

The French-Korean partnership in the Indo-Pacific

In December 2022, Korea set up its first Strategy for a Free, Peaceful, and Prosperous Indo-Pacific Region, drawing on the principles of inclusivity, mutual trust and reciprocity. This convergence with France on a vision for a free, open and stable Indo-Pacific led to the opening of bilateral dialogue on the region, with the first meeting taking place in October 2024. This new French-Korean dialogue forum is an important step forward in aligning the two countries' priorities and implementing cooperation in the region, including with regard to maritime safety, global challenges, humanitarian assistance and disaster response (HA/DR), and joint involvement in the work of regional organizations.

French and Korea are already cooperating in the Indo-Pacific in the area of securing port infrastructure and combating forest fires. Greater cooperation on issues relating to sustainable development is underway through closer ties between development agencies and banks in both countries.

Cooperation in securing and sustaining regional connectivity infrastructure

Korea is a key partner in the Global Ports Safety (GPS) programme, coordinated by Expertise France and launched in the Korean port of Ulsan in September 2024. The goal of GPS is to train officials from state agencies in 12 strategic ports in the Indo-Pacific, in order to provide greater protection to port infrastructure which is critical to local and European trade and essential for the development of these countries in the face of industrial and environmental risks. In April 2025, a cooperation agreement was signed between Expertise France, the Korea National Fire Agency (KNFA) and the Ulsan Fire Service (UFS) in order to include civil security best practices in the GPS training sessions, with the collaboration in particular of the UFS Ulsan training centre, which specializes in industrial risks.

A shared commitment to fighting forest fires

Against the backdrop of worsening forest fires in Asia due largely to climate change, France is working with the Asian Forest Cooperation Organization (AFoCO, based in Korea), in partnership with the Korea Forest Service (KFS). In October 2024, a seven-year cooperation framework was set up to provide training, research and skills transfers in the area of forest fire prevention and management. The flagship project in this partnership, Forest Fire Management in Asia (FFMA) 2025-2030, thus aims to build regional capacity in terms of prevention, response and post-fire restoration, particularly in the 15 AFoCO member countries (Bhutan, Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Laos, Mongolia, Myanmar, Philippines, South Korea, Tajikistan, Thailand, Timor-Leste and Vietnam).

Stepping up cooperation on sustainable development

The Agence Française de Développement (AFD, French Development Agency) and its South Korean partners are working to step up their cooperation for a comprehensive transition towards more sustainable and equitable development. Dialogue is underway with the Korea International Cooperation Agency (KOICA) and the Export-Import Bank of Korea (KEXIM) to implement and co-fund projects in third countries in the region.