The Working Group website: https://www.iavsasia.org/about/steering-committee
The Working Group on the IAVS website:
https://www.iavs.org/page/workinggroups_asiansection

Asian section as a new working group in IAVS

Asia is a large continent consisting ~30% of the terrestrial area of the Earth. The vegetation types of Asia are very diverse and vulnerable to human activities and climate change. To study and conserve the plant diversity, vegetation and ecosystems in Asia, it is essential to create a collaborative network between the vegetation scientists and researchers of this continent.

The Asian Regional Section was formally approved by the IAVS Governing Council in Oct. 2022. The main goal of the Asia Regional Section is to connect and enhance the collaboration of the researchers of vegetation science investigating Asian vegetation types. The specific aims of the Asian Regional Section contain promotion of vegetation studies in Asia:

- Organizing regional and international symposia and field excursions to encourage the Asian vegetation scientists for more collaborations
- Nurturing young scientists
- Creating a data-sharing platform among Asian vegetation scientists

Foundation of the Asian Regional Section

The first inspiration on foundation of Asian Regional Section comes from the Asian Grassland online Conference organized by EDGG during 19-21th April 2022. David Zelený (IAVS Secretary) & Jürgen Dengler (Chair of the IAVS Membership Committee) organized a professional initial workshop for foundation of this regional section during the Asian Grassland conference. Milan Chytrý (European Vegetation Survey, Secretary) and Reginald Guuroh (IAVS African Regional Section, Chair of the Steering Committee) have also attended to represent their special sections during the workshop. A total of 36 participants from different countries, mainly from Asia attended in the workshop. During the workshop, David Zelený introduced IAVS (https://www.iavs.org/), its internal structure including Working Groups and Regional Sections (https://www.iavs.org/page/working-groups_join), history, membership, the way how to establish Regional Sections (guidelines are here: https://www.iavs.org/resource/resmgr/working-groups/informationforworkinggroups.pdf), conditions to join IAVS (generally low fees, free
membership for scientists from many Asian countries: [https://www.iavs.org/page/membership_financial-support](https://www.iavs.org/page/membership_financial-support), benefits of the Regional Section (networking, organizing in-person and online regional meetings, workshops, invited lectures; exchange of students and researchers between labs, exchange of data and compiling larger vegetation databases, organizing and joining special features in the IAVS journals). He also mentioned that IAVS has 49 members from Asia (Japan: 17, Russia: 8, India: 7, Turkey: 5, Taiwan: 4, China: 2, Iran: 2, Philippines: 2, Indonesia: 1, South Korea: 1). Jürgen Dengler, Milan Chytrý and Reginald Guuroh extended the topic, talked about the ideas behind organizing this initial workshop, the low number of members from Asian countries, benefits of Regional Sections and represent their experiences with organizing other working groups/regional sections. Additionally, the members of the initiative committee were all in favour of a single Regional Section and suggested making one large group, also because the current membership interest is rather low. The representatives of IAVS ensured participants that all related topics such as seed ecologists, plant community ecologists and functional ecologists are core topics of vegetation science. It was also emphasized that being a Regional Section comes with many benefits:

* RS receives a baseline funding of 500 EUR per year;
* RS can apply for project money, typically up to 3000 EUR per project;
* If once in the future you should conduct a conference, you can get travel grants for young scientists to subsidize their part;
* RS can organize your website within the IAVS website;
* In the future also your membership list can and should be organized within the IAVS membership platform (also for those who are not IAVS members).

During the meeting, David Zelený provided an online form to become member of the emerging IAVS Regional Section for Asia and to declare potential interest in serving in its core team/steering committee.

At the end of meeting eight members declared that they are interested in serving in the initiative/steering committee. These members are Arkadiusz Nowak, Alireza Naqinezhad, Frank Yonghong Li, Jianshuang Wu, Jalil Noroozi, Sebastian Świerszcz, Jian Zhang, Cheng-Tao Lin. This is the responsibility of the initial steering committee to organise among themselves the necessary next steps. These are (a) creating and updating a membership list, (b) establishing a communication means among members (see some thoughts above), (c) drafting Bylaws, (d) having these Bylaws
approved by the members and (e) having a definitive Steering Committee democratically elected by the members according to the before approved Bylaws.

For a formal approval of a Regional Section by the IAVS, the elected Steering Committee needs to submit a petition to the IAVS Governing Board that contains (a) the approved Bylaws and (b) a member list.

On 3rd May 2022, a first meeting of initial steering committee was held on zoom platform to discuss how to initiate the Asian Section of IAVS. The initial steering Committee included Arkadiusz Nowak, Alireza Naqinezhad, Frank Yonghong Li, Jianshuang Wu, Jalil Noroozi, Sebastian Świerszcz, Jian Zhang, Cheng-Tao Lin with Jian and Sebastian as the leading members in communications.

The following six main points have been discussed:
(a) creating and updating a membership list
(b) establishing a communication means among members: We decided to give a try to Slack for the communication. Cheng-Tao Lin will prepare the instruction for using the Slack.
(c) drafting Bylaws: Arkadiusz Nowak will take the lead on drafts Bylaws first. Jian Zhang, Jianshuang Wu and others will help with the revisions.
(d) having these Bylaws approved by the members
(e) having a definitive Steering Committee democratically elected by the members according to the before approved Bylaws
Plan to use the Slack as the Voting system. Cheng-Tao Lin could help us set up the voting by Slack.
(f) submitting a petition to become an official IAVS RS to the IAVS GB

**Governance of the Asian RS and Membership**

In June 2022, the first draft of RS Bylaws was prepared by the initiative committee of the Asian Regional Section and submitted to IAVS for the final approving. At the same time, the first call for membership was sent to all members interested to join the Asian Regional Section. The Governing Borad and then the council approved the Asian Section Bylaws in their meeting on 28th June 2022. All activities of this Regional Sections can be formally started from this date. The most important step is formal election of a Steering Committee.

The initiative committee sent a call to all members regarding nomination of candidates for steering committee. The deadline was set by 20th July 2022. The election of the first Steering Committee was held by means of an electronic ballot over a period of one month. However, the voting process time took a bit longer and the result was released in September 2022. The election was conducted by Alla Aleksanyan. According to the Bylaws, the Steering Committee (SC) should have up to seven elected members. From 48 members initially declared as being a member in the Asian Section, we received
14 votes from which only 13 (27%) are eligible (members of IAVS). The votes for each candidate are as following:
Alireza Naqinezhad (12), Arkadiusz Nowak (11), Jalil Noroozi (11), Jian Zhang (10), Sebastian Świerszcz (9), Cheng-Tao Lin (9), Bayrtungalag Batsaikhan (9), Badshah Khan (3). So according to Bylaws, the first seven candidates with the highest votes are selected as the final Steering Committee for a course of 4 years (2022-2026).

**Responsibilities of the Steering Committee**

The new elected Steering Committee organized an online meeting in October 2022 to decide on:
1) final positions of the Steering Committee;
2) future platforms for SC communication;
3) constructing a homepage for IAVS Asian Section;
4) the main objectives and activities of the IAVS Asian Section

Each member of the SC should have at least one of the responsibilities pointed out in the Bylaws. Therefore, the SC decided to distribute the responsibilities among the seven members as following:

Bayrtungalag Batsaikhan, Mongolia: Event Organizer
Cheng-Tao Lin, Taiwan: Social media Officer/webmaster
Alireza Naqinezhad, Iran & UK: Chair
Jalil Noroozi, Austria: Treasurer
Arkadiusz Nowak, Poland: Secretary
Sebastian Świerszcz, Poland: Secretary
Jian Zhang, China: Vice-chair

During the meeting, the most important activities with the newly initiated IAVS Asian Section were discussed. The participants of the meeting outlined priorities, including: creating the IAVS Asian Section website, promoting the activities of the Section among current members, encouraging new scientists to join the Asian Section, the need to integrate activities among scientists dealing with Asian vegetation, and organizing online meetings and workshops.

The new webpage of Asian Section was embedded within IAVS website (https://www.iavs.org/page/workinggroups_asiansection)
Asian Regional Section activities

Special Collection “Grasslands of Asia”

The Steering Committee at their seasonal meeting in 18th January, 2023 decided to proactively contributed to co-editorship of a new Special Collection, namely “Grasslands of Asia” to be published in Vegetation Classification and Survey. This is a collaboration of Asian Regional Section with Eurasian Dry Grasslands Group (EDGG). Two members from Steering Committee (Arkadiusz Nowak and Alireza Naqinezhad) are serving as editors of this special collection. More information on this call is available in https://vcs.pensoft.net/collection/317/ and the recent publication call in Palearctic Grasslands (54-55; December 2022).
Special Session at the IAVS Symposium in Australia

We are planning to organize a Special session and a general assembly meeting during the 65th IAVS annual symposium in Coffs Harbour, Australia. A total of 11 oral talks will be presented in this special session.
Social media and membership

The Asian Regional Section has been striving to foster engagement through virtual platforms such as Facebook and Google user groups. While we have actively announced symposiums and event activities across these platforms, recent statistics (visualization site: https://lookerstudio.google.com/reporting/7b29d171-546b-492c-ac5e-c2cc8f997f2b) indicate a need for revitalization, with minimal posts, comments, and user interactions recorded over the past few months (see Figure 6 and Figure 7). However, a noticeable increase in the number of browsed users was observed on specific dates, reflecting potential interest. Moving forward, we are committed to enhancing our social media presence by targeting more young vegetation scientists. Our plan includes the creation of more engaging content, collaboration with influencers in the field, and leveraging in-person events to drive online participation. These efforts aim to build a more vibrant and interactive community that supports the growth and collaboration of vegetation scientists across the Asian countries.
Figure 4 Facebook user group of the Asian section

Figure 5 Google user groups of the Asian section
Figure 6 Gender and age composition of the Asian section Facebook group users.

Figure 7 Recent activities on the Asian section Facebook user group