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RECOFTC Communication on Engagement (COE) February 2020 – February 2022
Statement of Continued Support by the Executive Director

13 February 2022

Dear Secretary General,

On behalf of the Regional Community Forestry Training Center for Asia and the Pacific (RECOFTC), I am pleased to reaffirm our support and commitment to the United Nations Global Compact and its Ten Principles in the areas of human rights, labor, environment and anti-corruption.

RECOFTC works at the forefront of modern global development in the Asia-Pacific region, home to some of the world's most diverse and unique landscapes. As the region grows richer and more economically integrated, great opportunities for communities and countries arise. But they come with potential risks. Forests are being cut, burned, or degraded while the livelihoods of local people are upended. The challenge of balancing development and ensuring sustainability poses an urgent need for innovative solutions. To meet these needs and challenges, RECOFTC collaborates with a wide range of partners and stakeholders to put people at the center of sustainable development and co-create long-lasting, practical solutions – creating the necessary conditions for communities to transform their landscapes and achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.

This is RECOFTC's Communication on Engagement (COE) with the United Nations Global Compact. It describes the actions our organization has taken to support the UN Global Compact and its principles over the last two years.

Yours sincerely,



David Ganz, PhD
Executive Director

Summary of Achievements since the last Communication on Engagement

At RECOFTC, we believe in a future where people live equitably and sustainably in and beside healthy, resilient forests. We serve the poorest and most marginalized rural communities in the Asia Pacific, where more than 450 million people depend on forests to survive. We support Indigenous Peoples, ethnic groups and other marginalized and vulnerable people, particularly women and youth. We help them build their capacity to secure their rights to land and resources, stop deforestation, restore degraded landscapes, overcome poverty and hunger and foster gender equity and social inclusion.

RECOFTC's Strategic Plan 2018-2023, titled *Resilient Forest Landscapes: Empowered Communities, Strengthened Institutions, and Shared Prosperity* outlines the various approaches we take to help local people find solutions together with government, the private sector, development partners, local institutes, academia, media and others to meet some of the most pressing development challenges for forested landscapes in the Asia-Pacific region. A brief description of our actions and outcomes is provided in the following sections. For more information on RECOFTC, please visit our website: www.recoftc.org.

Our work lays the foundation for achieving many of the Sustainable Development Goals of the United Nations 2030 Agenda and the Paris Agreement. We therefore directly support the aims of the UN Global Compact and its Ten Principles.

During the pandemic, we remain fully operational with staff working remotely. We are adapting and expanding our work with governments, donors, civil society and the private sector to ensure responses to the pandemic and other threats respect the rights, views, wellbeing and aspirations of forest communities. The novel coronavirus does not differentiate between peoples. It attacks both the rich and the poor. But the communities we serve are far less able to protect themselves from COVID-19 than others and they have the least access to provisions and healthcare.

Some local communities may not even know about the pandemic. And if they do, they have limited options to self-isolate within their living conditions and everyday practices. These communities are poised to pay a higher price for the pandemic than the rest of humanity in terms of death, disability and loss of livelihoods and income. This is also true for the other human-made emergency, climate change. In this light, RECOFTC is more committed to advance its mission in these most uncertain times. Read more about how RECOFTC is responding to COVID-19 ([link](#))

Description of actions

RECOFTC has contributed to the UN Global Compact principles in many ways. Here are a few examples:

1. RECOFTC, together with development partners and ASEAN state members, developed a framework and guidelines to recognize customary tenure in forested landscapes for ASEAN. The guidelines encourages ASEAN member states to support the recognition of customary tenure at the national and sub-national

levels to secure the rights of communities over traditional land and natural resources.

2. RECOFTC's EU-funded project Voices for the Mekong Forest (V4MF) developed strong mechanisms for participation and collaboration among different stakeholders to improve forest governance across the Mekong region. RECOFTC with international and national development partners in Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar, Thailand, and Viet Nam increased awareness of local communities about their rights and obligations in forest governance processes. In the process, V4MF empowered communities to resolve long standing disputes over their land.
3. RECOFTC's WAVES - Weaving Leadership for Gender Equality program engaged over 30 gender leaders in supporting gender equality within the forest sector. WAVES Gender leaders come from civil society, the government and the private sector. WAVES has successfully embedded gender-based budgeting and program planning in governments of Cambodia, Viet Nam, and Nepal.
4. RECOFTC continued piloting and demonstrating improved models and best practices for formalizing local people's forest tenure, forest management planning (including with considerations for 'climate-proofing' and disaster risk reduction), forest product enterprise development for communities and smallholders, and partnership arrangements between local people and the private sector. Support was given to 1,900 forest-product entrepreneurs (over 50% women), most of whom are organized into 49 community-based enterprises (CBEs). Ten (10) of these are women-only CBEs in Nepal, where RECOFTC is scaling out its 'Trees and Bees' model with the President Chure-Terai Madesh Conservation Development Program.
5. RECOFTC values its work and the impact it has on the environment so it launched an institution-wide Environmental and Social Safeguards policy to become part of its standard operating procedures.
6. RECOFTC also values due diligence in its work with the private sector. As part of its commitment to accountability and transparency, RECOFTC updated its Private Sector Engagement Guidelines in 2021, which ensures that a due diligence process is followed prior to accepting contracts from the private sector.

Measurement of outcomes

RECOFTC's actions have contributed to the following outcomes:

1. The approval of a landscape management strategy and action plan for the Kuan Kreng Landscape in **Thailand**, developed with RECOFTC support. This brings the total of landscape management strategies and plans facilitated by RECOFTC to four since the beginning of the RECOFTC Strategic Plan 2018-2023. Experiences from **Nepal** have been captured into a set of municipal government and landscape scale

guidelines for replication and are already being adapted by multi-stakeholders in eight other municipalities and landscapes in the country.

2. The increasing influence of civil society actors in the forest sector, with support from RECOFTC. In the **Mekong region**, this is evidenced by their contributions in FLEGT VPA negotiations, ongoing REDD+ processes, and to social forestry reforms. Important milestones were achieved in **Lao PDR** and **Thailand** by successfully completing their respective fourth and third rounds of FLEGT VPA negotiations between corresponding governments and the EU. In both countries CSO networks are engaged in ad-hoc Working Groups and Joint Expert Meetings, which allows them to contribute to the Timber Legality Definitions (TLDs), as well as to drafting the Timber Legality Assurance Systems (TLAS). REDD+ consultations are also progressing significantly in **Cambodia, Lao PDR, Thailand, and Viet Nam**, with RECOFTC supporting civil society engagement.
3. The ongoing development of **26 equitable business partnerships** between forest producer groups/smallholders and private sector actors, facilitated by RECOFTC. These include partnerships between a community-based cooperative and coffee buyers in **Indonesia**; timber smallholder groups and private buyers on teak in **Lao PDR and Thailand**; community groups and buyers of various forest products in **Nepal**; and village groups and private companies on bamboo in **Viet Nam**.
4. Development and implementation of strategies, action plans, and capacity development resources and tools to support gender mainstreaming in government agencies and civil society organizations through supporting gender leaders in **all RECOFTC focal countries**. This has resulted in the creation of an active network of women foresters and forest user group members in **Cambodia, Nepal, and Thailand**; the inclusion of gender mainstreaming as key forest policy objectives in **Cambodia, Lao PDR, and Nepal**; and gender mainstreamed university and non-formal education curricula in **Indonesia, Myanmar and Viet Nam**.

In summary, RECOFTC has worked with numerous partners to achieve many of its output targets up to the present day. Here are some of our key achievements:

- 15,611 duty bearers and rights holders (40% women, 14% members of indigenous groups) have been trained and empowered through 607 capacity development events. Participants represent 188 organizations.
- 30 gender leaders with a reach across 7 countries and beyond have demonstrated leadership in promoting gender equality in the forest sector.
- 54 global, regional, and national events were organized and reached at least 262,093 persons.
- 336 communications products published and disseminated, with 187,256 unique visitors on the RECOFTC website and 970,700 unique views on social media channels.

- Over 466 forest user groups are supported, and these groups include 63,164 households and over 382,964 hectares of forest land conserved within RECOFTC focal countries.
- At least 1,900 forest-product entrepreneurs (over 50% women), organized into CBEs, are supported and empowered.

A full account of our current achievements can be seen in our Annual Report ([link](#)). In conclusion, RECOFTC remains committed to its mission. It is aligned with and continues to support the UN Global Compact.