it is both expensive and extensive. **Myanmar** supported more collaboration in various realms of sustainable forest management (SFM), but especially in trans-boundary work relating to biodiversity conservation, protected area management and combating illegal wildlife trade and forest crimes.

6. FPN Work, Challenges and Moving Forward

FPN Work 2020-2022

Established in 2013, the Asia-Pacific Forestry Planning Network (FPN) aims to enhance networking, knowledge exchange and communications among forestry planners and
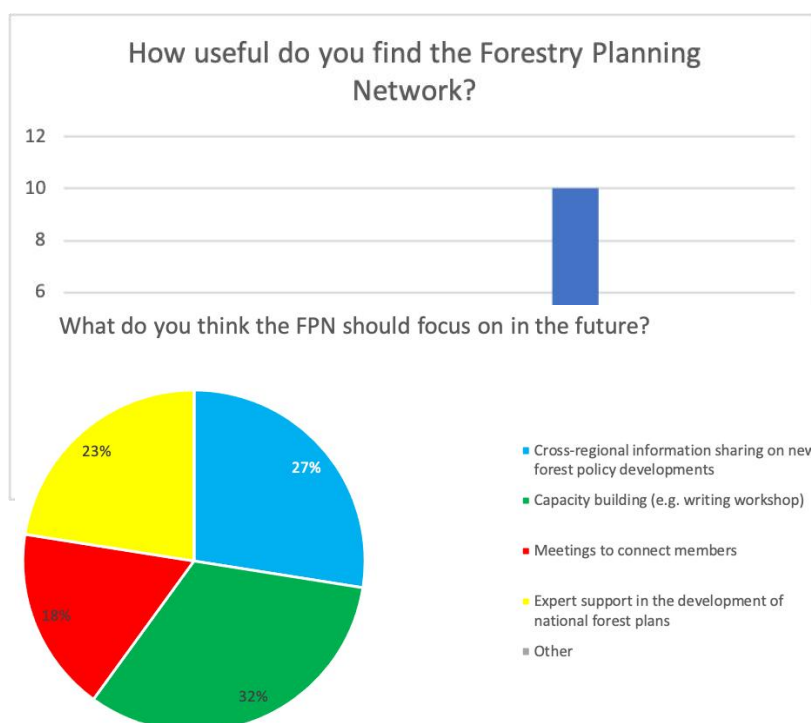
policymakers in the Asia-Pacific region, improve the availability and accessibility of information for strategic planners and policymakers; and strengthen the knowledge, capacity and ability of forestry planning institutions and individuals at the economy level. As a result of the pandemic, on-site mechanism activities have been severely impacted since the end of 2019. Regardless, a number of studies were conducted between 2020 and 2022 to enrich the regional knowledge base. This included an economy-specific study on strategic planning of degraded forest restoration in Asia-Pacific Region, resulting in two publications, the results of the newest one already being presented in Chapter 2.1.

Challenges in Forestry

Issues and challenges to address deforestation and forest degradation mentioned during both the study and the workshop included the underlying drivers of forest loss – poverty, population growth, lack of income diversity, unclear land tenure; the conversion of forest areas into other land uses; also due to conflicting sectoral policies and weak coordination mechanisms; lack or inadequacy of financial and human resources; weak advocacy & user group organizations; a lack of accountability and transparency and climate change and so forth. During the workshop, some participants also remarked on the remaining issue of budget constraints, and many local people having issues in fully grasping the environmental issues and how their actions impact their surrounding environment. Finally, there still remains a continuously low investment from the private sector into the forestry sector.
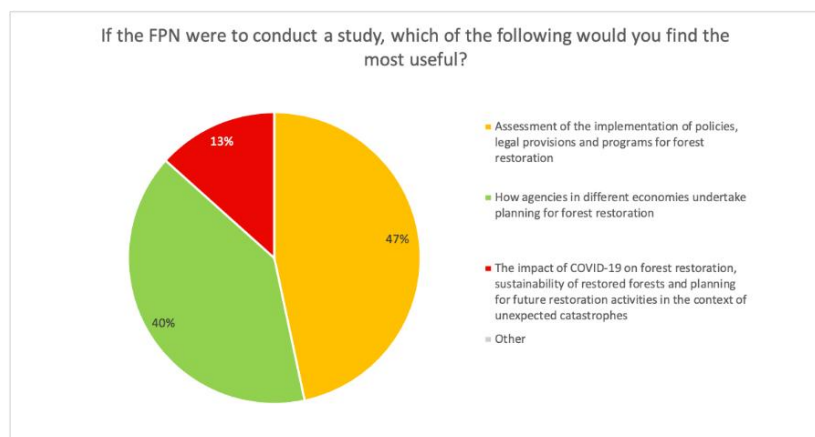
Moving Forward

A survey about how useful participants found the Asia-Pacific Forestry Planning Network was conducted towards the end of the online event. Most responders found it "somewhat useful", indicating that there is room to for growth for the FPN to become even more valuable for its members although the polling result was not reflected by a full number

How useful do you find the Forestry Planning Network?

What do you think the FPN should focus on in the future?

- Cross-regional information sharing on new forest policy developments
- Capacity building (e.g. writing workshop)
- Meetings to connect members
- Expert support in the development of national forest plans
- Other

of attendance.

In this context, the study and the participants gave recommendations regarding future potential work of the FPN, both in their presentations and in another survey. In a broader sense, most participants felt that the FPN should focus most on **capacity building**, while a large part also found that continued **cross-regional information sharing on new forest policy developments** would be of great help. Participants emphasized during the discussion, however, that they would strongly prefer in-person meetings in the future as for some the connection was spotty and personal relationships are best fostered in person. The FPN team strongly agreed with this opinion and stated that once COVID restrictions ease, the goal would be to conduct more in-person meetings.

When asked on their opinion regarding some of the specific follow-up studies recommended by the latest FPN report, most participants supported the undertaking of a study that would **assess the implementation of policies, legal provisions and programs for forest restoration**.

If the FPN were to conduct a study, which of the following would you find the most useful?

13%
47%
40%

- Assessment of the implementation of policies, legal provisions and programs for forest restoration
- How agencies in different economies undertake planning for forest restoration
- The impact of COVID-19 on forest restoration, sustainability of restored forests and planning for future restoration activities in the context of unexpected catastrophes
- Other

In this context, the FPN has gained new valuable input in terms of potential work areas moving forward.

7. Conclusion

Conducting an all-day workshop online is never easy. Despite this, the FPN Workshop on New Developments in Forest Planning and Policies in Response to the Glasgow Endorsement of Forest Restoration, can be judged to be a success. The members gave an overview of the implementation of existing policies and legal framework and shared significant new developments, such as the launching of new large-scale reforestation programs or the introduction and amendment of forestry policies and laws, or upgrading of institutional arrangements. All in all, it's not hard to see that the Glasgow Leaders' Declaration on Forests and Land Use has been integrated into the participating economies' new forestry planning already or will be within the next five years. Armed with this up-to-date knowledge, information and valuable suggestions, the regional members can now enhance their respective planning even more to achieve a sustainable future.