



NEAR EAST FORESTRY AND RANGE COMMISSION

TWENTY-FOURTH SESSION

Antalya, Turkey, 25 - 29 November 2019

***SILVA MEDITERRANEA* PROGRESS REPORT**

Executive Summary

This paper provides basic information on the activities conducted under the auspices of *Silva Mediterranea*, including the State of Mediterranean Forests, working groups work, and the sixth Mediterranean Forest Week.

I. Twenty-third Session of *Silva Mediterranea*

1. The Committee held its Twenty-third Session on 1-5 April 2019 in Brummana, Lebanon, during the sixth Mediterranean Forest Week. The Committee:

- a) adopted its strategy 2019-2030;
- b) recommended to continue clarifying the role of observers and coordinators within its subsidiary bodies;
- c) recommended to continue reactivating the network of national focal points for *Silva Mediterranea*;
- d) endorsed an amended version of the Brummana Declaration before its adoption at the high-level segment of the sixth Mediterranean Forest Week;
- e) endorsed the programme of work of its subsidiary bodies for 2019-2021;
- f) encouraged member countries to work with the Near East Forest Health and Invasive Species Network and Forest Invasive Species Network for Europe and Central Asia;
- g) welcomed the Mediterranean component of the project “The Paris Agreement in action: upscaling forest and landscape restoration to achieve nationally determined contributions”;
- h) urged FAO to explore ways and means to develop and implement the project “MedForYouth-Empowering Young Entrepreneurs around the Mediterranean”;
- i) welcomed the offer of Tunisia to host the Seventh Mediterranean Forest Week; and
- j) elected Dr Chadi Mohanna of the Republic of Lebanon as Chairperson of the Twenty-third Session of *Silva Mediterranea*.

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II. Forest and landscape restoration in the Mediterranean

2. As part of the working plan of the working group on desertification and restoration of Mediterranean drylands of *Silva Mediterranea* and in line with the Agadir Commitment taken by ten Mediterranean countries at the fifth Mediterranean Forest Week in 2017, a global project entitled “The Paris Agreement in action: upscaling forest and landscape restoration to achieve nationally determined contributions” has been developed by the Forest and Landscape Restoration (FLR) Mechanism of FAO. This global project includes a regional Mediterranean component implemented under the guidance of *Silva Mediterranea*. The project proposal was submitted for funding to the International Climate Initiative (IKI) of the Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety of Germany in July 2017. The project has been approved and the funding agreement was signed on 18 December 2018. Moreover, the Mediterranean component of the IKI project was labelled by the Union for the Mediterranean on 20 September 2018.

3. The IKI project aims to support the restoration of degraded lands to help countries achieve positive climate mitigation and adaptation impacts that will contribute to their Nationally Determined Contributions (NDC) and other commitments such as the Bonn Challenge on the restoration of degraded and deforested lands and Aichi targets on biodiversity. The project has three components:

- a) One regional Mediterranean component to enhance national capacities to successfully plan, implement and monitor large-scale forest and landscape restoration programmes to achieve countries’ NDCs;
- b) Two national components with activities in pilot sites in Morocco (Maâmora forest) and Lebanon (Shouf Biosphere Reserve, Bkassine forest).

4. Based also on the Agadir Commitment, a Mediterranean programme on forest and landscape restoration has been developed for the seventh replenishment cycle of the Global Environment Facility (GEF-7). The primary objective of the programme is to increase the resilience of Mediterranean landscapes and populations through restoration of degraded lands, climate change adaptation and sustainable forest management practices for the sustainable provision of forest ecosystems goods and services. The programme was developed within the Food systems, land use and restoration Impact Programme of GEF-7, expressions of interest were submitted in January 2019, but the proposal was eventually rejected by the GEF Secretariat. Project identification forms developed with four countries now undergo the submission process as national projects: Algeria with a project on the integrated development of the Biban Mountains; Iran with a project to restore degraded ecosystems to enhance the conservation of natural resources, the provision of ecosystem services and biodiversity; Jordan with a project to reverse land degradation and improve sustainable land management and livelihoods in Northern Jordan; and Sudan with a project on the restoration of degraded Nilotic riverine ecosystems to enhance the provision of ecosystem services and biodiversity.

III. Young entrepreneurship in the Mediterranean

5. MedForYouth-Empowering Young Entrepreneurs around the Mediterranean is a project proposal that has been developed to promote the goods and services provided by Mediterranean forests while favouring rural development. It thus contributes to the second objective of the strategy of *Silva Mediterranea*, specifically its strategic lines “Improve sustainable production of goods and services by Mediterranean forests and other wooded lands” and “Enhance the role of Mediterranean forests and other wooded lands in rural development”. The project proposal will be submitted to selected donor but co-funding from countries is still needed to complete the proposal.

6. MedForYouth was initiated by the Université Catholique de Louvain (UCL), the Mediterranean Facility of the European Forest Institute (EFIMED) and the International Centre for Advanced Mediterranean Agronomic Studies (CIHEAM) and could be further developed under *Silva Mediterranea*.

7. MedForYouth aims to develop forestry and to support youth employments and entrepreneurship in the Mediterranean region with high unemployment rates particularly among young

people and where initiatives dedicated to job creation are a high priority. It could give a real purpose to the youth of the region and offer them a future with opportunities to play an active and constructive role. Forests could significantly contribute to such a process where social and technological innovation are key and where forest-related concerns (limited social services in rural areas, land abandonment, lack of management, increased risk of wildfires due to uncontrolled biomass accumulation) should be transformed in opportunities.

IV. Advocacy and knowledge production

8. The Committee co-organized with partners the sixth Mediterranean Forest Week (MFW) on 1-5 April 2019 in Brummana, Lebanon. The sixth MFW addressed the role of Mediterranean forests in the Paris Agreement. Its main outcome was the Brummana Declaration on the role of Mediterranean forests to fulfil the Nationally Determined Contributions of Mediterranean countries. The twenty-fourth session of the Committee and the seventh MFW will be hosted by Tunisia in 2021 with a topic related to young people, their role in green jobs creations, and the social dimension of forests with participatory approaches and the involvement of populations in facing forest challenges.

9. The second edition of the State of Mediterranean Forests was published on 27 November 2018 (<http://www.fao.org/documents/card/en/c/CA2081EN>). This new edition of the State of Mediterranean Forests aims to demonstrate the importance of Mediterranean forests to implementing solutions to tackle global issues such as climate change and population increase. The report is composed of fourteen chapters in three parts:

- a) The Mediterranean landscape: importance and threats. Mediterranean forests are important natural capital. They are under threats from climate change and population increase and other subsidiary drivers of forest degradation.
- b) Mediterranean forest-based solutions. Forests and landscape restoration, adaptation of forests and adaptation using forests, climate change mitigation, and conserving biodiversity are complementary approaches to address the drivers of forest degradation to the benefit of populations and the environment.
- c) Creating an enabling environment to scale up solutions. To scale up and replicate forest-based solutions, there is a need to change the way we see the role of forests in the economy, to put in place relevant policies, more widespread participatory approaches, to recognize the economic value of the goods and services provided by forests and, ultimately, to create appropriate financial incentives and tools.

V. Points for consideration

10. The Commission may wish to:

- a) Invite its Members to support the project “MedForYouth-Empowering Young Entrepreneurs around the Mediterranean” and urge FAO to explore ways and means to further develop and implement it;
- b) Contribute to the preparation and commit to high level participation in the Twenty-fourth Session of the Committee and seventh Mediterranean Forest Week to be held in 2021 in Tunisia.