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NEAR EAST FORESTRY AND RANGE COMMISSION

TWENTY-FIFTH SESSION

19 – 21 October 2021

FAO AND COUNTRY ACTIVITIES IN THE REGION AND FOLLOW-UP ON REQUESTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE 24TH SESSION OF THE NEFRC

Executive Summary

This note was prepared to inform the Near East Forestry and Range Commission (NEFRC) about FAO forestry normative and field programmes that were carried out in 2020 -2021, including the actions taken by FAO in response to NEFRC24 recommendations. For ease of reference, FAO activities and responses have been grouped under six main titles.

The activities undertaken by countries in response to the recommendations of the Twenty-Fourth Session of the Commission are summarized in Annex 1. Countries that submitted reports to the Secretariat are: Iraq, Kuwait, Mauritania, Oman, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, Sudan, Turkey and Yemen.

Suggested action by the Commission

The Commission may wish to:

- Encourage member countries to take advantage of the opportunities provided by the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration and other related global initiatives to mobilize resources for large-scale restoration programmes that aim at reversing ecosystem degradation, halting deforestation and land degradation and enhancing ecosystem health.
- Encourage member countries to better utilize available FAO technical resources (manuals, guidelines, tools, applications), including e-learning courses to enhance capacities in areas related to forest and rangelands development, including landscape restoration, sustainable forest and rangeland management, biodiversity conservation, climate change adaptation and mitigation and others and provide FAO with feedback on their usability and the gaps to be filled in these available resources.
- Request FAO to continue to support member countries with the formulation of development projects that integrate forest and rangelands within the broader food system, conserve biodiversity, adapt to climate change and combat land degradation and contribute to achieving multiple SDGs.

Queries on the content of this document may be addressed to:

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I. FOREST AND RANGELAND POLICY AND RESOURCES DEVELOPMENT

1. This section presents a summary of policy and resource development-related actions undertaken as a follow-up to the recommendations of the Committee on Forestry (COFO) and the Near East Forestry and Range Commission (NEFRC).
2. In September 2020, at the UN General Assembly, FAO Director-General launched the “Green Cities Action Programme: Building Back Better for SDGs” – an initiative aimed at improving the livelihoods and well-being of urban and peri-urban populations in at least 100 cities around the world. The mayor of Tunis was invited to participate as a key speaker and representative of the Near East and North Africa (NENA) Region. The programme has three main pillars: urban forestry, urban agriculture and urban food systems. More information is available at the following link: <http://www.fao.org/about/meetings/fao-green-cities-initiative/en/>.
3. To contribute to the Green Cities Initiative and to respond RFCs requests to support country efforts in developing urban forestry programmes, FAO’s Forestry Division - in collaboration with FAO regional offices - developed the “Green Urban Oases Programme”, which aims to turn dryland cities into “green urban oases” and strengthen their overall resilience to climatic change while reducing the impact of urbanization on biodiversity and on the surrounding natural environment. Two NENA countries, Jordan and Tunisia, were included in the initial phase of the programme. More information on the Initiative can be found at: <http://www.fao.org/forestry/50477-031690b1d38afd68917593f96b73bdb07.pdf>.
4. FAO continued its support to NENA countries in the area of forest resource assessment and monitoring. This includes support i) to Sudan, for carrying out a national forest inventory; ii) to Tunisia, for carrying out a national inventory of forests, pastoral resources and olive trees in the country; iii) to Lebanon, for carrying out a national forest and range resource inventory; and iv) to Saudi Arabia for building the country’s capacity for mapping and monitoring of vegetation cover and managing geospatial land resource information.
5. Following the publishing of the Global Forest Resource Assessment (FRA) 2020 report, FAO prepared a regional Forest Resource Assessment report for the NENA Region based on country reports submitted to FRA 2020. The synthesis of the report is presented in a separate NEFRC document (FO:NEFRC/2021/5). The full report is under publication.
6. In response to the Commission’s request to support the undertaking of an assessment study on the status of forest and range biodiversity in the region to identify gaps for future country actions, FAO conducted a regional assessment of the status of mainstreaming biodiversity across agricultural sectors in the NENA Region. The assessment report is being finalized and will be validated by countries in a regional workshop prior to its publication. Main outcomes of the assessment are presented in a separate NEFRC info note (FO:NEFRC/2021/Inf.3)
7. FAO’s flagship report “The State of the World’s Forests (SOFO) 2020” on Forest, Biodiversity and People assessed progress in meeting global targets and goals related to forest biodiversity and examined the effectiveness of policies, actions and approaches in terms of both conservation and sustainable development outcomes. The report highlighted cases of good forest

biodiversity conservation initiatives from across regions, including from NENA. More details are available at the following link: <http://www.fao.org/3/ca8642en/CA8642EN.pdf>.

8. The Biodiversity and Forests theme was also a dedicated agenda item in COFO25 (COFO/2020/5/Rev.2) where delegates discussed the Action Plan that guides the implementation of FAO's Strategy on Mainstreaming Biodiversity across Agricultural Sectors.

9. From 19 to 20 April 2021, FAO also organized a regional online meeting for the National Focal Points on Forest Genetic Resources (FGR) in the NENA Region to support the preparation of country reports for the second global assessment on FGR.

10. FAO's Forestry and Animal Production and Health Divisions are developing a joint assessment to provide sound evidence on the positive impacts of optimized livestock grazing on biodiversity conservation, management and restoration of dryland forests and land with trees.

11. FAO finalized the regional assessment on the "effects of conflicts on forests and rangelands in the Near East and North Africa" that was initiated in response to an earlier Commission request. The assessment aimed to study the impact of conflicts on forests and rangelands in the Region and developing a robust methodology for tracking conflict-induced degradation. The assessment report is under publication.

12. In response to NEFRC's recommendation to support countries in the area of fire prevention, FAO supported Algeria, through the Japan funded project OSRO/ALG/901/JPN, in developing an integrated fire management strategy and action plan and in strengthening country capacities in fire-cause investigation. Support was also provided to Sudan in the context of project UTF/SUD/079/SUD to launch a nation-wide awareness campaign on forest fires and to collect information on fire cases, extent, damage and loss, to better understand their causes and to build the basis for the elaboration of a national fire management strategy.

13. FAO is currently supporting the Government of Jordan in enhancing the country's capacity to manage forest wildfires and to elaborate a national fire management strategy through project TCP/JOR/3805/C5 "Enhancing the capacity of the forestry sector to control and manage forest fires".

II. ACTIVITIES RELATED TO RESOURCE MOBILIZATION AND ACCESS TO FINANCE

14. In accordance with NEFRC's recommendation to support countries' efforts to increase fundraising and to facilitate their access to major international funding sources - especially for forestry - FAO is currently supporting the development of national and regional projects with a broader integrated approach, including, among others, landscape restoration, forest biodiversity conservation and sustainable use, watershed management, land degradation neutrality and development of sustainable silvopastoral or agroforestry systems.

15. FAO has taken significant steps in facilitating country access to climate change funding for projects related to forest, rangeland or sustainable land management. The total number of recently-approved or active hard pipeline GEF/GCF projects and proposals are 11 projects amounting to a total portfolio of about USD 53.8 million. Countries benefiting from these resources include Algeria, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Mauritania, Morocco and Sudan.

16. This brings the overall number of forest, rangeland and sustainable land management projects to in the region to 20 projects with a total budget of about USD 90.5 million. In addition, Algeria and Mauritania, with FAO support, submitted two concept notes to the GCF Secretariat for a total GCF funding of USD 73 million. The concept notes are now under second review after taking into consideration the comments received from GCF Secretariat.

17. FAO continues its efforts to translate NENA countries' Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) and the voluntary Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN) targets into regional/country projects. Most of FAO's support to countries' submissions under the GEF-7 replenishment cycle is focusing on realizing countries' NDCs. A notable exception is FAO's support to Jordan in the preparation of a full GEF-7 project proposal on "Achieving land degradation neutrality targets through restoration and sustainable management of degraded land in Northern Jordan" following GEF Secretariat's approval of the submitted Project Identification Form (PIF). The project has a strong focus on the rehabilitation and sustainable management of forests and rangelands.

18. FAO is also collaborating with the NDC Partnership to support NENA countries with mobilizing external resources to ensure that countries' NDCs are translated into concrete actions on the ground.

19. In addition to country projects, FAO is also working to involve NENA countries in interregional forestry projects. In this framework, FAO is developing a concept note for submission to GEF-8 in the context of the future Impact Programme on dryland landscapes to involve interested NENA countries. GEF Official focal points will be contacted towards the end of 2021.

20. Algeria, Iraq and Iran (Islamic Republic of) are participating in the interregional project TCP/INT/3802 - "Catalysing investments and actions to enhance resilience against sand and dust storms in agriculture". The project has strong linkages with the countries' LDN targets.

21. The point stressed by the Commission in its 24th Session on the importance of steering attention to the difficulty that countries with internal conflicts face in accessing international funding for project development and implementation was brought to the attention of the Regional Technical Coordination Meeting (RTCM) and afterwards to the NERC35 Session in September 2020 (NERC/20/INF/5. <http://www.fao.org/neareast/regional-conference/en/>).

III. UN DECADE ON ECOSYSTEM RESTORATION AND THE UN DECADE ON FAMILY FARMING

22. A dedicated discussion topic on FAO's contributions to the UN Decades on Ecosystem Restoration and Family Farming was held during the 25th Session of COFO (FO:COFO/2020/7.2). The document highlighted the FAO-UNEP collaboration as lead agencies in the implementation of the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration and featured the linkages between the Decade and FAO's work on Forest and Landscape Restoration.

23. Following the global launch of the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration, FAO and UNEP have designated regional focal points to follow up on the implementation of the Decade at regional and country levels.

24. In this regard, FAO Regional Office for the Near East is collaborating with UNEP Regional Office for West Asia and UNEP Office for Africa to develop a regional action plan, identify potential partners and organize a regional launching event with the involvement of all NENA countries so as to raise awareness on the Decade and the opportunities it provides for countries to scale up their restoration efforts to prevent, halt and reverse ecosystem degradation. The meeting will discuss the proposed regional action plan and agree on priority actions to kick off the Decade work in the region.

25. Within the framework of the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration, FAO is leading the development of a Framework for Ecosystem Restoration Monitoring and further developing the Dryland Restoration Initiative Platform (DRIP), a reporting mechanism on drylands restoration that aims to support countries assess their efforts in achieving Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN) targets and build databases related to their restoration efforts.

26. The SALMA GEF-funded project in Lebanon "Smart Adaptation of Forest Landscapes in Mountain Areas" was included in the initial testing phase of this reporting platform. After the testing

phase, a platform will be launched and countries will be invited to report on their different restoration activities (<http://www.fao.org/in-action/dryland-restoration-initiative-platform/en/>).

27. FAO is strengthening its role in the UN Decade of Family Farming by developing a global programme to support forest and farm producer organizations. In this regard, discussions were initiated with the Islamic Development Bank to mobilize resources for a regional project targeting Non-Wood Forest Products (NWFP) producer organizations in selected NENA countries.

IV. CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT

28. In response to the Commission's request to strengthen countries' capacities in afforestation/reforestation and landscape restoration, and to facilitate the sharing of information and experiences between countries in this regard, FAO organized several regional and global workshops and webinars involving RNE participants (mainly from the Mediterranean region) on Forest and Landscape Restoration in 2020 and 2021 (webinar series on Forest Genetic Resources for Forest and Landscape Restoration, webinar series on Sustainable Financing for Forest and Landscape Restoration and targeted webinars on M&E products).

29. In line with the Commission's request to strengthen countries' capacities on fire prevention and post-fire interventions, FAO has planned a workshop for strengthening capacities on fire-cause investigation in Lebanon under the GEF-funded SALMA project. However, the implementation of the workshop was delayed several times due to the situation in the country.

30. In response to NEFRC's request to strengthen countries' capacities on valuation of ecosystem services, FAO will conduct a capacity-building training workshop on ecosystem services evaluation in November 2021 (following NEFRC 25 Session). The workshop aims at equipping national forest and rangeland staff in NEFRC Member countries with the basic tools and methods needed to undertake evaluation studies in regard to forests, rangelands and other ecosystems.

31. FAO organized in May 2020 a virtual remote sensing survey workshop for Near East and North Africa countries. The workshop aimed to i) Develop national remote sensing capacities and establish a global network of satellite imagery interpreters who will be trained on a scalable methodology that can be adapted for country needs; and ii) Provide independent and consistent estimates at global, regional, Global Ecological Zone (GEZ) levels for current forest area and its changes for periods 2000-2010 and 2010-2018. The workshop targeted 41 participants from 13 NENA countries. National experts were trained in remote sensing and visual interpretation of satellite imagery as well as in analysing data for 13 683 samples in the region.

32. In 2021-2022, FAO will organize a series of regional capacity building events on Forest and Landscape Restoration (Forest Genetic Resources, Assisted Natural Regeneration, Forest Landscape Restoration, carbon benefits in the Mediterranean etc.) and encourages country partners to participate.

V. REGIONAL AND INTERREGIONAL COLLABORATION AND KNOWLEDGE-SHARING

33. In response to the Commission's request for FAO to continue its support to the work of the Near East Network on Wildlands Forest Fire (NENFIRE) and Near East Network on Forest Health and Invasive Species (NENFHIS), a joint NENFIRE-NENFHIS meeting was held on 16 November 2020. The meeting included a technical session on the impacts of COVID-19 on forest protection: "Fire management under COVID-19" and "Managing the threat of forest-invasive species - lessons learned from the SARS-CoV-2 pandemics". The meeting was attended by the national focal points of the two networks, NEFRC bureau members, interested staff from NEFRC member countries and involved FAO staff.

34. To foster regional collaboration and experience sharing and encouraging active participation of member countries in the activities of NENFHIS and NENFIRE, FAO supported the organization of two webinars in 2021 in the framework of the two networks. The first webinar was held on 23 February 2021 during which a web application and information system for forest risk management in Morocco was presented. The second webinar organized was on forest invasive species in the NENA Region and lessons learned. During the webinar, country experiences from Algeria, Lebanon, Morocco and Tunisia were shared.

35. FAO is facilitating the sharing of information on techniques of afforestation/reforestation and landscape restoration through a number of technical documentations and manuals produced (in English, French and Arabic) on large-scale restoration under the ongoing Action Against Desertification project. These manuals contain basic information and methodologies which can easily be transferred to other drylands countries and regions, including the NENA Region. More information can be found in the document provided at the following link <http://www.fao.org/in-action/action-against-desertification/resources/en/>

36. With FAO's support, NENFHIS is submitting a poster abstract on forest invasive species in the NENA region to the VX World Forestry Congress. The submission is still under consideration by the Congress Secretariat.

37. FAO's eLearning Academy Portfolio of Forestry includes several eLearning courses developed recently, such as the courses on Climate Smart Forestry¹; the Forests and transparency under the Paris Agreement²; the Measuring the role of forests and trees in household welfare and livelihoods³; the Tenure security for better forestry: Applying the Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure⁴ and others.

38. FAO encourages country partners to collate and capitalize on good new restoration practices using the framework developed in the context of the Task Force of the UN Decade on Ecosystem Services on Best Practices and to join the multiple Communities of Practices facilitated by FAO on Forest and Landscape Restoration (Monitoring, Finance, Best Practices etc.).

39. The 2nd meeting of the FAO Working Group on Drylands Forests and Agropastoral Systems will be hosted virtually by the Tanzanian government from 17 to 18 November 2021. FAO is encouraging countries to nominate their experts, including those coming from NENA countries, to participate and prepare the next biannual work plan (2022-2024) of the Working Group.

VI. SUPPORT TO COUNTRY INITIATIVES AND PROGRAMMES

40. FAO is proving its continued support to the ongoing and newly-developed country programmes and projects during 2020–2021 including, but not limited to, the following:

41. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, is receiving support under the FAO-Saudi Cooperation programme, in implementing project UTF/SAU/052/SAU - "Strengthening Ministry of Environment, Water and Agriculture (MoEWA) capacity for mapping and monitoring of vegetation cover and managing geospatial land resources information" and Project UTF/SAU/051/SAU – "Strengthening MoEWA's Capacity to implement its Sustainable Rural Agricultural Development", which has one main component on strengthening the Kingdom's capacities in sustainable management of rangelands, forests and natural resources to support sustainable rural development.

42. With technical support from FAO and funding from the World Bank's Forest Carbon Partnership Facility under project UTF/SUD/079/SUD - "Support for the design of the MRV system in the framework of REDD+ Readiness in the Sudan", Sudan was able to achieve key milestone

¹ <https://elearning.fao.org/course/view.php?id=578>

² <https://elearning.fao.org/course/view.php?id=587>

³ <https://elearning.fao.org/course/view.php?id=537>

⁴ <https://elearning.fao.org/course/view.php?id=643>

deliverables, including the: i) implementation of a national forest inventory (NFI); ii) development of a satellite land monitoring system (SLMS); iii) development of National Forest Monitoring System (NFM) and action plan, iv) strengthening of national government institution and the institutionalization of the MRV system; v) development and submission to UNFCCC of Sudan's first sub-national Forest Reference Emission Level/ Forest Reference Level (FREL/FRL); and (vi) strengthening of greenhouse gas (GHG) inventory and reporting process for the Agriculture, Forestry, and Other Land Use (AFOLU) sector.

43. Support to Morocco in the implementation of project UTF/MOR/037/MOR "Support for the implementation of the National Forest Program". The project has helped improving the management tools for forest protection through development of national forest health and surveillance system and forest fire risk maps, revision of the Master Plan for forest fire prevention and control and enhancing monitoring reporting system through setting systematic network of surveys.

44. Support to Tunisia in the implementation of project UTF /TUN/041/TUN - "Support for the implementation of the General Registration of Agriculture (RGA) and the National Forests, Rangelands and Olives Inventory (IFPON)", which aims at strengthening national capacities for designing, planning and carrying out the general agricultural census and carrying out the forest, pastoral and olive-trees inventory, while enhancing the country's capacity to repeatedly carry out such activities in the future independently.

45. Support to Mauritania and Sudan to undertake concrete restoration actions (5 000 hectares) in degraded forestlands through the Turkey-funded project GCP/INT/340/TUR - "Boosting Restoration, Income, Development, Generating Ecosystem Services (BRIDGES)".

46. Support to Mauritania in the implementation of the project GCP /MAU/001/GFF "Integrated ecosystem management programme for the sustainable human development in Mauritania", which aims to increase sustainable human development through the restoration of ecosystem services and an integrated ecosystem management approach in three selected landscapes in the country.

47. FAO is collaborating with the Desert Research Center in Egypt in the implementation of the project GCP/EGY/030/GFF – "Sustainable Management of Kharga Oasis Agro-Ecosystems in the New Valley Governorate". The project aims to ensure sustainable food production systems that help maintain and that can progressively improve soil quality and agro-biodiversity status in the oasis agro-ecosystems of the Egyptian Western Desert.

Annex 1: NEFRC 24 Recommendations and country's achievements⁵

Recommendations made by the Near East Forestry and Range Commission, 24 th session	Activities linked to the recommendations	Other activities
1. The Commission welcomed the matrix reporting format and encouraged its use in future reporting exercises. It recommended Members to consider establishing national task teams/committees to follow the implementation of the recommendations and the reporting.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National task teams/committees have been established in Iraq, Mauritania, Oman, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Turkey and Yemen. With all, except Oman, providing names and titles of their committee members. 	
2. The Commission invited countries to implement sustainable land management practices that combine biodiversity conservation and land uses to the benefit of local people.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Iraq has ongoing projects on SLM, SFM and one on developing Desert oases. • Mauritania reported number of nationally and externally funded projects combining restoration with biodiversity. • Saudi Arabia is implementing campaigns to raise awareness on the importance of greening. The country is also implementing several afforestation projects including the initiatives supported by his Highness the crown prince "Green Saudi Arabia" and "Green Middle East" • Somalia is implementing actions on LDN to increase national forest cover through sustainable landscape management in agroforestry systems. • In Turkey, projects were developed at selected regions to rehabilitate degraded natural forests. • Yemen has engaged in a project of conservation and sustainable use of local genetic resources. 	
3. The Commission took note of the forest-related outcomes of COP24 of the UNFCCC and invited countries to consider how to strengthen forest-related contribution to their respective Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mauritania reported translating NDCs into concrete actions through three GEF funded projects focusing on CC adaptation and mitigation. • • Somalia reported number of projects linked with the country NDCs focusing on building resilience and sustainable livelihoods for pastoral and agro-pastoral communities; improving climate and water monitoring; and on integrated water management for CC change adaptation in agriculture and rangelands. • Sudan mentioned that forestry is well articulated in the mitigation measures in 	

⁵ Iraq, Kuwait, Mauritania, Oman, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, Sudan, Turkey and Yemen

	<p>both 1st NDCs (2015) and the updated one (2020).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yemen has projects focusing on early warning system, <i>in situ</i> conservation of genetic resources and collecting information on the state of country biodiversity as well as assessing the risk of degradation of threatened genetic resources. 	
4. The Commission took note of the forest-related outcomes of the CBD COP 14 and called on countries to provide input to the development of the post-2020 global biodiversity framework.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sudan reported providing input into the national report that the country has submitted under the post-2020 global biodiversity framework. 	
5. The Commission took note of the conclusions of the High-Level Political Forum (HLPF) and strive to implement the commitments pertaining to forests listed in the Ministerial Declaration	Sudan reported contribution to the NVR by adding information on policy and legislative measures that took place during the reporting period. In addition input was added to the sections of report on poverty; biodiversity, forests and water; climate change; and partnerships.	
6. The Commission invited countries to promote nature-based solutions to climate change and encourage participation in the United Nations Climate Action Summit.	Saudi Arabia, for the period 2020-25 is putting efforts to increase resilience to climate change through implementing afforestation and agroforestry programmes and is developing protection programme through the establishment of National parks.	
7. The Commission took note of the outcome of the 1st World Forum on Urban Forests and invited countries to promote the Tree Cities of the World initiative.	No action in promoting the TCWI. .	
8. The Commission Took note of the UN reform process and encouraged developing countries to ensure that forestry issues are given the priority they deserve in the development of the UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework documents for their country.	No reported action	
9. The Commission invited International Popular Commission (IPC) Member Countries to engage in the IPC's continued reform and called on countries not members of the IPC to consider joining the IPC under its new scope.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Turkey reported being engaged in the work of the International Poplar Commission since 1955. • Iraq reported as being member with no indication of the level of engagement in the Commission work. 	
10. The Commission recommended that countries strengthen engagement of their forestry and rangelands institutions in the preparation of NDCs and enhance the capacities to access funding related to climate change adaptation and mitigation and to achieving Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In all the eight reporting counties, forestry and rangelands institutions are fully engaged in the preparation of NDCs. • All 8 countries have ongoing forestry or rangelands related projects aiming at achieving the NDCs (with focus on both cc adaptation and mitigation) and/or LDN targets. • Only Mauritania, reported receiving 	

	<p>capacities support to access funding related to climate change adaptation and mitigation.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Sudan reported finalizing the first phase of the national REDD+ readiness process, which resulted in numerous studies and assessments that could support preparation of climate change adaptation and mitigation projects. 	
11.The Commission highlighted the need for longer-term restoration programmes	No reported action	
12.The Commission suggested that Country Programming Frameworks could be an entry point to enhance FAO support to forest and rangelands ecosystem restoration.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Somalia reported preparing a new CPF with FAO, which is being influenced by the COVID-19. No indication if the CPF includes output/activities on forest and rangelands ecosystem restoration. •Mauritania CPF includes output on sustainable management of natural resources to face climate change effects and strengthening capacities of local communities in ecosystems management. 	
13.The Commission invited members to strengthen coordination efforts and collaboration between countries on transboundary invasive species and requested FAO support in containing emerging pests and diseases.	Mauritania reported collaboration agreement with neighbouring Senegal for the control of invasive plant species <i>Typha australis</i> aiming at the coordination of eradication efforts.	
14.The Commission stressed that forest fire management, particularly prevention, is increasing in importance and highlighted the need for more accurate and detailed information on fires to assess the effectiveness of prevention measures and strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Turkey reported comprehensive awareness raising programme on fire management that targets the public through social media, schoolchildren through Cartoons and other attractive means. The country has also a tailored training programme on fire protection and management targeting farmers, beekeepers, shepherds and hunters living in forest villages. •Mauritania reported organizing national campaigns led by the State Governors including early warning and early fire combat actions. The campaign which goes for 6 month costs USD 2 million annually. •Saudi Arabia reported establishing operational forest fire monitoring unit and is working on the preparation of a national fire prevention plan. •Somalia is reviewing the current forest fire prevention systems in the country, identifying innovative strategies available on forest fire prevention and control through effective forest management plans and rising public awareness on their responsibilities on fire prevention. •Sudan prepared, under the REDD+ project, 	

	a fire management strategy and established a national fire monitoring system.	
15. The Commission invited countries to further strengthen efforts in experience sharing building on successful efforts including disaster risk reduction (DRR).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mauritania reported that its national DRR strategy includes fire and flood risks. The country organized national training workshops for experience sharing involving related government institutions, NGOs, research and academic institutions and local elected leaders. • Sudan reported developing flood risk reduction programme supported with maps on potential risk areas along the Nile. 	
16. The Commission invited countries to support the XV World Forestry Congress and to encourage the widest possible attendance and participation from all sectors within the region.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mauritania has developed a plan for the country participation in the XV World Forestry Congress and identified the thematic areas the country will be presenting at the Congress. • Iraq is preparing awareness raising work on the Congress and its importance to encourage participation from the country. 	
17. The Commission invited countries to propose themes and topics that could form the basis of technical sessions at the Congress, and encouraged members, as appropriate, to support the Congress financially, aiming especially participation from developing countries.	No reported action	
18. The Commission suggested to capitalize on the expertise of SILVAMED in the context of inter-regional collaboration including in the areas of forest health and fire management.	No reported action	
19. The Commission highlighted some knowledge gaps in the further promotion of non-wood forest products (NWFPs) and raised their concerns about potential degradation of forest resources that may be caused by the economic promotion of NWFPs resulting in over exploitation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Turkey has regular programme on the valorization and sustainable use of NWFPs under its developed forest management plans and the country organises regularly training activities on collection and utilization of NWFPs. • Mauritania reported carrying out awareness raising campaigns and capacity building programmes, including for local communities, on the valorization and sustainable use of NWFPs. • In Saudi Arabia launched the “Environmental week” which is also targeting the sustainable use and management of NWFP. Universities and Research institutions are joining efforts to support capacity building activities on sustainable enhancement of NWFP. • In Yemen, as recognition of crucial role of NWFP for women employment in the rural production sector, the government 	

	<p>supports several activities that include capacity building for local communities and organization of fairs to promote handicraft and food products in which women are particularly involved.</p>	
<p>20. The Commission highlighted the need for improving the inventory methods of NWFPs that could provide food for the local communities and/or wildlife and for strengthening the technical capacities in this regard.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Turkey has developed an action plan for sustainable use of NWFP which includes identification of priority NWFPs, development of technical capabilities and strengthening collaboration among involved research institutions. • Somalia is working with FAO under the Country Programming Framework (CPF) in improving technical capacities on the sustainable use of NWFP. 	
<p>21. The Commission recognized the importance of strengthening information and experience sharing on the promotion of NWFPs and the need for developing their local and external markets.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Turkey has prepared and implemented an Ecotourism Action Plan for 2021-2025 which aims to sustainably expand ecotourism services and develop its share in local and foreign markets. • Mauritania reported organizing a national training workshop in collaboration with GIZ on the valorization and development of NWFPs in the country. The workshop has led to identification of the opportunities and challenges for promoting NWFPs and it raised as well the awareness on the importance of NWFPs. 	
<p>22. The Commission highlighted the need for developing national rangeland, wildlife and forest strategies.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A Range Management Strategy (2021–2031) is under development in Somalia with technical assistance from African Union. • The government of Turkey has included wildlife and forestry policies in both the Strategic Plan for Forestry (2019-2023) and in the National Basin Management Strategy (2014-2023). Wildlife and forestry policies will also be included in the proposed Strategic Plan for Forestry for the period 2024-2028. • In response to the growing national concern about desertification, climate change and loss of biodiversity, the Government of Mauritania has developed a new Forest Strategy that focusses on undertaking NFI, reforestation and restoration of forests ecosystems, promoting sustainable forest management and creation of green jobs. • Saudi Arabia is working, through the National center for vegetation cover and the National center for wildlife, to update and/or develop new national rangeland, 	

<p>23. The Commission emphasized the importance on agreeing on and adopting criteria and indicators for sustainable rangeland management.</p>	<p>wildlife and forest strategies.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Turkey has developed, since 2019, its own National Set of Criteria and Indicators for Sustainable Forest Management.• The government of Yemen is working on the development of its criteria and indicators for sustainable rangeland management that are based on SDG target 15.3.1, combating desertification and land degradation and monitor wood cover.• Saudi Arabia adopted under its national rangeland strategy set of regulatory tools for sustainable rangeland management and procedures for rational grazing.	
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