

National Report on the Implementation of the UNCCD
Submitted by the Republic of Korea

1. Abstract

Through long history of Korea, wise forest management for controlling droughts and floods on forested watersheds has been a prior policy of all dynasties. But during the first half of 20th century, including the Korean War, severe deforestation had occurred throughout the Korean Peninsula, due to widespread illegal cuttings and over-cuttings. Since the early 1960s, in parallel with the Economic Development Plans, rehabilitation of forestlands have been strongly propelled in order to green the country again. In 1973 the first 10-year National Forest Plan was launched to complete the rehabilitation of denuded forestlands and to enhance the protection of the existent forests. The subsequent National Forest Plans have been implemented for improving forest resources and consequently providing augmented economic and environmental benefits. Korea is currently well known as one of the most successful countries in its achievement of reforestation. Although no desert in Korea, droughts during rainless-season have increased since meteorological records were started. Droughts may cause the potential danger of disastrous forest fire in Korea. Meanwhile, the dust storm containing with a yellow-sand blowing from the northeast desert of China and Mongolia has influenced on the environmental and economical aspects. This trans-boundary environmental issue allows the public and government to recognize the role of forests in conservation of nature. In the basis of the public recognition, governmental and non-governmental organizations are interested in preventing desertification through bilateral and multilateral cooperation among countries. In the present time, several bilateral cooperative projects funded by the Korean government are implementing in China and Mongolia. Also, cooperative research projects include monitoring the occurrence of the dust storm and developing effective countermeasures. On the other hand, Northeast Asia Forest Forum (NEAFF) as one of the NGOs is actively extending its activities to enhance public awareness on the desertification and devastation of forest in the countries of Northeast Asia.

2. Policies and Strategies of Priority

Korea is covered by 9,940 thousand ha of forests occupied 65% of the whole country area.. Forest resources in Korea had been managed well until the early 1900s because its policy had been concentrated on the conservation of trees and water resources during the long history of Korea. But during the rule of Japanese imperialism

and the consecutive Korean War, most of the forested area in Korea was completely destroyed owing to illegal logging and over-harvesting. An effective policy and strict law enforcement on forest management were not executed up to the end of the 1960s. The comprehensive forest rehabilitation plan in the 1970s was established with enactment of forest law in 1961. The first (1973-1978) and second (1979-1987) 10-year National Forest Rehabilitation Plans had been formulated in focusing on rehabilitation and restoration of the devastated mountainous area with particular emphasis on erosion control. With the successful execution of the plans as a national campaign the first and second National Forest Rehabilitation Plans were completed earlier than planned timelines. During the period of project implementation, more than one million ha of denuded forestlands was reforested. The third National Forest Plan during 1988-1997 was a shift of the forestry policy from greening the nation to achieve environmentally healthy forest. This was totally attributed to the success of the first two plans and social demand. The fourth National Forest Plan was scheduled from 1998 to 2007, which the new paradigm of sustainable forest management was introduced and incorporated. The Plan aimed to; (1) the implement of environmentally sound forest management in sustainable ways, (2) the increment of competitiveness of forestry and forest industry, (3) the enhancement of social benefits.

The Forestry Act enacted in 1961 have regulated that the National Forest Plan should be renewed in every 10-year with mid-term evaluation every 5-year. Table 1 summarizes the major policy goals and strategies in the fourth National Forest Plan. In this plan, The National Forest Plan were established by the chief of Korea Forest Service (KFS), whereas chiefs of five National Forest Offices and eight governors and seven metropolitan majors of local government have to set up local forest management plan considering specific local conditions.

The Korean government signed the UNCCD Agreement in October 14, 1994, and ratified it officially in August 17, 1999. It is well known that desertification expanded by anthropogenic activities. Even there is no desert is in Korea, Korea is one of the countries that have experienced serious droughts during the rainless-season. In the spring of 2001, Korea experienced one of the severest droughts in its history. In this season, potential of forest fire increased, and indeed in 2000 the largest scale of forest fire occurred in the east coast of Korean peninsular, and over 23,000 ha of natural forest was totally burned.

During the spring, a tremendous dust storm, “Yellow Sand” is blowing from deserts in the neighboring countries such as China and Mongolia influenced badly on natural environment of Korea. With the increment of its occurrence, frequency, and intensity, the dust storm become hot issue not only in Korean, but also in northeast Asian countries.

Table 1. Goals and Strategies of the fourth National Forest Plan

Foundation of Sustainable Forest Management	
Strategies	Major Programs
Forest Land Management System	Efficient conservation and utilization of forest lands
	Establishment of sustainable mountain development system
	Expansion of managed forest lands by plans
Promotion of Forest Policy Management and Fostering of Professional Foresters	Expansion of national forest area and settlement of the Responsible Management System.
	Activation of private forestry
	Fostering of professional foresters
	Fostering of forestry union
Promotion of Forest of profitable Trees and Building a Management Foundation	Promotion of forest of profitable trees
	Expansion of forestation program
	Establishment of seedling management
	Improvement of basic forest road and expansion of forest road
	Development of forestry machines and fostering of forestry technicians
Competitiveness of Forest Industry	Promotion of infrastructure for forest products
	Reinforcement of timber industry and domestic timber use
	Infrastructure for distribution system of forest products
	Emphasis on strategic items for income raise
	Strengthening of forest industry for export
Strengthening of Forest Biological Resources Conservation and Management	Conservation and management of forest biological resources
	Expansion of forest biological resources conservation facilities
	Conservation and propagation of wild animals
Disaster Prevention in Forests and Expansion of Urban Forests	Strengthening of forest fire control system
	Extermination of vermin
	Land conservation and disaster prevention in forests
	Enhancement of watershed management
Recreation Forest Culture and Comprehensive Development	Enlargement and intensive management of urban forests
	Enlargement of forest recreation
	Program development of forest-based culture
International Cooperation	Comprehensive development of rural forest community
	Strengthening diplomatic efforts on forest resources
	Broadening of overseas plantation and forest development
International Cooperation	Preparation of peninsular forest management to reunification

The dust storm occurred 7.7 days per year in the 1990s. However, its frequency increased 27 days in recent because of expansion of desert area in the northeast Asia. The desert area may increase owing to climate change in China and Mongolia. Now its impacts are widely influencing on atmospheric environment, agriculture and forest, as well as some industrial factories, which makes high precision instruments. In addition, its impacts on human health attract public attention. During the spring, a large number of patients with respiratory disease become a social problem. The moving route of the dust storm through the industrial complex in the east China is afford to increase the probability of contamination by toxic compounds. Therefore, it is presumed that those pollutant compounds are harmfully impacting on the forest ecosystem in Korea. Due to the direct impact of the dust storm on Korean society, public awareness on the need of prevention and control of the dust storm is well enhanced. Having particularly recognized its significant influences on human health, Korean government has been providing funds for silvicultural activities and technology transfer in the rehabilitation area through bilateral and multilateral cooperation with the countries where the dust storm is initiated. Also Korean government and NGOs have been participating in combating the desertification for environmental conservation.

3. Legal Framework

The Korea Forest Service (KFS) as a focal point of UNCCD, is under the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry. The major objectives of the KFS are propagation of forest resources, protection and upbringing of forest, developments and uses of forest products, and researches on improvement of forest management. The Korea Forest Service consists of four Bureaus including Forestry Policy Bureau, National Forest Administration Bureau, Private Forest Assistant Bureau, and Planning and Management Bureau, and two divisions including General Service Division and Planning and Budget Division. As sub-organizations, it includes Korea Forest Research Institute, National Arboretum, Forest Aviation Office, and five Local Forest Management Offices.

In Korea, some international initiatives related to forest including Convention on Biological Diversity and Convention on Climate Change are in charge of the Ministry of Environment. UNCCD is in charge of KFS that undertakes policy works and their implementations regarding rehabilitation of degraded forestland that mainly caused by forest fire and erosion.

4. Participation and Agreement Processes

Recent increment of frequency and intensity of the dust storm caused to public awareness on desertification and the significant role of forest in our environment. Korean Government is interested in the control and prevention program through bilateral and multilateral cooperation. Indeed, a Joint Communiqué of the Third tripartite Environmental Minister's Meeting among Korea, China and Japan was signed and issued by the respective Environmental Ministers of the countries on April 2001. It has highlighted the need to promote cooperation for systematic studies on the trans-boundary dust storm, exacerbated by soil degradation in order to determine better ways to resolve. In addition, the Korean government installed a new warning system of the dust storm recently.

As a cooperative work between governmental organizations, the KFS and Korea International Cooperation Agency (KOICA) jointly provided supporting programs for forest management to combat desertification in the northeast Asia. By the programs, the KFS provides know-how gained through the extensive experiences and successes of reforestation and rehabilitation projects, while KOICA provides project-operating funds to the countries that participate in the programs such as Mongolia, China, and Myanmar.

While the implementation of forestry policies are primarily undertaken by governmental organizations like as KFS, NGOs and private sectors also participate actively in decision-making processes, and other forest related activities and operations.

5. International Cooperation under Implementation

In the Summit Meeting between Korea and China in 1998, both countries agreed to pursue cooperative projects in China for combating desertification. On executing the project Korean government agreed to provide project funds and transfer of technologies to share experiences of restoration projects in Korea. The projects are briefly summarized in the Table 2. As a part of the activity on projects, preliminary survey had been done in 2000. Korean side provided technical and professional support to the rehabilitation project at the upper stream watersheds of Miyun reservoir, one of the major watersheds of Beijing City. In 2002, both countries will implement the plantation-project in three desert areas of western China. Two areas are planned to execute in the future, but not specified yet. Korean side will provide a total sum of 6 million US\$ in this project.

Table 2. Forestation Project Support for China

Target Area		Area (ha)	Period	Budget (1,000 US \$)	
				Korea	China
Miyun Reservoir Water Conservation Forest, Beijing		500	2001 – 2003	1,000	870
Desertification Prevention	Tongliao, Inner Mongolia	3,000	2002 – 2005	1,000	500
	Baiyin, Gansu province	1,540	Not specified	1,000	670
	Tulufan, Xinjiang province	1,200	Not specified	1,000	100

※ Forestation areas that are going to be invested 2,000 thousands US \$ was not decided.

Beside the plantation projects in the countries of combating desertification, Korea has also been provided several training programs and host international conferences to support efforts made by the countries in combating desertification. The First Technical Training Program for Combating Desertification sponsored by KOICA was carried out in May 2001 for 12 participants from China and Mongolia. The second program was held in April 2002, with lectures and practices on rehabilitation of degraded forest, control of desertification prevention, and plantation for 16 participants from 9 countries such as China, Iran, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Mongolia, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Tadjikistan, and Uzbekistan.

International cooperation on the prevention and control of desertification is also extended in research sector. Korea Forest Research Institute and Chinese Academy of Forestry have been jointly implemented cooperative research projects on prevention of desertification since 1996. Another international cooperative research was launched with Mongolia in 2001. These research projects are focused on investigation of desertification characteristics, and development of control technology of desertification. All project sites are located in China and Mongolia, and research funds are jointly provided.

There are also non-governmental activities in combating desertification initiated by Korea. As a non-governmental organization, NEAFF campaigned establishment of “Forest for Friendship” in China and Mongolia in April and May 2000, respectively. During the campaign, 15 ha in outbound of Langfang city in China were planted. A private company in Korea supported the expenses for the campaign. NEAFF also organized several seminars and symposiums regarding combating desertification. Participants were invited from the countries in the northeast Asia. These activities are solely purposed for international cooperation through sharing experiences on plantation and rehabilitation of each country. Table 3 summarizes those events initiated by Korea.

Table 3. Seminars, Symposiums, and Meetings for Desertification Prevention

Date	Titles	Host Organization	Place
1999.07	Present State of Desertification of China and Mongolia and Prevent Plans	UNCCD, UNDP, NEAFF	Seoul
2000.11	Korea and China Partnership Meeting for Desertification Prevention	NEAFF	Seoul
2001.04	Korea and China Workshop for Desertification Prevention	NEAFF	Beijing, China
2001.06	Korea and Mongolia Seminar on Desertification Prevention	NEAFF	Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia
2001.12	Korea and China International Scientific Symposium for Desertification Prevention	Korea Forest Research Institute, NEAFF	Seoul
2002.04	International Symposium of International Countermeasure for Desertification Prevention	Korea Forest Research Institute	Seoul
2002.05	Korea and Mongolia Partnership Meeting for Forestry Field	NEAFF, The Korea and Mongolia Society	Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia

The experts from China, Mongolia, and related countries presented on the situation of desertification, its causes and expansion, and their efforts to reduce desertification. Korean experts presented the compiled data of northeast Asia related to desertification and our traditional rehabilitation method in devastated mountainous area.