

GUIDELINES ON THE ASEAN GREEN INITIATIVE

I. BACKGROUND

The Concept Note of the ASEAN Green Initiative (AGI) that was envisaged by H.E. Kung Phoak, Deputy Secretary-General of ASEAN for ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community, was presented at the 30th Meeting of the ASEAN Senior Officials on the Environment (ASOEN) held in Bangkok, Thailand from 10 to 11 July 2019. The ASOEN supported the AGI to further demonstrate ASEAN's serious commitment to work together towards biodiversity conservation in the Region, and to recognise grassroot actions that support regional policies, strategies, and programmes. Pursuant thereto, a ceremonial tree planting activity was held on 15 October 2019 during the 15th ASEAN Ministerial Meeting on the Environment in the Angkor Wat in Siem Reap, Cambodia, as a precursor to the official launch of the AGI.

The ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity (ACB) serves as the Secretariat of the AGI.

II. OBJECTIVES

The AGI aims to:

1. contribute to the efforts relating to the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration through the planting of 10 million trees in 10 years;
2. raise awareness about biodiversity and its ecosystem services and values;
3. contribute to the health and well-being of ASEAN citizens;
4. promote public and private investment in biodiversity and its ecosystem services; and
5. recognise grassroot actions that support regional policies, strategies, and programmes.

The goal of this initiative is for 10 million trees to be planted throughout the Region over a period of 10 years, as a demonstration of regional cooperation to promote the restoration and sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, and the adoption of nature-based solutions to combat desertification, halt biodiversity loss, reverse land degradation, and respond to climate change, through community engagement and public outreach, pursuant to the ASEAN Socio-Cultural Community Blueprint 2025, and the ASEAN Working Group on Nature Conservation and Biodiversity (AWGNBCB) Action Plan, and the CBD Strategic Plan for Biodiversity. Ongoing and new tree planting initiatives from 2021 to 2030 may be recognised, provided that they are nominated and qualify as AGI. Moreover, the AGI will contribute to strengthening environmental linkages within cities, particularly between urban, peri-urban, and rural areas, and increasing green spaces that are accessible to the public, which provide benefits to human health and well-being. These efforts are also in conjunction with the UN Decade of Ecosystem Restoration.

The AGI will be spearheaded by ASEAN Member States (AMS), with the ASEAN Secretariat and the ACB playing enabling and supporting roles. It complements tree planting activities that the AMS are undertaking pursuant to their national biodiversity and reforestation targets, and encourages the mainstreaming of biodiversity across sectors through the engagement of various stakeholders.

III. TARGET PARTICIPANTS

The target participants are as follows:

1. AMS, with AWGNCB national focal points as the key implementing agencies with cross-sectoral support from other government agencies
2. ASEAN's dialogue and development partners
3. Various stakeholders, including women, youth, and indigenous peoples and local communities (IPLCs)
4. Civil society organisations
5. Private sector

IV. BENEFITS OF AGI

1. **Better environment for the citizens of ASEAN.** The benefits that humans get from trees are immense: they provide fresh air and regulate water flow; contribute to the health and well-being of ASEAN citizens; protect us from extreme weather conditions; and provide shelter for plant and animal species, among other benefits. Increasing green spaces contributes to an improved state of the environment, ecosystems, and human health.
2. **Opportunities.** Being recognised as an AGI may potentially provide opportunities, such as expansion of network of partners, funding prospects, enhancement of corporate image, reduction of environmental impact, participation in regional biodiversity dialogues and events, and potential increase in revenue.
3. **ASEAN-wide documentation and acknowledgement of qualified contributions and best practices.** Qualified tree planting activities will be documented and acknowledged as contributing towards ecosystem restoration, combating desertification, halting land degradation, and curbing biodiversity loss in the ASEAN region. Moreover, AGI awardees, as well as their tree planting or greening projects, will be widely promoted by the ASEAN through the official AGI website, regional and international events, exhibitions, news releases, publications, and other communication platforms. Proponents of selected AGIs may also be invited to share their best practices that may be considered for replication.

V. CATEGORIES

While the AGI encourages tree planting initiatives for the many benefits it may provide, it also seeks to encourage, build on, and recognise best practices based on its criteria. AGI recognition will distinguish qualified tree planting activities as model initiatives that are worth replicating.

Since the intent is to encourage multi-stakeholder engagement in tree planting, no minimum number of trees is required for nomination. Small- and medium-scale tree planting activities are also welcome, and may qualify for recognition under AGI. For these purposes, we propose three categories:

- a. Small-scale initiative: up to 100 trees planted
- b. Medium-scale initiative: 101 to 5,000 trees planted
- c. Large-scale initiative: over 5,000 trees planted

Nominations for small- and medium-scale tree planting activities shall be evaluated by the ACB, acting as the AGI Secretariat. The evaluation of nominations for this category shall be completed within 30 working days from receipt of the nominations by the AGI Secretariat. Qualified small and medium-scale activities shall be featured on the AGI website, and proponents shall receive a certificate signed by the ACB Executive Director after each evaluation is completed. This shorter process will make it easier for individuals and other stakeholders to be recognised, and shall contribute to movement in the AGI and its website.

The evaluation of nominations for large-scale initiatives would require more time and expertise. As such, the initial screening of nominations shall be undertaken by the AGI Secretariat, which shall submit the shortlist of nominees to the ACB Scientific Advisory Committee (SAC) members for evaluation. Another option is to engage an expert to conduct the screening and evaluation of nominations for large-scale AGIs. The ACB will then present the recommendations of the SAC members/experts for consideration of the AWGNCB and the ACB Governing Board (GB ACB) members for the biennial certification.

VI. GUIDELINES FOR TREE PLANTING UNDER THE AGI

To facilitate the implementation of the AGI, the ACB has developed these proposed guidelines for tree planting activities in the Region. Considering that tree planting activities must be designed in a manner that is appropriate to the specific conditions at every site, these guidelines provide general direction on supporting existing tree planting and reforestation programmes of the AMS.

For the purposes of this proposal, “tree planting” shall refer to the process of replanting and transplanting of vegetation, by using saplings of trees and shrubs for the intentional replenishment of vegetation that has been depleted. The activities to be conducted through this initiative may include reforesting deforested areas; enrichment planting of degraded forest areas, not limited to inland terrestrial areas but also to coastal and mangrove habitats; and urban tree planting, including in parks and along streets.

In any case, the tree planting activity should contribute to increasing the ecological value of the area, as well as enhancing site resilience and adaptation to climate change impacts. As such, tree planting for plantations meant for commercial timber production is excluded from AGI. The tree planting may be planned and designed to support national reforestation programmes of AMS, and respond to their commitments under multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs).

It is worth emphasising that the main criterion for inclusion in AGI is the planting of indigenous species. As such, the threshold requirement in order for tree planting to be recognised as AGI is that planted species must, as far as practicable, primarily include species that are likely to have been present in the area prior to degradation.

Table 1 shows the evaluation criteria for small and medium scale tree planting activities.

Table 1. Selection Criteria for Small- and Medium-Scale Initiatives

Criteria	Per cent Score
Ecological Soundness	70%
Socio-Economic Impacts	10%
Sustainability	10%
Compliance with Governance and Institutional Mechanisms	10%
Total	100%

To be recognised as an AGI, a nominated small- or medium-scale tree planting initiative must garner at least 60 per cent of the total score per criterion.

1. Ecological Soundness: 70%

- As far as possible, use of a selection of indigenous species;
- Invasive alien species and genetically modified organisms (GMOs) should not be used.
- The trees to be planted should be suitable to the natural biophysical characteristics of the area, and as such, should, as far as applicable, be suitable to the climate, original topography, soil, and elevation of the area before degradation.
- As far as practicable, chemical pesticides and artificial control agents shall be avoided, or their use shall be minimised and justified.
- Environmentally appropriate collection, handling, and disposal of waste materials shall be in place.

2. Socio-Economic Impacts: 10%

- When applicable, community participation in the planning process, production of seedlings in nurseries, as well as planting, maintenance, and sustainability of the

trees is highly desirable, even when the planting is on government or privately owned land, and should be promoted.

- Tree planting should, as far as practicable —
 - contribute to livelihood opportunities to traditional and local communities in the area;
 - provide health and well-being benefits to the community; and
 - use readily available local seeds and planting materials and/or support the development of local nurseries to produce these materials.

3. Sustainability: 10%

The proponent should implement maintenance activities for at least one year after the planting to ensure the survivability of the planted seedlings.

4. Compliance with Governance and Institutional Mechanisms: 10%

- The procedures to be followed should be in accordance with existing national policies of the participating parties' respective countries.
- Land may be owned publicly by government agencies and bodies at national and/or local levels; privately by individuals or companies; or collectively by indigenous peoples or local communities. In each case, the decision to plant trees in the area must be agreed upon, and involve the owners/managers of the land.
- The proponents of the tree planting activity have obtained the necessary legal requirements and/or permits from the appropriate government authorities.

Table 2 below shows the selection criteria for large-scale tree planting initiatives.

Table 2. Selection Criteria for Large-Scale Initiatives

Criteria	Per cent Score
Ecological Soundness	55%
Socio-Economic Impacts	15%
Sustainability	15%
Compliance with Governance and Institutional Mechanisms	15%
Total	100%

To be recognised as an AGI, a nominated large scale tree planting initiative must garner at least 60 per cent of the total score per criterion.

Considerations Under Each Criterion

A. Ecological Soundness: 55%

1. Use of a selection of indigenous species which may –
 - Include both pioneer species and slower maturing species typical of more advanced succession stage; and
 - Provide shade, shelter, and food to attract wildlife living in adjacent areas.
2. Invasive alien species and genetically modified organisms (GMOs) should not be used.
3. The trees to be planted should be suitable to the natural biophysical characteristics of the area, and as such, should, as far as applicable, be suitable to the climate, original topography, soil, and elevation of the area before degradation.
4. The tree planting activity should contribute to increasing the ecological value of the locality (e.g. enhance or support pollinator populations, improve ecosystem services, etc.).
5. The tree planting activity should contribute to improving site resilience, respond to climate change impacts, and where feasible, demonstrate rehabilitation of degraded habitats.
6. As far as practicable, minimise the use of chemical pesticides and artificial control agents.
7. Maintenance and protection interventions must be programmed to ensure the survival and sustainability of the replanted trees.

B. Socio-Economic Impacts: 15%

1. Participation of stakeholders in the planning process, as well as the planting, maintenance, and sustainability of the trees is highly desirable, even when the planting is on government or privately owned land, and should be promoted, wherever appropriate.
2. Tree planting should, as far as practicable —
 - provide subsistence and livelihood opportunities to traditional and local communities in the area;
 - provide health and well-being benefits to the community;
 - support the traditional and indigenous knowledge systems and practices; and
 - use readily available local seeds and planting materials and/or support the development of local nurseries to produce these materials.

C. Sustainability: 15%

The proponent should implement maintenance activities for at least one year after the planting to ensure the survivability of the planted seedlings.

D. Compliance with Governance and Institutional Mechanisms: 15%

1. The reforestation protocols to be followed are in accordance with existing national environmental policies of the participating parties' respective countries, and compliant with any additional requirements as may be reasonably imposed by the relevant government agencies of the AMS where the activity is conducted.
2. Land may be owned publicly by government agencies and bodies at national and/or local levels; privately by individuals or companies; or collectively by indigenous peoples or local communities. In each case, the decision to plant trees in the area must be agreed upon, and involve the owners/managers of the land.
3. The proponents of the tree planting activity have obtained the necessary legal requirements and/or permits from the appropriate government authorities.
4. The tree planting activity should follow zoning and other applicable land use plans.
5. The tree planting initiative should support national reforestation programmes and contribute to compliance to international commitments and/or multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs); where relevant.
6. Environmentally appropriate collection, handling, and disposal of waste materials shall be in place. The use of single-use plastics should be avoided.

VII. PROCESS FLOW AND THE AGI ONLINE REGISTRY

A. The AGI Online Registry

The ACB shall create and manage a page dedicated to the AGI on its official website, which shall serve as the AGI Online Registry.

- Proponents of planting activities for consideration as AGI should register their tree planting activities with the AGI Registry, which may be accessed through the ACB's website.
- The proponent of the tree planting activity (small, medium, large scale) shall provide information/requirements, including but not limited to:
 - Accomplished Nomination Form. The form will have guide questions to be answered by the proponent to explain how they have complied with each AGI selection criterion.
 - Photographs of the tree planting activity.

For large-scale tree planting initiatives, the proponents should submit the following supporting information/ documents; where applicable, as shown in Table 3:

Table 3. Criteria and requirements for large scale tree planting activities

Criterion	Supporting information/ documents
Ecological soundness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Site information (location, climate) • Trees planted (common and scientific names, number of trees to be planted per species)
Socio economic impacts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Photo documentations and minutes of stakeholder meetings • Photos of community involvement in the tree planting activity • Photos of products or livelihood activities generated by the tree planting initiative (if available) • Concept note or business plan of livelihood activities generated by the tree planting initiative (if available)
Sustainability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitoring and Evaluation Plan • Report on maintenance activities undertaken and duration of such activities
Compliance with governance and institutional mechanisms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tree planting permit • Waste disposal plan

VIII. RECOGNITION AND SPECIAL AWARDS

A proponent that registers its tree planting activity for inclusion in AGI, meets the criteria, and submits the required documentary requirements, may be recognised as compliant and receive an AGI Certificate.

In addition to inclusion in the roster of ACB partners, **large-scale initiatives** shall receive an AGI plaque of appreciation, in accordance with the following categories:

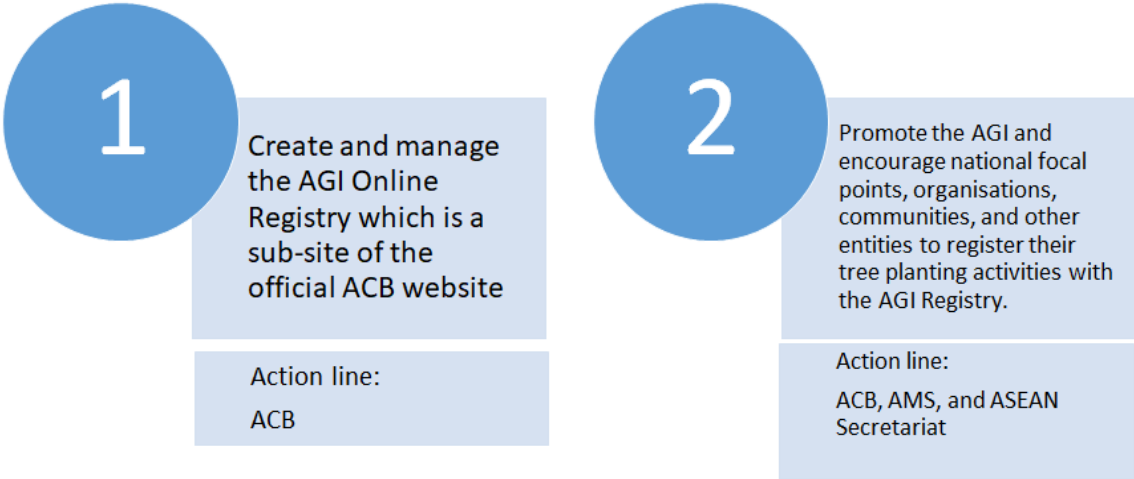
- Bronze - 5,001 to 20,000 trees planted
- Silver - 20,001 to 50,000 trees planted
- Gold - 50,001 to 100,000 trees planted
- Platinum - over 100,000 trees planted

The indicative date for the launch of the AGI and the first call for nominations is in 2021. The call for nominations will be every two (2) years beginning 2022 until 2030. The deadline for submission of nominations is 21 March, which coincides with the annual celebration of International Day of Forests. Nominations received after 21 March of the first year from every call will be considered

for the next awarding cycle. In which case, the first call for nominations will be at the launching in 2021. The deadline for submission of nominations will be on 21 March 2022, in time for the first awarding in 2023. Each nomination and awarding cycle will cover two years, inclusive of the awarding date.

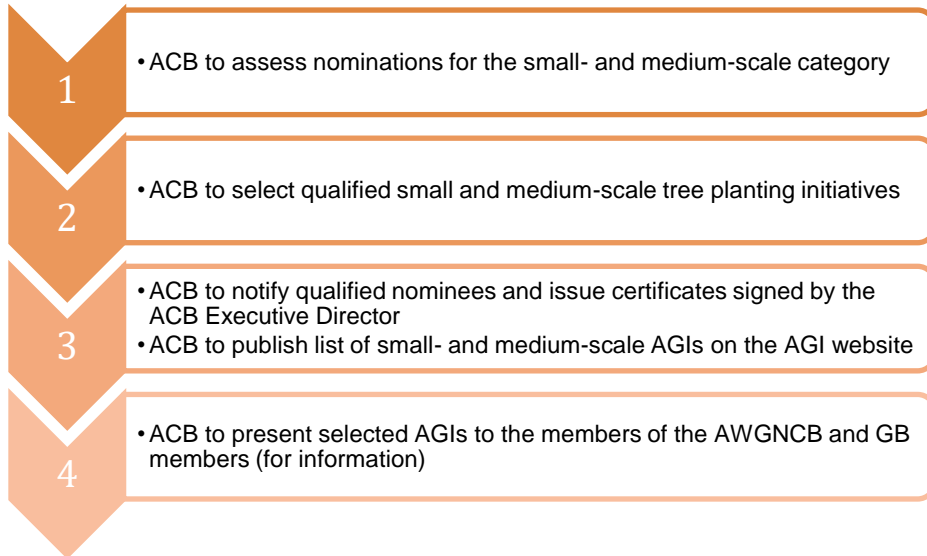
Proponents may be awarded with higher levels of recognition by updating their nominations with the AGI Secretariat, which shall keep its database current, and facilitate the evaluation of additional trees planted or tree planting activities nominated under a proponent’s portfolio. The promotion of an initiative to a higher category based on the increase in the number of trees planted shall be awarded every two years beginning 2025. The deadline for submission of updates to a proponent’s portfolio is on 21 March 2023 and every 21 March every year thereafter, until 2030.

B. Suggested Process Flow



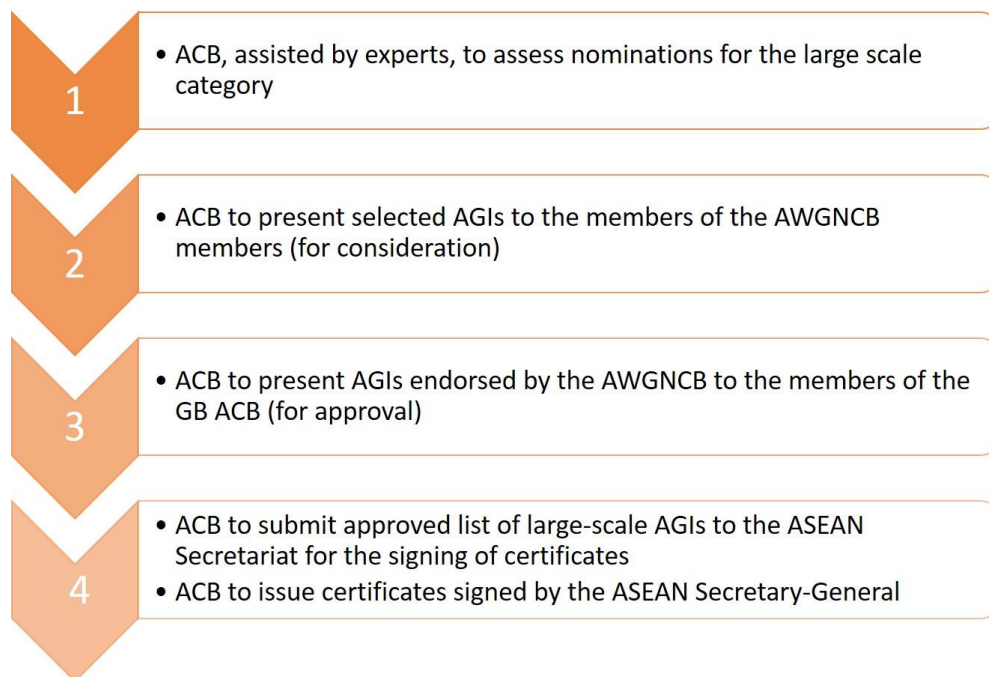
Small- and Medium-Scale Categories

For small and medium scale categories, the ACB will be taking charge in the selection, awarding, and promotion of the qualified AGIs.



Large-Scale Category

For the large-scale category, the AGI Secretariat, with the assistance of experts, will provide an assessment and recommend the large-scale initiatives to be awarded, which will be presented by the ACB to the AWGNCB for endorsement, and to the GB ACB for approval.



IX. AGI BRANDING GUIDELINES

A. The Logo

The AGI logo, which features a leaf held by a human hand, represents the ASEAN community's commitment to ecosystem and habitat restoration, through science and knowledge-based, participative tree planting activities and reforestation.

The delicate portrayal of the hand and the leaf, and the overlapping of some of their elements, demonstrate humanity as part of biodiversity, and the crucial need to attain and maintain the balance between the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity, and development.



Figure 1. The AGI Logo

B. The AGI Certificate

A tree planting activity that qualifies as part of the AGI shall contribute to the accomplishment of the aim of 10 million trees planted in the ASEAN region. The AGI Certificate is issued for a tree planting activity that meets the set criteria. The ACB, as the AGI Secretariat, shall consolidate the large-scale tree planting activities endorsed by the AWGNCB and approved by the GB, and submit the list to the ASEAN Secretariat, which shall facilitate the signing of the AGI Certificate by the ASEAN Secretary-General.

Below is the proposed design of the AGI Certificate for large-scale tree planting activities signed by the Secretary General of the ASEAN, which proposed design appears as Figure 2. The AGI Certificate for small- and medium-scale activities will be signed by the Executive Director of the ACB, which sample certificate appears as Figure 3.



Figure 2. The AGI Certificate for Large-Scale Tree Planting Activities



Figure 3. The AGI Certificate for Small- and Medium-Scale Tree Planting Activities

X. CONTACT DETAILS

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