

# **RECORD OF DISCUSSION**

*(Official)*

---

The 6<sup>th</sup> Trilateral Director General Level Meeting on Forestry Cooperation

November 15, 2023  
Tokyo, Japan

# **Record of Discussion of the 6<sup>th</sup> Trilateral Director General Level Meeting on Forestry Cooperation among Japan, China and ROK**

November 15, 2023 Tokyo, Japan

## **1. Opening Remarks**

### **[Japan]**

Director General (DG) NAGASAKIYA Keita from the Forestry Agency expressed his deep gratitude at the opportunity to host the 6th Trilateral Director General Level Meeting on Forestry Cooperation in Japan.

DG NAGASAKIYA looked back on events from the 2016 meeting to now, including the Glasgow Leader's Declaration at COP26 in November 2021, with a goal to halt deforestation by 2030, and the Seoul Forest Declaration from the 15th World Forestry Congress in May 2022 emphasizing sustainable wood use for a resilient society. Additionally, at the 2<sup>nd</sup> meeting of COP15 in December 2022 hosted by China, the Kunming-Montreal Biodiversity Framework was adopted, aiming to conserve at least 30% of land and sea by 2030.

DG NAGASAKIYA introduced 5 meeting topics that will be discussed in this meeting: Current situation of Forest and Forestry, function of forestry for disaster prevention, promotion of wood usage, promotion of legal timber trade, and finally forest space utilization. He hoped for international collaboration, foreseeing significant progress during the meeting towards a sustainable future for forests.

### **[China]**

Deputy Director General (DDG) XU Qiangxing from the National Forestry and Grassland Administration (NFGA) expressed appreciation for the Japanese delegation's efforts in ensuring a smooth conference as its host. And he highlighted that the past five meetings played a critical role in facilitating three countries discussions on current issues and providing a platform for forest management.

DDG XU pointed out China's commitment in advancing forestry operations, utilizing scientific technology and pursuing afforestation. He outlined efforts in expanding forests and implementing ecological projects to build the relevant networks. He shared ambitious goals like achieving carbon neutrality by 2030 and addressing desertification, reporting on successful measures covering 1.77 million hectares (ha).

DDG XU expected new policies in Japan and the ROK to be shared during the meeting and hoped collaborative discussions would contribute to tackling the climate change and preserving biodiversity.

### **[ROK]**

DG PARK Eunsik from Korea Forest Service (KFS) appreciated the Japanese government for hosting the DG Meeting, expressing gratitude for realization of the meeting after a five-year suspension.

DG PARK recognized the significance of the 15th World Forestry Congress in the ROK, fostering meaningful discussions among forestry professionals. He extended his appreciation to Japan and China for their support at the Congress, making the Declaration possible. He introduced that the ROK has planted 12 billion trees over 50 years and now has restored rich forests across the nation with the Forest Renaissance Promotion Strategy to maximize the economic, environmental, and socio-cultural benefits of forest. DG PARK noted China, Japan, and the ROK have shown regional and global leadership in addressing crisis of climate change, biodiversity, and desertification, such as Japan's achievement in establishing the Kyoto Protocol and China's leading role in promoting the Kunming-Montreal Biodiversity Framework.

DG PARK stated that the meeting topics are timely and common issues among CJK, and it would be a good opportunity for the three countries to demonstrate leadership in the international community through common goals and initiatives.

#### **[TCS]**

Deputy Secretary-General (DSG) YAN Liang expressed gratitude for collaborative efforts in organizing the meeting, particularly from the host country Japan.

DSG YAN emphasized the vital role of forests, covering 30% of land area and supporting 80% of terrestrial species, in providing various ecosystem services from air purification to wood products for human existence. Also, he said that forestry would enable human society to achieve sustainable development. Reflecting on the TCS' 12-year journey, he noted its evolution to engaging 21 ministerial mechanisms and diverse projects in the green economy, carbon neutrality, environmental protection, and rural agriculture.

DSG YAN advocated for enhanced trilateral forest cooperation, and also highlighted that TCS supports the three countries in achieving sustainable development in forestry cooperation.

## **2. Session 1: Current Situation of Forest and Forestry**

#### **[Japan]**

DG NAGASAKIYA introduced the state of Japan's forests by explaining that forests cover two-thirds of the country's land, with around 60% being privately owned. Also, forest accumulation increased sixfold to 3.5 billion m<sup>3</sup> in 2020 over the past 55 years. He also pointed out the steady growth in wood supply, recording 31 million m<sup>3</sup> in 2019 and 34 million m<sup>3</sup> in 2021. According to the Basic Plan for Forest and Forestry (Cabinet Decision on June 15<sup>th</sup>, 2021), the wood supply targets are set as 42 million m<sup>3</sup> by 2030.

DG NAGASAKIYA emphasized the forest's function in achieving carbon neutrality. He explained the carbon-absorbing characteristics of forests, such as long-term carbon storage of wood materials and higher CO<sub>2</sub> absorbing functions of younger forests. Regarding the substitutability of wood, he highlighted that wood is more energy-efficient than other materials, serves as an alternative to fossil fuel-derived materials like plastic, and can be used as energy, replacing petroleum. With these features, the Agency aims to improve public awareness of the significance of forests and forestry.

Furthermore, DG NAGASAKIYA showed the trends in forestry output. A profit of 233.8 billion yen was made annually between 2000 and 2005 and significantly increased to 325.4 billion yen recently. However, timber prices remain low, decreasing to one-third or two-fifths of the peak price in 1980, resulting in a financial challenge for forest owners. While forestry is growing nationwide, dissatisfactions among forest owners persist due to low timber prices. About 30% of forests have unidentified owners, and there has been a rise in individuals not wanting to keep their forest properties. To address this issue, a Forest Management and Administration system was introduced four years ago, allowing municipalities to manage forests based on their survey results.

To overcome these challenges, five initiatives utilizing digital technology to improve the current situation of forestry owners were presented. First is from memory to forest management of digital record, such as aeronautical laser measuring tree species and their heights accurately. Half of Japan's private forests have completed this laser measurement. Second is ICT production management, which aims to advance production management. Third is liberation from "3K Forestry" (Kitsui=harsh, Kitanai=dirty, Kiken=dangerous) by using automated technology during afforestation and production to eliminate high-risk tasks prone to industrial accidents. Fourth is "Harvest 50 years to 30 years". Japan invented the species of Japanese cedar that can be harvested in 30 years which would normally take 50 years. Fifth is moving away from relying solely on logs and expanding timber usage by breaking down wood to the cellular level, using resulting materials like lignin for durable, lightweight products, potentially replacing plastics in items such as car bonnet hood in the future.

#### **[China]**

Director CHEN Xinyun from NFGA stated that the Chinese government is actively focusing on the conservation and management of forest resources. The surveys since 1973 shows an increase in China's forest coverage from 12.7% to 24.02%, with annual monitoring since 2021. The forest area expanded from 1 to 2.3 million ha, and the volume reached 19.5 billion m<sup>3</sup>. China has the fifth largest forest area in the world showing a steady and most dramatic growth over 40 years. The natural forest area also ranks sixth largest globally.

As of the latest situation of forest resource, woodland covers 2.84 million ha, constituting 29.6% of the whole land area. State-owned forests make up 40%, with more than half of the resources being used for public purposes. As for the challenges of China's forest, its per capita forest area is only one-third of the world average, and the per capita forest stock is one-sixth compared to the global average.

Director CHEN introduced the Forest Law and Regulations on the Implementation of the Forest Law, covering development plans, forest protection, afforestation, management, supervision, and inspection. He explained the implementation of various policy measures under this law. There are regulations for commercial logging to protect natural forests. The management of logging is based on a permit system clearly stipulating the limitation of logging amount, certification, etc. A monitoring mechanism has been established separately for natural forests and public-use forests and it is used for growing, protecting, and utilizing forests. In addition, it clarifies responsibilities for ecological protection and protects forest resources by dividing local governments into levels and introducing an evaluation system.

Another feature is the use of drones, which are being used for supervision and inspection. The government strictly controls any destruction of forestlands, grasslands, wetlands, and protected natural

areas. The national and local governments are working together to monitor the ecological environment using a total monitoring system. This utilizes new technologies such as remote sensing, 5G, cloud computing, big data, and artificial intelligence (AI) to improve information processing. Aligned with the UN Forest Strategic Plan 2019-2030, China has set goals to achieve a 26% forest coverage and 21 billion m<sup>3</sup> of forest volume by 2035.

### **[ROK]**

Director KIM Jina from KFS introduced the structure of KFS and explained the forest resources in the ROK. Its forest area accounts for 6.3 million ha, with 67% being private and 25.5% as national forests. The average forest growing stock per ha was 165m<sup>3</sup> in 2020, with national forests having higher stock than private forests.

Director KIM briefly explained the ROK's forest policy transition from nationwide forest rehabilitation in the past to economic, welfare, and ecological forest since 2018. The total public value of forests is now approximately 221 trillion won, which is 13.3% of the ROK's GDP. However, despite this progress, the timber self-sufficiency rate is only 16%. Recognizing that wood is nature-friendly and efficiently stores carbon, KFS is conducting initiatives such as the Wood-friendly City and Wooden Construction.

Director KIM went into details of the ROK's Forest Renaissance Promotion Strategy in response to the recent crisis such as expanding forest fires and frequent typhoons. The five-year plan from 2022 to 2027, with the vision of achieving sustainable forest resource management, consists of six strategies as follows:

- 1) Profitable Economic Forestry: Sets the goals such as annual reforestation 21,000 ha and achieve a 25% increase in timber self-sufficiency. It utilizes advanced technologies (IoT, AI) in the Smart Seed Nursery system, plans to plant climate-resilient forests, and promotes domestic wood use. Infrastructure development targets increasing forest road density.
- 2) Environmental Forestry Going Together: Introduces a forest conservation payment system for designated private forest reserve area. Additionally, it fosters urban forests and gardens for citizen well-being, aiming to expand urban forest area per capita to 15 m<sup>2</sup>, complying to the World Health Organization recommendation, by 2027.
- 3) Social Forestry within Our Lives: Provides Forest welfare policies for citizen enjoyment and learning. Especially, Forest-village Tourism project connects existing forest welfare facilities with local tourism resources such as nature, living, culture, etc., involving local governments and residents.
- 4) Forest Disaster Countermeasures: Builds an ICT-based monitoring system for disaster prevention, increases the number of helicopters for suppressing wildfires and involves citizens and professionals in recovery measures.
- 5) International Cooperation: KFS signed a bilateral MOUs with 39 countries, while engaging in multilateral projects with international organizations and initiatives to share afforestation experiences.
- 6) Research & Development: Plans to expand investments in forest science and technology, promoting satellite use for forest management, and aiming to launch an Agriculture and Forestry satellite in 2025.

### **[Comments]**

DDG SU Zuyun from NFGA highlighted that commercial logging in natural forests is strictly prohibited in China. He explained that the country promotes scientific forest management and provides subsidies based on ecological effects. Commercial forests adhere to scientific principles,

allowing proper forestry operations based on these principles. Public forests are managed to meet national forestry needs without affecting the ecological system.

DG PARK added the clarification that logging is prohibited in protected forests to preserve the landscape, and these areas receive tax incentives and subsidies from the government. A service payment system, yet to be implemented, is currently under the process of legislation. This system would involve entering contracts with protected forest owners, and the government would purchase ecosystem services from protected forests at an appropriate price.

DG NAGASAKIYA explained in detail regarding the development of fast-growing trees, which took about 80 years. It started from Japan's cedar plantations, by crossing selected pair of fast-growing trees up to the third generation, allowing harvest in 30 years. He also commented on the laser technology cost, stating that it can be justified the overall cost because it has broader applications in disaster prevention, land conservation, and development. Government entities at different levels can use this technology.

DG PARK emphasized the development of customized satellites for forestry, focusing on climate, land, and pollution monitoring. He explained the plan for launching satellites specialized in agriculture and forestry by 2025, which can enhance data collection for forest-related analysis, including carbon levels and accumulation. This initiative aims to establish a comprehensive inventory and implement Measurement, Reporting, and Verification (MRV) in the carbon absorption sector.

### **3. Session 2: Function of Forest for Disaster Prevention**

#### **[Japan]**

Deputy Director YAMANA Yuuki from the Forestry Agency noted that Japan strives to develop the disaster prevention function of forests through the two pillars of the Chisan projects and Forest Law: The Chisan projects mean the construction or maintenance of facilities to enhance disaster prevention capabilities. The Forest Law regulates forest conversion and logging while providing tax reductions and exemptions by designating public-use forests under the law.

Deputy Director YAMANA showed that rainfall in Japan has been increasing since 2010, with the annual precipitation ranging from 1,000 to 3,000 mm. There are prolonged, intense rainfall in certain regions due to linear precipitation bands occurring every year. During these heavy rainfall, Japanese forests are prone to landslides. Although the number of mountain disasters is decreasing, the damage is worsening.

To address this issue, mountain disaster prevention measures have advanced significantly, such as the expansion of Chisan dams by installing thicker cross sections, trapping driftwood and utilizing radar for driftwood countermeasures. Various government agencies are collaborating with Forestry Agency, the Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism, etc., to implement these measures.

Deputy Director YAMANA also stated that there is a challenge in promoting Chisan projects to the public because of its location relatively far away from the community. To promote the positive effects of Chisan projects, photo recordings and promotional activities are being carried out.

#### **[China]**

Director CAO Yanning from NFGA conveyed that China is significantly affected by land desertification and it is being addressed based on relevant laws. As part of these efforts, project-led

development is underway. According to the results of the 6th National Desertification Monitoring, the desertification area until 2009 was 168.7 million ha, with a prevention area of 18.8 million ha. A total of 1.77 million ha of land has been closed off.

The first project established 41 policy implementation areas for desertification prevention and created 128 national parks. The second project involves launching initiatives, investing in facilities, and funding for preventing desertification and sandstorms. The third project strengthens international cooperation, proposing China's solutions to global governance. Successful events like the 13th United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) Conference and the Ordos International Desert Forum have facilitated desertification monitoring and technical training in developing countries, including technical support in Africa's Green Wall region. In collaboration with the UNCCD Secretariat, the International Desertification Control Center was established.

For the enhancement of forest fire prevention, an investment of 2.8 billion yuan has been made. Activities such as planting trees for fire prevention, including indigenous Chinese species, and implementing aerial forest protection and fire road construction have taken place. A forest fire prevention monitoring system utilizing satellite remote sensing, drone patrols, and video surveillance have been established. Real-time monitoring of state-owned forests, national parks, and others aims to achieve early detection of fires.

The fire prevention mechanism is formed by a combination of fire source management, infrastructure construction, and emergency response models. Regional and collaborative forest fire prevention activities are being promoted, with joint fire prevention agreements and projects being initiated at the provincial level. These measures have resulted in consistent achievements in fire prevention over the past five years. There were 1,250 forest fires in 2005, it decreased 660 in 2020, and now to 312.

### **[ROK]**

Program officer AHN Heeyoung from National Institute of Forest Science indicated that in the ROK, an average of 535 forest fires has occurred annually over the past 10 years. In 2022, particularly dry weather has made 756 fires, surpassing the annual average, with a total affected area reaching 2,400 ha. Rising temperatures and the impact of climate change have led to an earlier onset of spring wildfires compared to the 90s, contributing to an overall increase in incidents. Approximately 99% of these fires are attributed to human negligence.

The primary factors influencing forest fire occurrence are weather conditions, topography, and fuel. As a response, a forest fire risk prediction system based on weather conditions has been implemented, providing easy access to information for the public. Efforts have been made to select fire-resistant trees and organize space, coupled with implementing a forest fire risk forecast in areas prone to large-scale wildfires. Drones and surveillance cameras are being utilized, and information is disseminated to residents through a smart app.

The Forest Disaster Control Center (FDCC) operates in real-time to monitor incidents, track deployments, and assess the situation. Images are captured all day when a fire occurs, and information is shared with the Presidential Office and relevant ministries. Once a wildfire is detected, spread prediction systems are employed to support evacuation planning and resource deployment decisions.

Specialized firefighting teams, including helicopter units and drones, are dispatched when a forest fire occurs. Also, cooperation with local governments and other agencies ensures a swift response to the fire. Plans for reconstruction are formulated based on the extent of damage in affected areas.

### **[Comments]**

Director CAO from NFGA explained in detail why China's disaster prevention is well-operated. The Grassland Bureau, functioning as the Forest and Grassland Fire Prevention Department, collaborates with ministries to manage forest resources. High-level meetings provide specific directives, while daily operations are overseen by the Emergency Provisional Department. Monthly meetings enhance information exchange and disaster preparedness in prioritized areas. Utilizing aerial monitoring and drones can make the bureau ensure early fire detection and timely information dissemination. The network management approach is crucial for effective disaster prevention, involving collaborations with ministries and regional strategies. Town mayors also play key roles in managing fire-prone areas, with residents in designated zones always being prepared for potential fires.

Programme Officer AHN Heeyoung from the National Institute of Forest Science further explained details, such as strengthened collaborations with mobile carriers for wildfire alerts, sending real-time notifications to local mobile phones, facilitating effective communication of the situation to the affected area. The notifications are triggered by an elevated risk of wildfires.

## **4. Session 3: Promotion of Wood Utilization**

### **[Japan]**

Director MIKAMI Yoshiyuki from the Forestry Agency described that in Japan, there is a fundamental plan for the use of wood: not only by the Forestry Agency but also as part of government-wide policies, the emphasis is on strengthening the wood industry and promoting its use. The reinforcement of the wood supply system involves sustainable logging practices, ensuring a steady supply of wood from the mountains. After cutting the wood, it can be processed in large factories or even in smaller facilities with distinctive capabilities. The integration of these processes is crucial for efficiently producing and constructing with wood.

To promote wood utilization, relevant laws and policies have been established. The laws shifted two years ago to promote wood utilization throughout all types of constructions, aligning with the goal of contributing to a decarbonized society.

The Headquarters for wood use promotion, comprising not only the Minister of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries but also the Minister of Internal Affairs, Minister of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology, Minister of Economy, Trade and Industry, Minister of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism, and the Minister of Environment is actively working to enhance wood usage. The Create an agreement system involves agreements between companies wanting to use wood and the government, as well as local authorities. Businesses set goals for the wood they intend to use, and these agreements are promoted by both national and local governments. Such agreements contribute to social responsibility for the companies, and on a national level, they foster increased wood usage.

Recognition is given to outstanding buildings that extensively use wood in their interiors or pay attention to wooden features in roofs. This includes elementary schools and municipal facilities in villages. The award system commends well-designed structures using wood, and it includes buildings constructed with wood at a cost comparable to reinforced concrete. One such example is a building located in the center of Ginza. It is an 11-story structure using a new material called CLT (Cross-Laminated Timber), making it the tallest wooden building in Japan.

### **[China]**



DDG SU Zuyun stated that China is the world's primary hub for timber processing and production, playing a crucial role in the processing and international trade of wooden products. Wooden panels, furniture, flooring, wooden doors, and more—all these categories hold the top global positions.

The gross product of forestry in China is valued at 8.7 trillion yuan, with the wood processing industry at 140 million yuan, and the bamboo industry at 3,600 yuan. The production of wood panels remains stable at 345 million m<sup>3</sup>. The furniture industry comprises 6,647 companies, with sales surpassing 800 billion yen. In 2021, China's total sales of wooden floor materials reached 413 million m<sup>3</sup>, and the production value of wooden building components exceeded 100 billion yuan.

In 2021, the number of wooden construction companies exceeded 2,070, with the total floor area of new wooden constructions surpassing 3 million square meters and production value exceeding 20 billion yuan.

DDG SU made the following four proposals regarding cooperation between the three countries. 1) Broaden fields of cooperations and enhance policy support, 2) Take joint actions through multiple measures & multi-stakeholder participation, 3) Strengthen wood research and education cooperation, 4) Promote the green and low-carbon development of the wood industry.

#### **[ROK]**

Deputy Director MIN Byeonsan explained that 85% of ROK's wood consumption relies on imports. Wood manufacturing in the ROK is primarily driven by pulp and wooden furniture production. Policies promoting wood utilization are underway, encouraging its use in public and private construction sectors. Efforts are being made to advance new constructions, including the removal of restrictions on wooden buildings and the encouragement of domestic wood usage.

Deputy Director MIN also mentioned that many wood industry stakeholders are small-scale, so collaborative efforts are being made to facilitate negotiations. Support is provided for the modernization of facilities in small businesses and the coordination of wood industry clusters, with collaboration across industry, academia, and government sectors. The government advocates climate crisis response and carbon neutrality through sustainable wood utilization, promoting citizen engagement through the "I Love Wood" campaign, encouraging participation across generations.

In the realm of woody biomass utilization, there is an increasing consumption of wood pellets, with over 90% utilized in power boilers. The operation of unused woody biomass certification system has been implemented, allowing certification and financial support for forest management and harvested products by forest owners. Sustainable woody biomass initiatives focus on creating models on using locally produced biomass as the energy source in the region. Other efforts include establishing an unused forest resource center and conducting research to enhance the insulation capabilities of wood as part of the overall strategy to promote wood utilization. Lastly, he proposed for collaborative technological development involving China, Japan, and the ROK.

#### **[Comments]**

Director MIKAMI described the guidelines to easily calculate the amount of carbon sequestration in wood using in Japanese Agricultural Standards (JAS) structural materials, and these guidelines are published on the official website of Forest Agency. For example, by indicating the volume of cedar used, the guidelines illustrate the amount of CO<sub>2</sub> which can be absorbed, and the amount of forest area

which is equivalent to the accumulation of carbon storage. This accumulated amount can be beneficial for corporate promotion.

## **5. Session 4: Promotion of Legal Timber Trade**

### **[Japan]**

Director MIKAMI Yoshiyuki explained the underwent revisions of Clean Wood Act.

The Clean Wood Act was established five years ago aiming to promote the use of legal timber. It requires confirmation whether the imported timber has been legally harvested according to the laws of the producing country. However, this act was not an obligation, but an obligation to make efforts. The background for the revision lies in the recognition that illegal logging obstructs the multifunctional aspects of forests and fair trade. Promoting the use of legal timber has been identified as a challenge, by calls for its mandatory status in international forums such as the G7 and APEC. After the revision, forestry companies and importers in Japan are now obligated to confirm the legality of timber. Additionally, retailers of timber products are now included in the category of timber-related businesses. Through these changes, the importance of legality is expected to be widely communicated within the industry, eventually reaching consumers through an established information-sharing mechanism.

In the implementation of the Clean Wood Act, a website called "Clean Wood Navi" has been established to provide information on legally harvested timber. This site allows users to search for regulations related to timber harvesting in various countries. The promotional activities for the use of legal timber include exhibitions and seminars, have been held 58 times for exhibition and 347 times for the seminars.

### **[China]**

Associate Researcher JIANG Hongfei from Chinese Academy of Forestry stated that China's policies have yielded four main outcomes from the progress of policy. First, the promotion of timber use and trade. Second, overall transparency. The wood processing enterprises must establish accounts for raw materials and products. This is to avoid purchasing wood from forest areas that are known to have been harvested indiscriminately. Third, the new regulations in the Forestry Law, for operations and logging have been established. This led to the abolition of the previous operational permit system. It specifies the role of state-owned forests and provides flexible logging regulations. The policy for national reserve forests involves expanding protected forests to replace the importation of large timber. The announcement to expand the area of national reserve forests by over 2.4 million ha from 2021 to 2025 has made to address timber shortages and promote timber conservation. Fourth, the timber conservation policy adheres to international rules and includes waste management through increased taxation.

From these four main progresses in the policy, specific promotion methods, involving collaboration with experts based on drafts, public relations activities, and establishing international dialogue mechanisms were outlined. At the non-governmental level, regional and industry groups collaborate to build cooperative systems and controls for timber utilization. There is strengthened guidance for businesses, and additional measures are under consideration for imported timber. Green companies are dedicated to promoting forestry, export, and timber use.

**[ROK]**

Deputy Director MIN Byeongsan explained that since October 2018, the ROK has been only importing legal timber, conducting document inspections through a system before customs clearance. After customs clearance, the authorities perform sampling and species identification. In last May, the Enforcement Decree of the Act on the Sustainable Use of Timber was revised, expanding the regulated items of legal timber trade inspection from 4 to 9, with 1-year demonstration period until next May.

The annual statistics of import inspection results show the stabilization of the system, with more than 90% passing as suitable products. Based on the 2022 data, the existing four items account for 58% of the timber import volume by item, while the newly added five items, now subject to inspection, make up to 23%; over 80% of imported timber in the future is expected to undergo legal timber inspection. To ensure stable system operation and alleviate industry burdens, KFA will focus on awareness-raising of new items industries, such as workshops on changed system, while approving customs clearance even with incomplete declaration documents during the demonstration period. Guidelines for importing countries for the five additional items will be uploaded, and inspection guidelines will also be announced. While the standard guidelines are not binding, adherence is expected to result in more principled certification documents. Currently, microscopic identification is used for species identification, and post-clearance research and development includes DNA analysis and anatomical AI identification.

Lastly, the ROK delegation requested assistance due to the expanded restrictions on processed products such as pulp and boards, making it difficult to obtain documents from suppliers. The delegation asked China and Japan to issue documents certifying the legality prior to processing. Documents verifying the legality in China and Japan is also accepted. Additionally, the ROK asked for China and Japan's support in promoting this new system and suggested a research collaboration on species identification.

**[Comments]**

DG PARK further explained the documents required when exporting timber to ROK. If Chinese and Japanese businesses utilize domestically produced timber to manufacture a product for export to ROK, they need a logging permit issued by their respective governments. However, if they import timber from a third country, and then export it to ROK, they must obtain certification documents from the third country at the time of importing the timber, and these documents need to be attached when exporting to ROK.

DDG Su shared the information that China is implementing a forest certification system for the export of Chinese timber products and processed goods. At the core of this system is a certification process that verifies the origin of the timber, whether the logging is sustainable, and other relevant details. It has been promoted for several years with the understanding that only after confirming the legality of timber harvesting can the process move to the next step. He added that this initiative has been ongoing for several years and covers almost all exported timber products.

**6. Session 5: Forest recreation, Forest Environmental Education, Forest Health Tourism****[Japan]**

Senior Deputy Director YOSHIMOTO Masaaki from Forestry Agency reported that despite having two-thirds of its land covered by forests, Japan has seen less than 10% engagement in forest-related activities over the past year. While there is a challenge of a distant relationship between people's lives and forests, there is potential for forests to provide benefits and healing effects. The concept of "Forest bathing (Shinrin-Yoku)," introduced in 1982, has been promoted for health tourism. In recent years, the advocacy of forest lifestyles and the promotion of the forest services industry have led to corporate initiatives, including tours and surveys catering to business needs.

Senior Deputy Director YOSHIMOTO emphasized corporate efforts focusing on improving employees' mental health and reducing early departure rates, contributing to the increasing trend of businesses adopting health management practices in the forest. Specific instances of forest utilization include successful new employee training at forest therapy bases, resulting in decreased turnover rates and the implementation of employee accommodation-based health guidance. On a broader scale, 48 regions are actively fostering the forest services industry, offering various programs and facilities. These initiatives contribute to employee well-being, bring economic benefits to mountain villages, and impact corporate evaluations through contributions to forest maintenance and the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.

#### **[China]**

DDG SU Zuyun stressed that in China, forest resources are considered both a natural and economic asset. With this perspective, there is a clear demand for top-down planning, focusing on initiatives such as forest therapy and forest tourism. There is a particular emphasis on the construction of distinctive facilities, including managed multifunctional tourist parks, forest houses, recuperation areas, and guesthouses. Efforts are concentrated on leveraging the strengths of resources and ecological culture in forested areas outside urban centers to provide services that urban residents will appreciate, thereby promoting industrial development.

In 2019, the Ministry of Civil Affairs and the Health Commission collaborated for the growth of the forest therapy industry. In June 2020, the establishment of the first 96 forest therapy recuperation bases was announced. This nationwide initiative, led by the government, aims to maximize regional features, such as traditional Chinese medicine and cultural heritage, and actively supports the construction of provincial-level forest bases. Currently, there are over 500 provincial-level forest therapy bases across the country. The new manifestation known as "Ecological Civilization Achievement," focuses on realizing the values of ecological civilization, developing forestry and new sectors, and fostering symbiosis between humans and nature. The five principles of forest therapy include adhering to ecological priority and green development, prioritizing people and serve the public, adhering local conditions and promote distinctive development, maintaining a focus on wellness promoting integrated development, and adhering to conservation and environmentally friendly practices.

In terms of providing services to the public, there is an emphasis on improving quality to create beautiful landscapes and environmentally friendly environments that promote health. Tailoring efforts to the characteristics of each region, diverse forest environments based on historical and cultural factors are being developed. This approach aims to highlight regional culture and maximize the utilization of forests for industrial growth.

Lastly, in ecological tourism, the focus was put on nature conservation, low-carbon initiatives, and the development of environmentally friendly activities. Moreover, drawing on international experiences,

mechanisms for evaluating ecological tourism are being established, and efforts are being made in academic exchange and training education to promote sustainable development.

#### **[ROK]**

Deputy Director LEE Sungho from KFS explained that forest therapy is based on laws related to Forestry Culture and Relaxation Act in ROK. It involves utilizing healing resources from forests, such as sunlight, landscapes, temperature, and negative ions, in a process known as "forest healing" to enhance immune function and promote health. The country currently has 48 foundation facilities called "Healing Forests Station" operated by the government, local authorities, and individuals, with plans to increase to 76 by 2027.

Forest Healing Station has been systematically managed since 2012, with 3 million people experiencing it in 2022, and over 370,000 participating in healing programs—a demand increases of more than fourfold. The law was first established in 2007 and operations began in 2008. Through this action, specialized forest therapy instructors were certified in 2011, along with the establishment of qualification criteria and training institutions. Approximately 2,600 trained instructors have been active since 2013, planning and managing programs that utilize mountain and forest resources. These professionals, trained in various disciplines including forestry, health, and nursing, contribute to the promotion of diverse welfare services in accordance with national laws.

Moreover, forest healing is integrated into the national health policy, cooperating with organizations such as the National Health Insurance Service to conduct preventive health management programs. Initiatives addressing issues such as dementia and anti-aging are also underway, and efforts are made to train individuals for disaster response. The proposal envisions the operation of 76 facilities by 2027, concentrating them in urban living areas for improved accessibility. In the healthcare sector, there is a focus on technological development and research in forest therapy, with the goal of establishing Forest Medicine post-2027. Lastly, continuous information exchange through shared research results and mutual visits is recommended for sustained development in facilities and programs.

#### **[Comments]**

DDG SU Zuyun described that the field involving forest therapy is broad, encompassing various areas such as sports, caregiving, and healthcare. As it constitutes 60% of the tourism industry, he believes it has the potential to create employment for approximately one million people.

## **7. Others**

DG PARK proposed a Trilateral Tree-planting Project in Mongolia as a follow-up project of the meeting with the support from TCS, considering the upcoming Trilateral Summit. DG PARK explained that China, Japan, and ROK are demonstrating leadership in Asia in terms of the economy and climate change, providing context to his proposal. The proposal aims to further promote the leadership of the three nations in tree-planting activities and extend these efforts to other Asian countries. The proposal has been discussed with the ROK Ministry of Foreign Affairs and shared at the working level with China and Japan.

Director TANIMOTO Tetsuo from Forestry Agency and DG XU replied positively and promised to take it back into consideration within their organization.

The 7th Trilateral Director General Level Meeting on Forestry Cooperation will be held in China.

## **8. Closing Remarks**

The three DGs appreciated the three countries' effort to promote trilateral forestry cooperation. Recognizing the importance of learning from each other, the three parties expected further cooperation for the next DG meeting.