The 3rd Regional Workshop on Strategic Forestry Cooperation
in Greater Central Asia

Workshop Report

Issyk-Kul, Kyrgyzstan

28-30 June 2017

Abbreviations list

APFNet	Asia-Pacific Network for Sustainable Forest Management and Rehabilitation
ASP	APFNet Scholarship Program
CACILM-2	Central Asian Countries Initiative for Land Management
CBF	Community-based forestry
CNY	Chinese Yuan
EUR	Euro
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
GCA	Greater Central Asia
GEF	Global Environment Facility
GIZ	German International Development Agency
ha	Hectare
IRD	Institute for Regional Development
JFM	Joint forest management
JICA	Japan International Cooperation Agency
KOICA	Korea International Cooperation Agency
km	kilometre
KR	Kyrgyz Republic
MMRF	Meeting of Ministers Responsible for Forestry
NGO	Non-governmental organization
REDD+	United Nations Programme on Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation
SAEPF	State Agency on Environmental Protection and Forestry
TEV	Total Economic Value
TIKA	Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency Directorate
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
USD	United States Dollar

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Workshop background

Background and rationale

Economies in Greater Central Asia (GCA) are close geographic neighbors with similar topography and natural conditions. Close cooperation is vital to sustainable economic and social development, and this drives the Asia-Pacific Network for Sustainable Forest Management and Rehabilitation (APFNet)'s activities in the region.

APFNet is an international nonprofit organization established in 2008 to promote sustainable forest management processes. It does this through the implementation of demonstration projects, capacity building, communication and information sharing, and regional policy dialogues focused on strategic issues in forestry development, and has been working in the GCA region since 2014.

The GCA region is made up of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Mongolia, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan and North-Western China. The landscape in these economies is characterized by desert and semi-desert valleys, plateaus and highlands. Although the region is sparsely forested, its forests perform important protective, water-saving, sanitary and hygienic, oxygen generating, climate regulation and health improving functions.

The 3rd Regional Workshop on Strategic Forestry Cooperation in the Greater Central Asia Region (hereafter referred to as "the workshop") was organized and conducted jointly by the State Agency for Environmental Protection and Forestry (SAEPF) under the Government of the Kyrgyz Republic (KR), the local non-governmental organization (NGO) the Institute for Regional Development (IRD), in partnership and with the financial support of APFNet. The workshop agenda can be found in Annex I.

The workshop was held in accordance with the outputs and decisions of the 2nd Regional Workshop on Strategic Forestry Cooperation in GCA (held in Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia, 15-17 July 2015) and the 1st Meeting of Ministers Responsible for Forestry (MMRF) in GCA (held in Astana, Kazakhstan, 30-31 May 2016). Based on the outcomes of the 1st MMRF, the Astana Statement was developed and adopted. The Astana Statement agreed that cooperation in forestry in the GCA region should:

1. Take into account the policies and main activities in the field of forestry of the representatives of participating economies of the first MMRF.
2. Encourage forest authorities of the participating economies to increase forest cover in the GCA region and to reduce forest fires, forests pests and diseases, illegal logging, and desertification and degradation.
3. Promote cross-border and regional cooperation, legislative development, joint programs and projects, and research and development.
4. Ensure effective regional and cross-border cooperation in the economies of GCA.

This current workshop was held as a means of determining how foresters across the GCA region could work together more closely to translate the Astana Statement into concrete actions going forward.

Workshop Objectives

The key objectives of the workshop were to:

1. Revisit the Strategic Cooperation Framework and discuss how the corresponding actions may be implemented;
2. Develop ideas for translating the Astana Statement (Annex II) into concrete actions in-line with the specific needs of GCA economies and forestry development opportunities offered by the 3rd Regional Strategic Cooperation Framework that are relevant to APFNet's activity pillars in capacity building, communications and outreach, demonstration projects and policy dialogues; and
3. Share experiences, best practices and updates on forest management and policy development that address domestic and transboundary forestry challenges.

Participants

Thirty-three participants from seven economies (China, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Mongolia, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan), as well as representatives of the German Agency for Cooperation (GIZ) in Kyrgyzstan, attended the workshop. A local NGO, IRD, was responsible for organizing the workshop on-the-ground, and also assisted in facilitation and moderation during the workshop itself. A list of all participants can be found in Annex III.

Outcomes of plenary sessions and group work

Day 1 (28 June 2017)

Welcome and opening remarks, and workshop agenda

Welcome and opening remarks were given by the following representatives:

- **Mr. Nurlan Jumaev**, Deputy Director of the State Agency for Environmental Protection and Forestry under the Government of the Kyrgyz Republic, opened the workshop and welcomed the participants, stressing the importance of the workshop for the forest sector while also noting the role of regional cooperation for forestry in the GCA economies.
- **Mr. Lu De**, Assistant Executive Director of APFNet, highlighted that students from GCA economies will receive scholarships for forestry training at Chinese universities from this year. Taking into account the outcomes of the MMRF in GCA held in Astana in 2016, APFNet proposes to strengthen cooperation between the GCA economies going forward.
- **Mr. Azamat Omorbekov**, Project Coordinator at the Institute for Regional Development.
- **Ms. Kuralay Karibaeva**, Director of the Institute of Ecology and Sustainable Development of the Republic of Kazakhstan, on behalf of the Minister of Agriculture of the Republic of Kazakhstan.
- **Mr. Said Inogamov**, facilitator of the workshop, invited each of the participants to introduce themselves briefly (20-30 seconds) and announced the opening of the workshop and the 1st and 2nd technical sessions. Participants were presented with the agenda of the 2nd technical session, requirements for delivering the presentations, and asked to follow the technical guidelines (Annex IV).

Technical Session 1: Review of APFNet's Efforts in GCA

<u>Presentation on review of APFNet activities in the GCA region (Mr. Lu De, APFNet)</u>

A brief summary of APFNet's work promoting sustainable forest management and forest rehabilitation in the Asia-Pacific region was given.

It was emphasized that APFNet's assistance is focused on the following:

- Capacity Building of forestry employees (conducting trainings, providing scholarships);
- Policy Dialogue (addressing strategic issues, including developing mechanisms for facilitating regional events and meetings);
- Demonstration Projects; and
- Information Sharing.

During the workshop comprehensive consultation and discussion would be carried out regarding the transformation of the Astana Statement provisions into concrete actions in-line with the specific needs of GCA economies and on how to realize opportunities in the Regional Framework into relevant activities.

Expected outcomes of the workshop:

- Information shared on the latest forestry development approaches, policies and other good practices in the GCA;
- Proposals developed and suggestions provided on activities that could be implemented under the Regional Framework and in-line with the Astana Statement;
- Strengthened networks among senior forestry officials in the GCA.

Technical Session 2: Latest information and data on progress/outcomes related to implementation of Astana Statement provisions by GCA economies

At this session, each economy delivered a presentation on the latest information and data on progress/outcomes related to implementation of the provisions of the Astana Statement, in accordance with previously sent technical guidelines (Annex IV).[1]

1) <u>Presentation on Combating Desertification and Land Degradation in China (Mr. Wang Junhui)</u>

China has experienced large-scale degradation and desertification of forestlands, with a total of 261.16 million hectares, equivalent to 27.2% of its total territory, now being subject to desertification.

The direct economic losses of this are USD 14 billion per year, with sand and dust storms in northern China bring losses of USD 8 billion per year alone.

Forestland degradation and desertification are related to overgrazing, deforestation, excessive and inefficient use of water resources, aridification of climate and droughts.

The need to recognize the following points was stressed:

- The desertified area is large, therefore combating desertification is a long-term, arduous and complex task;
- There is a big gap between investment and actual needs for combating desertification; and
- Climate change brings new and serious challenges to land degradation.

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[1] For technical reasons, the presentation by Mongolia was postponed to the morning session of the second day of the workshop.

To combat forestland degradation and desertification, various improvements in the legislative framework based on the Range Land Protection Law, Forest Law and Soil and Water Conservation Law have been implemented. The government provides financial support for environment initiatives such as natural forest protection projects and transformation of farmlands into forest and grassland. These initiatives afforest 7.5 million ha annually. Degraded areas located in the northwest part of China where the climate is arid can be afforested. Land with a light degree of desertification has increased, while land with a severe and extreme degree of desertification has decreased. A desertification monitoring system has been developed and focuses on desertification and sandification; vegetation; drought monitoring and dust storms.

During the last 15 years, the total area of desertified land decreased by 2 200 km^2, with sandy lands decreasing by 1 467 km^2. The income of the local population in the desertification areas increased from USD 213 to USD 2 003 per person.

During the last three years (2014 – 2016), the following key achievements were made:

- Rehabilitation activities have been implemented on 1.929 million ha of sandified land;
- 1.332 mln ha of land was protected;
- 70 national sandy desert parks have been established.

National targets to combat land degradation are:

- 1 million ha of annually managed sandified land;
- Over 26 million ha of managed sandified land by 2020;
- Over 53 million ha of managed sandified land by 2050.

National targets to achieve sustainable forest management include:

- National forest coverage rate is 23.04% or more by 2020;
- National forest coverage rate is over 24% by 2030;
- National forest coverage rate is over 26% by 2050.

National targets for rangeland conversation are:

- Average vegetation coverage to reach 56% by 2015-2020;
- Average vegetation coverage to reach 60% by 2030.

2) Presentation on forestry in the Republic of Kazakhstan (Ms. Kuralay Karibayeva)

The following challenges were emphasized:

- Lack of a strategic programming document on conservation and efficient rational use of biological resources;
- Forestry facilities lack sufficient material and technical resources;
- Deforestation and decline in productivity of forest plantations resulted from unsustainable forest management;
- Declining area of natural forests due to competition with industrial infrastructure development;
- Desertification and salinization of lands, especially in the area of the exposed bed of the Aral Sea;
- Impacts and consequences of large-scale forest fires occurred during previous years;
- Climate change impacts; and
- Decreased forest reproduction and afforestation activities over the past three years (80 500 ha in 2014 and 56 300 ha in 2016). There has however also been a decrease in the number of forest fires over the same period.

Community-based forestry, as a form of forest management, has not yet been implemented in Kazakhstan. However, its potential application has been considered. A pilot area for the testing and assessment of implementation of this form of forest management, taking into account the inputs and views of the local rural population, could be some selected in desert (saxaul) forests located in the south of the economy. The main barrier to the implementation of such a pilot project has been the lack of the funding required and of relevant standards in forest legislation.

At present, a two-level forest management system for the state-funded forestlands is functioning in Kazakhstan: a national and local management system.

Approximately 0.9 million ha of forest shelterbelts and 0.2 million ha of pasture-protecting plantations need to be established in Kazakhstan. Currently, the issue of application of an integrated approach for the introduction of a protective plantation system is being considered; the gradual formation of so-called agro-forest landscapes. Introduction of monitoring and cadastre of land resources are underway.

> Within the framework of regional cooperation, the following activities are proposed:
>
> - Joint monitoring and control over the state of forests, forest fire and the spread of pests and forest diseases;
> - Training and internships for forestry specialists;
> - Implementation of joint scientific and technical assistance programs and projects; and
> - Establishing joint transboundary protected areas and territories aimed at biodiversity conservation and protection.

3) <u>Presentation on results achieved by the Kyrgyz Republic within the framework of implementation of Astana Statement (Ms. Susanna Seideeva)</u>

Despite the fact that more than 90% of the territory of Kyrgyzstan is occupied by mountains, the government pays particular attention to combatting desertification of forestlands and promoting sustainable development of forest plantations in desert zones. Over the past 10 years, 21 097 ha of forest plantations have been established, including 4 800 ha on arid arable lands. One of the priority activities of forestry is biological methods of forest protection. The key advantages/disadvantages of implementation of such methods are as follows:

- Biological treatment is a low-cost measure, which does not pose a threat to the environment;
- When applying these methods, complete clearing of an outbreak is not possible.

Forest inventory works are conducted via a two-level system; national forest inventory and forest management inventory. The national forest inventory is carried out in accordance with international standards and the European information system oriented to the Forest resource assessment, according to the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) methodology. Over the past 20 years, forest management activities were implemented in an area of over 3 million ha.

In 2016, an economic assessment of the ecosystem services provided by the National Nature Park 'Karakol' that is a specially protected area, was carried out based on the commonly adopted methodology on the Total Economic Value (TEV). TEV can be determined through the value of use of ecosystem services and the value of the estimated non-used resources.

Based on the park's parameters (the park has four types of ecosystem), a methodology for economic valuation of ecosystem services (three types of services: provisional, regulation and cultural) has been developed, and monetary valuation estimates for forest lands and biodiversity have been carried out.

Forestry capacity building and training activities required are identified as being:

- Training on increasing productivity and quality based on the selection-genetics;
- Training in improving the forest pathological monitoring system;
- Training on growing seedlings of trees with use of the advanced technology (with a closed root system).

4) Presentation on progress/results achieved in implementation of the Astana Statement by GCA economies (Mr. Khikmatullo Akhmadov, Tajikistan)

Natural factors (topography, climatic conditions, geological formations, vegetation, and soil cover) and anthropogenic factors (deforestation, overgrazing, fires, intensive use of forests, etc.) have caused forestland degradation and desertification.

The National Action Program to Combat Desertification was approved in 2001. A total of 1 000 ha has been reforested and 800 ha afforested annually. The main purpose of planting is to combat soil erosion and desertification. In Tajikistan, over the last five years, cross-border fires were not recorded.

In accordance with the requirements of the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Pollutants, the use of biological protection methods to protect forests has become a priority in Tajik forestry. Based on the available results, biological methods for protecting forests from pests were improved.

For the conservation of forest genetic biodiversity, uterine plantations of fruit forest species have been established. A set of measures to eliminate the threat to forest genetic resources was elaborated.

However, a number of significant challenges remain:

- The National Program on afforestation and reforestation is not in place;
- Use of advanced, innovative and environmentally friendly technological solutions is very limited;
- The degree of forest vulnerability to climate change impacts has not been investigated yet;
- Reducing forest-covered area due to increased aridity of the climate and increasing the frequency of droughts is also not recorded; and
- Finally, a methodology for assessing forest ecosystem services is not in place.

Implementation of the National Forest Monitoring System is planned for the second half of 2017. There is a need for regional cooperation, in particular for a regional forest monitoring system and forest inventory.

5) Presentation on implementation of Astana Statement in Turkmenistan (Ms. Svetlana Zakariyeva)

Desertification processes are caused by anthropogenic and natural factors. Land degradation occurs because of industrial, agricultural, irrigation-reclamation activities and natural reasons.

To combat the degeneration and desertification of forestlands, as well as to contribute to the sustainable development of forest plantations in desert zones, the National Action Program to Combat Desertification and the National Strategy on Climate Change were adopted. Moreover, the National Forest Program and an Action Plan to increase forest areas have been developed. The forest inventory system is being improved. An inventory and survey of forests are being carried out. National stock-taking of the state-funded forest lands is being implemented. To mitigate climate change impacts and

deterioration of forestlands, measures aimed at limiting grazing and providing natural gas on a free of charge basis are being implemented in Turkmenistan.

To prevent fires, the Law on Fire Safety, in which additional measures are taken to prevent fires, was adopted in 2004:

- Financing of fire prevention measures from the state budget;
- Creation of operational groups;
- Conducting additional observations during the fire-dangerous period (May-October); and
- A National Commission on implementation of fire protection and nature protection measures was established.

To preserve forest genetic resources, the assortment of fruit tree species is zoned. To create working collections, the foreign breeding centers are provided with the best varieties. A genetic seed bank of Turkmenistan has been established.

Capacity building, training and re-training of forestry specialists are undertaken by the forestry professionals and funded from forestry budget. The main subjects of trainings are:

- Economics of forestry;
- Effective use of national budget funds and other funding sources; and
- Introduction of an electronic database of forest plantations, their status and forest sanitation and clearing logging activities.

Methodologies on valuation of forest ecosystem services are under development. Biological methods on protection of forests represent a new and not well-developed trend in the economy's forestry.

6) Presentation on information about outcomes achieved in implementation of the Astana Statement in Uzbekistan (Mr. Kholmurod Talipov)

The processes of desertification and land degradation pose serious problems for Uzbekistan. Degradation of forests is caused by intensive grazing, development of new lands for irrigation, cutting of wood and shrubs for fuel and secondary salinization of lands.

The present forest monitoring system provides only rough estimates. Updated maps of the forest inventory are not available. Due to an increase in forest pests, the state of forests has deteriorated in recent years. Every year, the biological method of forest protection is applied to about 15,000 ha, falling short of meeting the total area that needs it.

Methodologies on valuation of forest ecosystem services are not available.

The National Action Plan to Combat Land Degradation and Desertification was adopted in 1999.

In 2017, the total land area of the state-funded forestland is 11 250.3 thousand ha vs 9 629.6 thousand ha in 2010, however forest and shrub area is 3 245.7 thousand ha vs 3 023.1 thousand ha respectively.

It was also emphasized that the main Forestry Department under the Ministry of Agriculture and Water Resources of the Republic of Uzbekistan has been transformed into the State Forestry Committee of the Republic of Uzbekistan. Thus, the status of forestry in Uzbekistan has been increased.

In 2016, to provide rural residents with firewood (for the period 2016-2018), the Government set the corresponding targets for growing plantations of firewood species on an area totaling 4 800 ha. To achieve the targets, such plantations were planted on an area of 1 500 ha in 2016, and on an area of 1 500 ha in the first half of 2017.

Conservation of forest genetic resources is implemented on the lands of natural reserves and state forest farms.

It is necessary to create a database on forest genetic resources and conduct training on approaches for long-term storage of seeds of valuable genotypes of forest tree species.

It is necessary to revise the technology on establishing forests in the desert zone. Establishing forests in the desert zone requires testing use of hydrogel.

7) Practical Exercise

After all presentations were delivered, the participants were divided into economy groups to conduct a "Quick Assessment Method". The objective was to evaluate, using a five-point scoring system (5 being the highest score with 1 being the lowest), the conformity of each economy's forestry with the key provisions of the Astana Statement.

At the end of this session, Mr. Otgonsuren Batgombo from Mongolia delivered a presentation on the creation of a mini-botanical garden in Mongolia.

Technical Session 3: Brief overview of APFNet's activities focused on strategic development of forestry

Presentation on strategic development of forestry in GCA economies (Ms. Zhang Yang, APFNet)

After APFNet activities in the GCA region were highlighted, Ms. Zhang Yang explained the need to nominate a Focal Point (DG level – a high-level position in forestry) from each economy. The Focal Point should have the authority to represent the economy's views with respect to APFNet policy and programming priorities, and may join APFNet Council Meetings as an Observer.

To assist the Focal Point, one or two Contact Person(s) were also asked to be designated to:

- Handle routine communication and administrative matters and circulate information (regarding meetings and capacity building activities);
- Help review and recommend candidates for APFNet activities;
- Help with APFNet promotion efforts; and to
- Inform on progress and challenges with the implementation of APFNet programs.

The APFNet Secretariat is planning to organize the second MMRF in 2018 in accordance with the plan to hold such meetings biannually. The key regional issues/problems will be considered and discussed during the meeting with the involvement and participation of experienced and knowledgeable experts.

Workshop participants were asked for suggestions on a venue for hosting MMRF in 2018, with Mr. Erlan Jumaev proposing to hold the next MMRF and the 4th Regional Workshop on Strategic Forestry Cooperation in GCA in Kyrgyzstan. This proposal was welcomed and accepted by the workshop participants.

Technical Session 4: Group discussion of best practices and experience gained

Discussion in this session was centered on:

- Management of forest resources, including the implementation of the principles of community-based forestry (CBF);
- Combating desertification; and
- Use of desert zone products.

Participants were provided with instructions in advance for the preparations (Annex V) to be done by speakers during this session.

<u>Presentation on Forest Resource Management, including implementation of principles of CBF (Ms. Venera Surappaeva, Kyrgyzstan)</u>

In Kyrgyzstan about 1 200 000 people live nearby forestlands (at a distance of up to 5 km) and use forest resources. Up to 200 000 people live inside the forests and are completely dependent on forest resources.

The principles of CBF as well as forest land tenure in forestry have been implemented in Kyrgyzstan since 1998. Accordingly, an appropriate legislative framework that regulates the principles and issues of joint forest management has been developed. Currently, a number of provisions and other legal documentation of this legislative framework are being revised.

According to the principles of CBF applied to forest product use, community members should implement forestry activities (afforestation, reforestation, growing of planting material, etc., and also protect the transferred sites from unauthorized felling, fires and other forest disturbances) based on income received. The volume of forest management activities is determined by the local forest farm when drafting the contracts.

<u>Presentation on community co-management of forest ecosystem models (Ms. Umut Zholdoshova, Kyrgyzstan)</u>

The Rural Development Fund, a Kyrgyzstan based on non-governmental organization, has developed and tested a model of forest ecosystem co-management that engages local communities and is implemented through application of their rights and responsibilities related to the management and use of forest resources. This joint forest management (JFM) model uses the concept of integrity of management and conservation of forest resources, which simultaneously ensures the biodiversity conservation and sustainable use of natural resources by local communities. Such a methodology is based on traditional environmentally appropriate local and international practices.

The process of approval of the proposed model was carried out in several successive stages:

- Needs assessment, i.e. expectations and preferences of local communities to participate in the management of natural resources;
- A new forest co-management institution called 'Meikyn Jamaaty (landscape community)' established jointly with a local community;
- Transfer of rights to manage ecosystem by communities;
- Joint planning that means not only participatory planning but also use, management and conservation of the allocated forest areas; and
- Development of recommendations on national forestry policy and legislation based on the approved results.

The differences of this model compared with other methods of JFM are:

- Holistic (single and indivisible) approach to forest management processes;
- Indivisibility of the processes of forest ecosystems conservation and processes of utilization of resources accumulated by those ecosystems;
- Application of traditional ecological knowledge of local communities to the processes of forest ecosystem management and conservation; and
- Participation in the management by the entire community rather than by individuals as forest users.

The JFM model was tested at two pilot sites located in the northern and southern parts of Kyrgyzstan. Testing the model has demonstrated not only its viability but also effectiveness in solving a wide range of forestry-related problems, including:

- Decreased illegal logging cases (up to 80%);
- Transparent management of finances;
- Increased environmental awareness of children and adults in the communities; and
- Reduction of conflicts as a result of the joint involvement of communities and local government authorities in development and adoption of the community management plans and in monitoring of their implementation.

A new project on Integrated Forest Ecosystem Management in the Kyrgyz Republic supported by the World Bank and Global Environmental Facility (GEF) and implemented by the SAEPF under the KR was launched in this year. The project aims at strengthening capacity of government bodies and communities to improve forest ecosystem management through investments into management planning, restoration of ecosystems and infrastructure. This will be done through support for institutional reform and capacity building in the forestry sector of the republic, the introduction of integrated natural resource management planning at the leskhoz level and support for the implementation of these plans in pilot areas. It is planned to conduct national forest inventory and building an informational system of the forestry sector as well as conducting research on accounting of natural capital and climate change adaptation. The budget of the project is USD 16 100 000 million and the project will be completed by 2021.

Presentation on the green economy as a tool for combatting desertification in Kazakhstan and the Central Asian region (Ms. Kuralay Karibayeva, Kazakhstan)

Land degradation in Kazakhstan is mainly caused by soil salinization, as well as by wind and water erosion. Moreover, weak environmental sustainability, scarcity and uneven distribution of water resources aggravate land degradation processes. Desertification, which covers 70% of the territory of the economy, is associated with irrational farming and grazing, large-scale mining, construction and operation of industrial, military and civilian facilities, irrigation and line facilities, and inefficient use of resources. The regions in Kazakhstan with the most evident desertification processes were indicated.

Transition to a green economy is proposed to solve environmental problems, including climate change, desertification and loss of biodiversity, as well as depletion of natural capital, lack of fresh water, etc.

The concept on the transition to a green economy in the Republic of Kazakhstan, called the "Green Bridge" partnership program, was developed. To achieve sustainable land management, the Land, Water, Forest and Environmental Codes have been adopted.

These documents envisage the measures aimed at stabilization and prevention of desertification and land degradation, solving environmental problems in the Aral Sea region in an integrated manner, rehabilitation of ecological disaster zones and territories exposed to radiation, chemical and biological pollution, as well as reproduction of forests, conservation of biodiversity, and development of a system of protected areas, etc.

Environmental safety, a legal regulatory framework, monitoring and a database on environmental education ensure synergy of the key provisions of the UN environmental conventions ratified by Kazakhstan.

In general, the problem of depletion of fertile lands and reduction of their area is extremely acute in Central Asia. Crop yields in the region have declined by 30%, and annual losses in agriculture reach USD 2 billion.

Cooperation in the Central Asian region is required to overcome the following:

- Lack of social capacity in the majority of economies to reform the "brown" economy;
- Lack of investment, technology and expertise on the one hand, and natural capital on the other hand that requires a complementary partnership between the developed and developing economies; and
- Lack of trust for solving transboundary problems also requires multilateral partnership and independent professional expertise.

The speaker invited the participants to consider a possibility of the accession of Central Asian economies to APFNet, along with China and Mongolia. She also proposed to develop the corresponding accession criteria. Mr. Lu De replied that this is possible only in accordance with the procedural provisions and the charter of APFNet.

Recap of key points emerging from Day 1 discussions

A brief recap of the previous day's proceedings was given.

Presentation on after the Astana Statement: Mongolia (Mr. Nachin Baatarbileg, Mongolia)

The importance of applying biological methods for forest protection was emphasized, however their unavailability in the economy's forestry sector was also noted.

Currently, a methodology on economic valuation of forest ecosystems has not yet been developed.

Promoting biological methods for forest protection is a top priority for the Mongolian forestry authorities.

Desertification has become one of the pressing issues that needs special attention because of anthropogenic and natural impacts. A total of 76.8% of the territory of Mongolia is subject to desertification processes. Droughts tend to induce more frequent forest and steppe fires, and the size of burned areas is also increasing. By some scientific estimates, the decrease in forest cover in Mongolia resulting from forest fires could reach 512 000 ha (9.2%) in 2014-2030.

Prevention of transboundary forest fires is very important for Mongolian forestry.

Mongolia is vulnerable to climate change impacts due to its geographical and climate conditions, structure and level of development of its economic sector, and the lifestyle of its people. Increasing aridity induced by climate warming and decreased precipitation causes more frequent forest fires and pest invasion, which have become the key factors intensifying degradation and causing loss of Mongolian forests. Between 1999 and 2011, Mongolian forest cover (deciduous, coniferous and saxaul forest) decreased by 944 300 ha (7.5%), i.e. an annual decrease of 73 000 ha (0.62%).

Due to the climate change impacts, the Alpine tundra and the taiga may decrease by 0.1-5% by 2020 and 4-14% by 2050. The forest steppe in Khangai, Khentii, Khuvsgul and the Altai Mountain regions may decrease by around 3% during the first quarter of the 21st century, and by 7% during the second quarter of the 21st century. Pest affected forest cover with different greenhouse gas emission scenarios were estimated at 460-1149 thousand ha and 4390-5317.5 thousand ha respectively for the periods 2011-2039 and 2046-2065. This implies that the area affected by pests may increase significantly. The multi-year average of pest affected forest area was estimated at approximately 324.3 thousand ha. This number may increase by 1.4 to 13 times. Therefore, it can be concluded that climate change has an adverse impact on the national society and economy. In particular, the most affected groups are populations with a low income and herder households.

These factors accelerate the processes of desertification, and lead to strong sandstorms, traces of which are observed in the Republic of Korea and Japan, even reaching the western coast of the United States.

In this regard, there is a need to assess climate change impacts and vulnerability of the economy's forest ecosystems. This allows for the development of measures and actions aimed at management and mitigation of the corresponding risks and threats. To reduce the risks of natural disasters, the law on protection against natural disasters was adopted in 2003. Moreover, the National Emergency Management Agency was established in 2004.

To combat desertification, the National Action Plan was approved (2010). Its implementation is planned through two stages:

- First stage (2010-2015): within which all legal and policy actions were enforced, and countermeasures towards capacity building, improving science and technology, and increasing public awareness were undertaken as planned; and
- Second stage (2016-2020): mainly includes actions that can be implemented at the grassroots level and directed towards tackling, mitigation and combating desertification and land degradation.

Within the framework of the first stage of implementation, policy actions such as science and technology improvements, knowledge on how to combat desertification and promoting environmental conservation education were developed.

The five strategic goals are planned to be achieved through 15 objectives and 49 actions. According to the Action Plan, the areas affected by desertification are to be reduced up to 10.2% by 2030. The Government of Mongolia and National Committee for Combating Desertification are responsible for institutional arrangements, while line ministries, agencies and departments as well as scientific and educational institutions such as academia and universities are responsible for management and implementation.

The prospective considerations include:

- Establishing a national monitoring system, and developing a specific program focusing on analytical research related to assessment and mapping;
- Conducting specific research programs to determine impact of ecosystem service deterioration on the economy; and
- Providing appropriate information, and enabling the land-users to apply available knowledge to their plots that might be a workable approach for raising awareness.

The National Program to combat desertification was updated in compliance with the 10-year strategic plan of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD). In particular, Mongolia's Sustainable Development Goals 2030 set out to reduce areas affected by desertification by 10.2%. In this regard, the Government is working on having 30% of the total territory of Mongolia under special protection by 2030.

To prevent transboundary (with Russia) forest fires, during recent years, a number of particularly targeted actions (the International Conference on Cross-boundary Fire Management, the International Fire Management Week and Joint Mongolian-Russian Fire Exercise) were implemented. To prevent transboundary forest fires with China, the joint Mongolian and Chinese government resolution on 'Cooperation on fighting forest and steppe fires in border regions' was adopted in 1999. In line with this, the joint meeting on 'Prevention and Fighting of Transboundary Fires' was conducted in 2012. Mongolia is a member of the Regional Central Asia Fire Management Resource Center.

Needs in regional forestry cooperation were prioritized:

- Wall-to-wall forest cover changes to be monitored at regional level to determine climate change impacts on forest cover and corresponding adaptation options;
- Dot-grid based forest land use and land use changes to be monitored to assess the positive and negative impacts of human activities; and
- The same categories of forest stratification/human activities should be used at regional level, in particular for monitoring of forest-user group activities.

The focus of trainings and capacity building of forestry employees and experts is on:

- Payments for Ecosystem Services;
- Professional education in forestry;
- Role of government in capacity building of communities in forestry; role of community-based carbon monitoring under REDD+;
- Environment criteria and indicators for forest landscapes;
- National forestry science: characteristics and policy implementation;
- Policy instruments to enhance multi- functional forest management;
- Urban forestry: planning and management of urban green areas; and
- Building interaction and partnership between forestry and rural communities.

The importance of conservation and efficient use of forest genetic resources was also highlighted.

Technical Session 5: Setting the Stage: Analysis of opportunities for cooperation among economies and international organizations

<u>Presentation on analysis of promising means of potential cooperation between GCA economies and international organizations (Mr. Said Inogamov, APFNet consultant)</u>

The data presented was collected from the APFNet project 'Study on Current Status, International Cooperation, Development Strategy of Forestry and Best Practices of Forest Management in GCA'. Justifications for inclusion of north-western China (the provinces of Inner Mongolia, Shaanxi, Gansu, Qinghai, Ningxia and Xinjiang), Mongolia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan into the GCA region were provided. The most significant environmental UN Conventions signed by all economies of the GCA region were also listed. It was outlined that all GCA economies implement both bilateral and multilateral forestry-related grants and investment projects and initiatives at the national and regional level.

It was noted that China's forestry activities require particular attention, and this sector, like other similar sectors of the GCA economies, receive support and assistance from external funding sources, for example:

- Project on sustainable land management, with a budget of over USD 23 million, of which USD 5 250 000 million is a grant provided by GEF;
- Investment project on afforestation for carbon sequestration with a budget of over EUR 35 million, including EUR 25 million provided by EIB, with the remaining funding from national funding sources;
- Multifunctional forestry project of USD 1 million, provided by the World Bank;
- Project on control over desertification processes with EUR 7 million grant and EUR 2.5 million as a soft loan from the German government.

At the same time, China acts as a donor and provides assistance to the forestry sectors of a number of developing economies via various international programs. At the current time, within the framework of South-South cooperation, assistance is provided to developing economies:

- Demonstration project on control over desertification processes in the Sahara Desert;
- Joint research project on the control of desertification processes with the League of Arab States.

Within the framework of the joint China-UN action 'Water to Africa' implemented in several African countries, a pilot project on prevention of desertification and a project on development of drought early warning system are being implemented.

In addition, within the framework of bilateral cooperation and collaboration, significant assistance is provided. The Belt and Road Initiative, a mechanism of joint actions to prevent and control desertification processes is established for the respective countries.

In Kazakhstan, the following projects are implemented:

- WB/GEF projects aimed at conservation and increase of relict forest area in the Irtysh region and saxaul forests in the exposed bed of the Aral Sea; and
- United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)/GEF project on mountain agro-biodiversity.

A large number of projects and programs are being implemented in Kyrgyzstan in cooperation with various UN Agencies and by some national agencies in cooperation with the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), the Korea International Cooperation Agency (KOICA), TIKA, GIZ and others. These were initiated within the five phases of the sixteen-year joint Kyrgyz-Swiss forest program. It is important that the methodology on economic assessment of ecosystem services was developed within the UNDP/United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) project 'Poverty Reduction and Environment', which deserves particular attention and consideration.

It is also very important to learn from the Mongolian experience gained through implementation of a number of forest projects and programs, including the REDD+ program. The international financial mechanism, namely REDD+ (reducing emissions through preventing deforestation and degradation) is used, although it was initially created to specifically combat the degradation of tropical forests. As a result, a national program focused on boreal forests has been developed in Mongolia, for the first time in its history.

In Tajikistan, forestry activities are carried out under a number of international programs focused on conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity, combating desertification, reduction of greenhouse gas emissions, etc. One such project focuses on adaptation to climate change through sustainable forest management, and is funded by the German Development Bank (KfW Development Bank), with a budget of EUR 10 800 000 million.

Currently, the Forest Administration in Turkmenistan is not implementing any international or bilateral projects.

In the forestry sector in Uzbekistan, projects are being implemented jointly with various international organizations and financial institutions such as UNDP, FAO, the Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency Directorate (TIKA), KOICA and JICA. Uzbekistan participates in a multi-economy program on land management (Central Asian Countries Initiative for Land Management; CACILM-2). The economy fulfills its obligations with regard to international conventions, including development and submission of the required reporting to the Secretariats of Conventions, and through the development of action plans, etc.

Conclusions and recommendations:

- Ensure continuous and more active cooperation with UN agencies that provide access to multilateral financial institutions and funds of various conventions. Further active collaboration with various bilateral agencies specialized in international cooperation and development assistance such as JICA, KOICA, TIKA, GIZ, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and others;
- In light of the unique functionality of forests in GCA, use any opportunity to introduce the forest component into new environmental initiatives; for example, under the Belt and Road Initiative, which is based on 'equality and mutual benefits, mutual tolerance and borrowing of knowledge from each other' (Xi Jinping, President of the People's Republic of China);
- Implement targeted development of a methodology on economic valuation of ecosystem

> services; and
> - Explore the best ways for potential cooperation with well-known financial instruments and mechanisms such as REDD+, the Adaptation Fund and newly emerging ones such as the Green Climate Fund; and to continuously search for potential funding sources to use their resources for targeted forestry activities, for example, the Zukkov Foundation.

Group work

Group work followed the presentations. Participants were divided into four groups on a random basis. Groups were asked to elaborate on how APFNet can help strengthen regional cooperation in the forest sectors of GCA economies.

> Each group presented a summary of their discussions, with the following proposals being put forward:
> - Develop a basic methodology on assessment of ecosystem services;
> - Develop and conduct thematic and targeted trainings;
> - Create a unified forestry-related database for GCA economies, and ensure access to information about activities implemented by APFNet;
> - Establish demonstration and pilot sites to disseminate best practices and models of efficient forest management, and provide assistance in establishing mobile forest nurseries;
> - Undertake capacity building of forestry employees and experts through introducing and establishing mobile schools equipped with the most advanced technologies and conducting on-site trainings;
> - Provide assistance in revision of afforestation methodology and in development of project proposals;
> - Provide assistance in establishing forest fire monitoring systems; and
> - Provide assistance in tourism development in forests.

Technical Session 6: Brief on APFNet's capacity building activities

<u>Presentation on brief about APFNet capacity building activities in GCA (Ms. Liu Wei, APFNet)</u>

Capacity building activities are divided into two fields:

1. Training Workshops
2. Scholarship Program

Capacity building activities help to enhance the technical competencies of current and future managers. They also help facilitate networking for forest professionals in the GCA region by providing a knowledge and experience sharing platform.

1. Training Workshops

The commonly proposed key focus of training workshops in GCA economies is to combat desertification. The trainings might be conducted in two series:

- Series 1: 'Sustainable Management of Dryland Ecosystems towards Livelihoods Improvement' - could be conducted regularly, e.g. every July (deadline for application could be 31st May of each year); the training should focus on sharing best practices for combating desertification and improving livelihood and result in enhanced skills of participants with regards to policy analysis and strategic thinking. The targeted participants would be policy makers, planners, officials of the director level position and above; and

- Series 2: 'Related Sand-based Industry Development' – could be conducted regularly, e.g. every September (deadline for application could be 31st July of each year); the training should focus on sharing and reviewing available knowledge and experience in combating desertification and result in improved ability to manage industrial development and technology. The targeted participants would be technical forestry staff.

It was proposed to invite 8-10 persons to participate in the trainings and that they should be delivered in Chinese and Russian.

Each series might include four teaching modules.

Series 1:

- 3-5 best practice/models on combating desertification implemented in the Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region of China, including site/field visits;
- Policies and technical models on combating desertification, including low-cost sand fixing techniques;
- Investments in combating desertification and rehabilitation of degraded grassland; and
- Government support for combating desertification, including incentives for community participation.

Series 2:

- Sand-based industry development: small and medium enterprises;
- Desert plant cultivating techniques to combat desertification;
- Deep processing of sand-based non-timber forest products; and
- Sand storm source control, and planting protection bushes.

2. Scholarship Program

In 2016, 63 scholarship students from various economies in the Asia-Pacific region were supported through the APFNet Scholarship Programme (ASP). As of 2016, the ASP has been providing support to students from the following economies in the GCA region: Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Mongolia, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan.

The requirements for applications for ASP support are:

- Applicant should be aged between 18 and 40;
- Applicant should have a bachelor's degree or equivalent from an accredited higher education institute specialized in forestry or a related field;
- Applicant should have at least two years of work experience; and
- Applicant should have a professional command of English.

The host universities for ASP are:

- Inner Mongolia Agriculture University, Hohhot, Inner Mongolia, China. The university has grasslands, soil and water conservation expertise. A monthly stipend of CNY 2,200 (equivalent to USD 320) is provided to students by APFNet; and
- Northwest Agriculture and Forestry University, Yangling, Shaanxi province, China. As one of China's oldest agricultural universities, it adopts an innovative approach and has a multidisciplinary network of teaching and research faculty, alumni and partners. A monthly stipend of CNY 3 000 (equivalent to USD 440) is provided to students by APFNet.

For both universities ASP sponsors:

- On-campus accommodation;
- Comprehensive medical insurance;
- Outpatient medical services; and
- One international round trip ticket between the students' home economy and China.

There are some gaps and challenges for effective and efficient implementation of the ASP:

- Limited understanding and knowledge of GCA region's specific needs, more information and feedback are required for the continuous improvement of the capacity building program;
- Language barriers;
- Low recognition of APFNet's capacity building program in the GCA region; and
- Lack of an appropriate mechanism to support communication and coordination between APFNet and target economies.

Group work followed the presentation. Participants were randomly assigned to groups. It was suggested that participants focus on recommendations for improving the existing scholarship program, including its majors, language, duration and assessment of its feasibility in their own context.

The group work concluded with presentation and discussion of the main points that arose, including:

- Increasing the maximum age eligibility of nominees for the ASP up to 45 years and conducting short-term trainings for forestry experts, as well as long-term trainings for students specialized in forestry;
- Creating a regional training center and mobile field schools to train forestry professionals and experts;
- Conducting trainings on development of proposals on investment projects and economic valuation of ecosystem services;
- Assisting in updating secondary regulations and standards; and
- Conducting trainings in Russian.

It was explained that:

- The proposal on establishing a regional center, which should be located in the center of GCA region, requires detailed discussion with all stakeholders and a lot of financial resources; and
- APFNet is an international non-profit organization, the working language of which is English.

Brief overview of APFNet project activities (Ms. Liu Wei, APFNet)

Information about the three types of APFNet projects (demonstration, research/strategy development and capacity building) and the project sizes (in terms of the project budgets): small, less than USD 100 000; regular, from USD 100 000 to 500 000; and large, from USD 500 000 to 1.5 million.

APFNet's approach is to support demonstration projects that show best practices and successful management models that can be further promoted or duplicated; and/or contribute to improving existing policies.

The priority areas of APFNet's projects include:

- Rehabilitation of degraded forests and increasing forest cover;
- Promoting sustainable forest management to enhance ecological functions and ecosystem security of forests; and
- Enhancing forests' contribution to socio-economic development, and to improving local livelihoods.

The most important criteria of the application procedure are:

- Eligibility for application: legal person or entity based in an APFNet member-economy;
- Project Concept Note is endorsed by the Focal Point of the economy;
- Expected duration of the project cannot exceed 36 months;
- Counterpart contributions should be not less than 20% of the total project budget;
- Joint application is possible by more than one agency/organization with clear definition and distribution of their roles; and
- Preference is given to applications that involve multiple economies.

The project proposal should be developed in accordance with the APFNet template, and should be signed by the Focal Point. The Project Appraisal Panel (PAP) should approve the project Concept Note as well as the Full Project Proposal. The PAP is an independent expert evaluation panel that consists of regionally recognized forestry experts.

The findings of the group work on development of the three project proposals are summarized in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Suggested project types per economy from group work

Economy	Project type/Project title	Budget, USD		Duration, months
		APFNet	**Economy**	
China	Only project ideas developed but project types were not identified: • Best practices on combating desertification and land degradation; • Cooperation in prevention of transboundary forest fires; • Assessment of environmental services	Not identified	Not identified	Not identified
Mongolia	*Demo Project*/ Preventing forest insect and disease by using biological methods	500 000	100 000	Not identified
Kazakhstan	*Demo Project*/ Expansion of nursery for artificial reproduction of forests and for afforestation needs	500 000	Not identified	36
	Research/Strategy Development Projects/1) Development of a regional strategy and action plan on integrated forest management	120 000	Not identified	12
	2) Provision of technical assistance in creating an effective legal and institutional framework for forestry management	120-130 000		24
	Capacity Building/Assistance in establishing regional training center for capacity building to combat desertification and increase forest cover	500 000	Not identified	36
Kyrgyzstan	*Not identified*/Rehabilitation of degraded forests and desert zone	1 500 000	Not identified	Not identified
	Not identified/Capacity building and	900 000	Not	Not

	knowledge management for forestry employees		identified	identified
	Not identified/Improving living standards of local population	800 000	Not identified	Not identified
Tajikistan	*Not identified*/Establishing demonstration sites	500 000	Not identified	24
	Not identified/Inventory of forest resources	1 500 000	Not identified	36
	Not identified/Research of pistachio forests	100 000	Not identified	24
Turkmenistan	*Demo Project*/Establishing demonstration sites of artificial forest plantations with using drip irrigation	100 000	Not identified	24
	Research/Strategy Development Project/Conducting full-scale inventory of forest resources and creating database on current status of natural forests	500 000	Not identified	24
	Not identified/Training of experts in methodology of assessment of ecosystem services	100 000	Not identified	12
Uzbekistan	*Not identified*/Establishing demonstration sites at the exposed bed of Aral Sea and their replication in other economies and mitigation of environmental challenges in GCA region	500 000	Not identified	36
	Not identified/Development of methodologies for increasing productivity of desert pastures in Uzbekistan	300 000	Not identified	36
	Not identified/Development of unified system for forestation of exposed bed of Aral Sea for Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan	500 000	Not identified	36
	Not identified/Establishment of demonstration sites on drip irrigation in arid suburban zones to develop nut and fruit plantations	500 000		36

APFNet priorities include capacity building; economic assessment of ecosystems; cooperation, combating and prevention of transboundary forest fires in the economies of GCA region.

The outcomes of the second day of the workshop were that:

- Workshop participants discussed the potential role of APFNet in coordinating regional forestry development; they developed proposals on capacity building activities, and analyzed possible means of forestry development cooperation by the economies of the GCA region;
- The delegations of Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan offered to organize a new regional training center for GCA economies in Almaty and Bishkek respectively. Project proposals on priority areas developed by each of the GCA economies, with indicative budgets and duration, were

considered and discussed; and
- The participants concluded that GCA economies need APFNet assistance in development of a methodology on economic assessment of ecosystem services and development of project proposals, as these are highly relevant and needed for each economy of the GCA region.

Day 3 (30 June 2017)

The third day of the workshop consisted of a field trip to Issyk-Kul Forestry Farm, where participants were shown long-term forest plantations that had been transformed into forest-covered areas. Issues discussed included those related to establishment of forest plantations in mountainous locations to adapt to climate change impacts and involvement of local forest-users in the growing and care of the forest plantations.

Participants were introduced to eco-tourism development on state-funded forestlands, which contributes to biodiversity and forest ecosystem conservation through creation of alternative income-generating sources (in addition to the direct use of biodiversity and logging). Employees of the Issyk-Kul

Forest Farm demonstrated services provided by local communities.

Conclusions and recommendations

The workshop provided the setting for examining how foresters across the GCA region can help translate the Astana Statement (see Annex II) into concrete actions going forward. The workshop reaffirmed that the respective policies and priorities with regards to forestry of economies in GCA will be fully taken into account when designing activities.

In accordance with the second commitment of the Astana Statement, emphasis was placed on increased collaboration in reducing forest fires, forest pests and diseases, illegal logging and weakening the processes of desertification and degradation.

The value of regional cooperation was once again underlined, in particular in relation to preventing cross-border forest fires and promoting capacity building and training of specialists in forestry. Finally, and as stated in the fourth commitment of the Astana Statement, participants agreed to nominate focal points to ensure effective communication and coordination between economies.

The following section summarizes the key priorities and suggested follow-up actions resulting from discussion during the workshop sessions. The suggestions for APFNet follow-up actions were put forward by the workshop participants and will be narrowed down upon further consultation with the economies on their needs.

Key priorities identified for the enhancement of regional cooperation in GCA

- Capacity building
- Combating desertification
- Evaluation of forest ecosystem services
- Transboundary forest fire
- Database of forestry information

Suggestions for APFNet's follow-up actions in GCA

Capacity Building

Scholarship

1. A communication mechanism to disseminate information about the Scholarship Program should be established.
2. Some participants proposed the addition of a PhD Program to support professionals who wish to pursue advanced studies and continue their scientific research.
3. Language issues were identified as one of the major barriers for applicants. The requirement of English proficiency is difficult for economies in the region to meet. Deliberation will be given to this issue during the program's development.
4. A short term scholarship and certificate program were also proposed.

Training Course

1. Some participants suggested adding more themes for the training courses including:
    i. More technical issues, such as evaluation of forest ecosystem services, community based forestry, forestry information system (GIS).
    ii. Training workshops tailored to the needs of a specific economy could be considered in the future. It was suggested that current training themes are reviewed periodically to ensure the relevance of the topic to actual needs.
    iii. Training on forest policy/planning that targets policy makers in the forestry sector is needed.

      iv.   A train-the-trainers approach could be adopted to upscale the impact and efficiency of the training workshops.

2. Some participants who had previously attended APFNet trainings suggested that more training materials, application information and manuals could be presented in Russian.

3. All participants reiterated the importance of a communication mechanism to support effective dissemination of application information and other related documentation.

<u>Regional Training Center</u>

1. Participants from several economies expressed the need to establish a regional training center, with the following aspects being covered during the discussion:
    i.   Relevant participants need to be further identified;
    ii.   The center should be located in the center of the region to maximize its cost-efficiency;
    iii. Kyrgyzstan offered to provide an existing facility as the training venue for such a regional training center free of charge.

All participants agreed on the necessity of such a center, and APFNet will therefore consider the need to set up such a training center and will hold further discussions with Kyrgyzstan.

Policy Dialogue

1. It was agreed that the Meeting of Ministers Responsible for Forestry will be organized back-to-back with the Regional Workshop on Strategic Forestry Cooperation every two years.

2. Kyrgyzstan announced that it would hold the 2nd Meeting of Ministers Responsible for Forestry in GCA in 2018. Details regarding the meetings will be communicated with partners in due course.

3. The Regional Workshop on Strategic Forestry Cooperation would also be organized as a venue for policy dialogue, back-to-back with the Meeting of Ministers Responsible for Forestry.

4. Each regional economy (except China and Mongolia) will designate a Focal Point (DG Level) and Contact Person(s) to the APFNet Secretariat. An official letter to request the nomination would be sent to the forestry authorities of each economy by the APFNet Secretariat.

Information Sharing

1. Combating desertification: some participants expressed their hopes to share information on best practices of combating desertification, in particular with China. As such, it was suggested that APFNet could look into organizing a technical seminar on best practices for combating desertification.

2. Evaluation of forestry ecosystem services: most of the participants expressed their interest in gaining more information about methodologies for evaluation of forestry ecosystem services to support forestry development within their own economy.

3. Transboundary forest fires: the need to address transboundary forest fires was emphasized by participants at the workshop. A workshop on transboundary forest fires and a training course were suggested.

4. Forestry-focused database: some participants emphasized the need to set up a forestry-focused database to collect regional forestry information which would be available for all regional foresters to access.

ANNEXES

The 3rd Regional Workshop on Strategic Forestry Cooperation in

Greater Central Asia

Agenda

Date and time	Session	Topic	Facilitator/ Speaker
DAY 1. 28 June 2017 Karven Four Seasons			
08.30-09.00	Registration		
09.00-09.20	Opening Session	Welcome and opening remarks - Mr. Jumaev Nurlan Kadyrovich, SAEPF; - Mr. Lu De, APFNet; - Mr.Azamat Omorbekov, IRD	Moderated by Dr. Said Inogamov, Facilitator
09.20-09.40		- Icebreaker - Introduction to the Workshop	
09.40-10.00	Technical Session 1	Review of APFNet's Efforts in GCA	Mr. Lu De, APFNet Secretariat
10.00-10.30	Technical Session 2	- Update on progress/results achieved in implementation of Astana Statement by GCA economies; (China; Kazakhstan; Kyrgyzstan; Mongolia; Tajikistan; Turkmenistan; Uzbekistan)	Moderated by Facilitator
10.30-11.00	Group Photo Coffee Break		
11.00-12.00	Technical Session 2	Continue of Session 2 - Quick Assessment Method Analysis (performance of the forest sector against Astana Statement provisions)	Moderated by Facilitator
12.30-13.30	Lunch		
13.30-13.50	Technical Session 3	Brief on modality of APFNet Policy Dialogue - Function of Forestry Ministerial Meeting and Regional Strategic Cooperation Workshop	Ms. Zhang Yang, APFNet Secretariat
13.50-14.20		- Discussion on 2nd Ministerial Meeting and 4th Regional Workshop in 2018 (Host-economy, Dates, Topics)	Moderated by Facilitator
14.20-15.00	Technical	Panel discussion on personal experience with	Moderated by

	Session 4	best practices on: - Forestry management, including community-based forestry by Mongolia, Kyrgyzstan, etc; - Desertification Combating by China, Kazakhstan, and Uzbekistan, etc; - Utilization of desert resources by China, Mongolia, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan, etc.	Facilitator, presented by Panelists, and participated by Participants
15.00-15.20	Coffee Break		
15.20-16.30	Technical Session 4	Continue of Panel Discussion	
16.30-17.00	Summary of Day 1		By Facilitator
19.00	APFNet Reception Dinner		
Day 2: 29 June 2017			
09.00-09.15	Recap of Day 1	Recap of key points emerging from Day 1 discussions	Facilitator and Participants
09.30-09.50	Technical Session 5	Setting the stage: Analysis of Opportunities for Cooperation among Economies and International Organization	Presented by Dr. Said Inogamov
09.50-10:30		Group Discussion (15 minute for each group to discuss) on the potential role of APFNet in facilitating the regional forestry development	Presented by Participants and moderated by Facilitators
10.30-11.00	Coffee Break		
11.00-11.20	Technical Session 6	Brief on APFNet's Capacity Building activities	Ms. Liu Wei, APFNet Secretariat
11.20-12.30		Group Discussion on the ideas to move Capacity Building forward - Thematic Trainings - Scholarship	Moderated by Facilitator
12.30	Lunch		
13.30-13.40	Technical Session 7	Brief on the scope of APFNet's Demonstration Project	APFNet Secretariat
13.40-15.00		Discussion on the ideas to move Demonstration Project forward	Moderated by Facilitator
15.00-15.20	Coffee break		
15.20-16.00	Technical Session 8	Identification of way forward, priorities and follow up activities	Facilitator and Participants
16.00-17.00	Closing Session	Summing up and closure of the Workshop Key conclusions Closing remarks by partners	Facilitator APFNet Secretariat
Day 3 Field Visit in Issyk-Kul and Bishkek			

ASTANA STATEMENT

The First Meeting of Ministers Responsible for Forestry in Greater Central Asia
30-31 May 2016 Astana, Kazakhstan

Participants of the 1st **Meeting of Ministers Responsible for Forestry in Greater Central Asia** (hereinafter - the meeting)

Noting the importance of sustainable development and management of forests for social and economic development and to maintain a favorable environment in the region, Taking into account the proximity of aspects of policy goals and objectives of the member countries of the forestry sector, confirmed during the 2nd Regional Workshop on strategic forestry cooperation in Greater Central Asia held in Ulan Bator (Mongolia) from 15-17 July 2015, Recognizing the need for closer regional cooperation in the field of conservation, protection and reproduction of forests, mitigate negative impacts of global climate change, desertification, land degradation and strengthening the forestry potential in the region,

Have agreed as follows:

1. To take into account the policy and the main activities in the field of forestry of the representatives of participating economies of the meeting.

2. To welcome the efforts of forest authorities of the participating economies to increase the forest cover in the Greater Central Asia region reduce forest fires, forest pests and diseases, illegal logging and weaken the processes of desertification and degradation.

3. To mark an important role in addressing these issues such as the development of a wide cross-border and regional cooperation based on mutual discussion and awareness of the challenges and achievements of the forest sector, its legislative support, participation in the implementation of joint programs and projects, research and development. The most promising areas for such cooperation are the following:

- mitigating the impact of climate change and forest health decline;
- preventing cross-border forest fires;
- combating forest land degradation and desertification;
- promoting development of the regional forest monitoring system;
- promoting biological methods for forest protection;
- promoting development of forest plantations in sustainable manner in desert areas;
- conservation and utilization of forest genetic resources;
- promoting development of methodologies for assessing the value of forest ecosystem services;
- promoting capacity building and training of specialists in forestry;
- Other areas to be agreed by the participating economies in the future

4. To recommend to ensure effective regional and cross-border cooperation within the economies of the Greater Central Asia and continue to interdepartmental consultations and to

keep communication among the participating economies by nominating focal points in the state forestry authorities of participating economies entrusted with the following:

- organizing and maintaining interdepartmental relations;
- developing and coordinating mechanisms of interaction between the economies;
- preparing and organizing of meetings/conferences at the level of heads and experts of forestry authorities of the economies to discuss major regional forestry issues.

Participants of the 1st **Meeting of Ministers Responsible for Forestry in Greater Central Asia** recognized the efforts and support of APFNet in promoting forestry cooperation in Greater Central Asia region, urged all interested organizations, experts and the public in the region to take an active part in the development of this cooperation for the conservation, expansion of the area and increase the sustainability of forests.

Participating economies thanks APFNet for organization of this meeting and require APFNet to provide necessary supports for the next meeting to be held in 2018.

It is adopted in Astana (Kazakhstan) on 30-31 May 2016. The original copy in Russian and English languages is kept at the Ministry of Agriculture of the Republic of Kazakhstan, which is in the prescribed manner, a copy of Statement will be send to each participating economy of the meeting.

State Forestry Administration of the People's Republic of China

Ministry of Agriculture of the Republic of Kazakhstan

State Agency of Environmental Protection and Forestry of the Kyrgyz Republic

Ministry of Environment, Green Development and Tourism of Mongolia

Agency of Foretry under the Government of the Republic of Tajikistan

State Committee for Environmental Protection and Land Resources of Turkmenistan

Ministry of Agriculture and Water Resources of the Republic of Uzbekistan

Theme: The Third Regional Workshop on Strategic Cooperation in the Field of Forestry in Greater Central Asia

Date: 28-30 June, 2017

Place: Karven 4 Seasons Hotel, Issyk-Kul, Kyrgyzstan

№	Name	Economy	Position	Entity
		List of Participants		
1	Mr. Wang Junhou	China	Professor	National Desertification Monitoring Center/ Academy of Forest Inventory and Planning
2	Mr. Pan Hongxing		Director	Desertification Monitoring Division, National Bureau to Combat desertification State Forestry Administration
3	Ms. Kuralay Karibayeva	Kazakhstan	Director	Institute of Ecology & Sustainable Development (IESD)
4	Ms. Nazgul Doskeeva		Vice Director	Coordinator of All Conventions, IESD
5	Mr. Jumaev Nurlan Kadyrovich	Kyrgyzstan	Deputy Director	State Agency on Environmental Protection and Forestry (SAEPF) UNDER THE Government of Kyrgyz Republic
6	Mr. Sheripov Eldiiar Jenishovich		Director	Department of Forest Ecosystems Development, SAEPF
7	Mr. Chukumbaev Sabyr		Director	Forest and Hunting inventory Department, SAEPF
8	Mr. Aliev Mairambek		Head of division	Department of Forest Ecosystems Development, SAEPF
9	Ms. Venera Surappaeva		Head of division	Monitoring Department, Department of Forest Ecosystems Development, SAEPF

10	Mr. Oskonbaev Turumbek Sagynovich		Head	Issyk-Kul Territorial Department of Environmental Protection, SAEPF
11	Mr. Mukambetov Maksat		Director	The Issyk-Kul Forestry Unit
12	Mr. Jantaev Kanat		Director	The Balykchy Forestry Unit
13	Mr. Otgonsuren Batgombo	**Mongolia**	Senior Officer	Department of Forest Policy and Coordination, Ministry of Environment and Tourism of Mongolia
14	Mr. Baatarbileg Nachin		Professor	Forest Sciences, National University of Mongolia
15	Mr. Oshirsukh Badarch		Director	Mongolian Nature and Environment Consortium
16	Mr. Hukmatullo Ahmadov	**Tajikistan**	Chief Expert	Agency of under Forestry the Government of the Republic of Tajikistan
17	Mr. Kurbonov Tarikhon		Deputy Director	Agency of under Forestry the Government of the Republic of Tajikistan
18	Ms. Svetlana Zakaryayeva	**Turkmenistan**	Ecologist-Expert	Society of Nature Protection of Turkmenistan, Balkan Region Department (NGO)
19	Mr. Novitskiy Zinoviy Bogdanovich	**Uzbekistan**	Chief Scientist	Uzbek Scientific Production Center of Ornamental Horticulture and Forestry
20	Mr. Khojimurat Talipov		Head	Department of Reforestation and Protective Afforestation of the Main Department of Forestry
21	Mr. Ganisher Khudjaev		Specialist	Forest Protection Service of the Main Department of Forestry
22	Mr. LU De	**APFNet**	Assistant to Executive Director	APFNet
23	Ms. LIU Wei		Director	Communication and Outreach Division, APFNet

24	Ms. ZHANG Yang		Policy Dialogue Coordinator	Communication and Outreach Division, APFNet
25	Ms. FENG Siqi		Program Officer	Communication and Outreach Division, APFNet
26	Mr. Inogamov Said		Workshop Facilitator	APFNet
27	Ms. Umut Zholdoshova		Workshop Facilitator	Director of WB-GEF Project IFEM, SAEPF KR
28	Mr. Azamat Omorbekov	**IRD**	Project coordinator	IRD
29	Ms. Baktygul Nartaeva		Financial Manager	
30	Mr. Zhyldyz Zholdosheva		Assistant	
31	Mr. Tynystan Kerimaliev		Assistant	
32	Mr. Marat Asanaliev	**GIZ**	Programme Expert	Regional Programme for Sustainable and Climate Sensitive Land Use for Economic Development in Central Asia Deutsche Gesellschaft fur Interantionale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ)
33	Mr. Sulaiman Berdikeev		Consultant	Unique Forestry and Land Use GmbH

Requirements

for the Technical Session 2

Update on progress/results achieved in implementation of Astana Statement provisions by the economies of GCA:

- China;
- Kazakhstan;
- Kyrgyzstan;
- Mongolia;
- Tajikistan;
- Turkmenistan;
- Uzbekistan

Presentations will be done according to the English alphabetic order (related to the name of the economy). Duration of each presentation is 10 – 12 min. Cards to hold up to each presenter to indicate that his or her presentation time is coming to an end (the cards indicate when presenters have 5 minutes remaining, 3 minutes remaining, 2 minutes remaining, 1 minute remaining and card "STOP" when their time is up) should be designed and prepared to ensure the appropriate time management of the presentation session. Based on the previous experience, those presented the first consumed the most of the time allocated for the session but the last ones were not able to present in full and were disappointed.

The information related to the provisions 1, 4 and 8 of the Astana Statements shall be presented at **one slide** of the presentation, while updates on the provisions 2, 3, 5, 6 and 7 shall be shared between the **two slides** correspondingly. Thus, each presentation shall not exceed more than **13 slides** in total.

During the presentation, it is recommended do not read what is written at the slide but to provide the details and necessary brief and clear explanations only. If any of the provisions of the Astana Statement are not relevant for the particular economy (e.g. Combating forest land degradation and desertification and promoting development of forest plantations in sustainable manner in desert areas or Promoting development of methodologies for assessing the value of forest ecosystem services, etc.), those can be left out in the presentation.

If the economy succeeds in some particular provisions (e.g. Promoting development of methodologies for assessing the value of forest ecosystem services or Mitigating the impact of climate change and forest health decline, etc.), it is suggested to provide more details on how the success was achieved and/or briefly share the lessons learned/best practices adopted. In this case, the presenter can add 1-2 slides to this particular provision.

However, anyway, the total number of slides shall not exceed **13** and each presentation shall be done within **12 minutes maximum**.

Astana Statement provisions are below (in bold)

Particular points to be addressed in the presentations:

1) **Preventing cross-border forest fires**:

1) Present brief information about the number of cross-border fires occurred during the period of last five years (to be present in the picture, i.e. graphic format).

2) Inform on what is the tendency (increasing/reducing) related to the number of cross-border fires for this period?

3) Explain reasons that were behind the tendency (increasing/reducing) related to the number of cross-border fires occurred during this period;

4) Briefly inform about any cooperation existed between the neighboring economies to prevent the cross-border fires. If it was existed, describe what measures were implemented and contributed to preventing and fighting against the cross-border fires during this period.

2) **Combating forest land degradation and desertification and promoting development of forest plantations in sustainable manner in desert areas**:

1) Does the National Action-Plan on combat desertification exist? If it exists, briefly list the key characteristics/indicators;

2) Elaborate on the main reasons resulted in forestlands degradation and desertification;

3) Present brief information about the National Programmes on afforestation and reforestation;

4) Briefly inform about the undertaking measures and activities aimed at preventing desertification of drylands potentially vulnerable to this process.

5) Application of modern, innovative, environment-friendly solutions such as solar energy plants and forestry with using waste/sewage water or biofuel using waste/sewage water.

3) **Promoting development of the regional forest monitoring system:**

1) Does the national forest monitoring system exist? If it exists, briefly list its key characteristics/indicators;

2) Inform about any relations exist at regional level and point out their key characteristics/indicators. If they do not exists, elaborate on what are reasons/gaps/barriers?

3) Is there a need for regional cooperation (in particular, the regional forest monitoring system)? If there is a need, explain what would be the required and efficient format?

4) **Promoting biological methods for forest protection**:

1) Is this task of the top priority in your forestry?

2) Inform about the biological methods used for forest protection;

3) Elaborate on success/failure/lessons learned in achieving the forest protection with use of biological methods.

5) **Mitigating the impact of climate change and forest health decline:**

1) Elaborate on the level of forestry vulnerability to climate change impacts, e.g. reduction of forestland area due to climate aridity increase, increasing frequency of droughts, reducing of availability/amount of timber and non-timber forest products, decreasing living standards of local population living in and/or nearby the forest, etc.;

2) Does the economy develop and implement national programs aimed at forestation and afforestation that are the cost-effective tool to reduce greenhouse emissions? If they exist, list them (name, duration, amount and source of funding, and key objectives).

6) **Promoting development of methodologies for assessing the value of forest ecosystem services**:

1) Does the methodology on assessment of forest eco-system services exist? If it exists, provide example of assessment/calculation of the forest eco-system services;

2) Elaborate on advantages/disadvantages and/or strengths/weaknesses of the methodologies used;

3) Inform about the problems/challenges faced during development and application of those methodologies;

4) Present examples of practical implementation of the eco-system service concept;

5) Present the monetary equivalent (in USD) of the total cost of eco-system services. Is the mechanism of payment (compensations) for eco-system services established and operational?

7) **Promoting capacity building and training of specialists in forestry**:

1) Elaborate on is there a need in capacity building and conducting the relevant training for forestry professionals?

2) Describe the particularly required capacity building activities/events;

3) What trainings for forestry professionals are required?

8) **Conservation and utilization of forest genetic resources**:

1) Present potential of forest genetic resources and its integration into the inter-sectoral strategies/policies;

2) Present best forestry practices aimed at conservation of forest genetic biodiversity;

3) Elaborate on the existing threats to forest genetic resources.

Technical Session 4 (15:30 – 17:00)

Panel discussion on personal experience with best practices on:

A) Combating Desertification (since 1995, 17 July was dedicated to combating desertification and is commemorated annually. A number of international events are conducted this day that set concrete actions and plan further activities to tackle the challenge):

1. Brief information about geographical and climate features in the economy, key factors and root causes resulted in increasing desertification (disaggregated by natural, social and economic impacts); economic, social and environmental damages and losses resulted from desertification processes; and importance of desertification combating;
2. Information about status (date) of UNCCD ratification by the economy; national Focal Point to UNFCCD; key stakeholders contributed to combat desertification; reporting on activities/results related to combating desertification by the economy to the UNCCD Secretariat;
3. Briefing on development and/or updating the economy's strategy on combating desertification (set of measures/activities); agencies and organizations involved in the targeted activities undertaken based on the strategy; qualitative and qualitative indicators that characterize the strategy; government monitoring and control over use of environment and natural resources in desert areas, incentives for environment protection and conservation production facilities;
4. International cooperation in environment protection and combating desertification.

B) Utilization of desert resources

1. Kinds of "desert products" such as firewood, construction materials, agricultural and livestock products, etc as well as a development of natural resources as natural gas and oil, ferrous and non-ferrous metals (as such activities create opportunity for new jobs, i.e. additional income for local communities);
2. Approaches and practices applied to irrigation and greening of desert lands, use of renewable energy sources in agriculture productions; conducting systematic and efficient activities aimed at conservation of desert ecosystems, establishing of multi-seasonal and multi-functional pastures, etc.

C) Forestry management, including community-based forestry

1. Goals and objectives of community-based forestry; and availability of a legal framework that stipulates the principles and regulates activities of community-based forestry;
2. Target-groups that are involved in and generate incomes from community-based forestry initiatives; actual scale of such initiatives (area of forests, at which the community-based forestry principles are implemented; percent of population covered; scale of the joint forestation/afforestation activities; amount of incomes generated by local people thanked to community-based forestry, etc.);
3. Advantages/disadvantages of community-based forestry, lessons learnt from implementation of community-based forestry initiatives, opportunities and potential for community-based forestry dissemination and scaling-up;
4. Practical examples of implementation of the community-based forestry activities/initiatives.