

REPORT

**Beirut,
Lebanon
11 – 14 December
2017**

**NEAR EAST
FORESTRY
AND RANGE
COMMISSION**

**Twenty-third
Session**



**Food
and
Agriculture
Organization
of
the
United
Nations**

FO:NEFRC/2017/REP

REPORT

of the

TWENTY-THIRD SESSION

of the

NEAR EAST FORESTRY AND RANGE COMMISSION

**Beirut, Lebanon
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**FOOD AND AGRICULTURE ORGANIZATION OF THE UNITED NATIONS
Regional Office for the Near East
Cairo, 2017**

PREVIOUS SESSIONS OF THE COMMISSION

First session	Tehran, Iran	24-29 September 1955
Second session	Cairo, Egypt	27 October –1 November 1958
Third session	Adana, Turkey	30 April – 5 May 1962
Fourth session	Beirut, Lebanon	15-22 June 1964
Fifth session	Amman, Jordan	25-30 September 1967
Sixth session	Tehran, Iran	25-30 April 1970
Seventh session	Baghdad, Iraq	30 November – December 1974
Eighth session	Khartoum, Sudan	23-28 February 1978
Ninth session	Nicosia, Cyprus	6-10 June 1983
Tenth session	Tunis, Tunisia	29 June – 3 July 1987
Eleventh session	Ankara, Turkey	15-19 October 1990
Twelfth session	Cairo, Egypt	21-24 October 1996
Thirteenth session	Damascus, Syria	6-9 December 1998
Fourteenth session	Tehran, Iran	1-4 July 2000
Fifteenth session	Khartoum, Sudan	28-31 January 2002
Sixteenth session	Beirut, Lebanon	24-27 May 2004
Seventeenth session	Larnaka, Cyprus	5-9 June 2006
Eighteenth session	Khartoum, Sudan	18-21 February 2008
Nineteenth session	Hammamet, Tunisia	5-9 April 2010
Twentieth session	Antalya, Turkey	29 January – 2 February 2012
Twenty first session	Amman, Jordan	26-30 January 2014
Twenty second session	Tlemcen, Algeria	13-17 December 2015

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SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS
FOR THE ATTENTION OF
MEMBER COUNTRIES OF THE COMMISSION

The Commission:

underscored the importance of identifying and understanding the root causes of deforestation and rangelands degradation as a key step to address them to achieve sustainable management and restoration of dryland forests and agrosilvopastoral systems.

noted countries' and FAO's ongoing initiatives, particularly in promoting restoration of dryland forests and agrosilvopastoral landscapes and resource mobilization efforts through the increased projects portfolio.

commended countries' excellent collaboration with FAO, highlighting FAO's technical assistance for the ongoing initiatives and projects and the preparations for submission of project proposals to the Green Climate Fund.

underscored the importance of identifying and understanding the root causes of deforestation and rangelands degradation as a key step to address them to achieve sustainable management and restoration of dryland forests and agrosilvopastoral system.

highlighted the importance of considering both the direct and indirect contributions of forest to food security and nutrition, noting the importance of agroforestry and/or agrosilvopastoral systems in sustaining food production and the need to integrate forests into the agrosilvopastoral production systems.

highlighted the issue of encroachment on rangelands, including for mining activities and tourism, and *stressed* on the need to rehabilitate the areas affected by mining activities and to achieve a balance between the different uses.

invited countries to consider the recommendations of the High Level Panel of Experts (HLPE) and the Committee on World Food Security (CFS) and to take appropriate actions.

requested countries to participate actively in the Global Forest Resource Assessment (FRA) 2020 reporting process, including in the review and validation of the remote sensing products.

supported FAO's efforts for developing a new strategy for Forest and Forestry and *requested* FAO to undertake broader consultations with all partners at all levels and to publicize the Strategy document to inform countries strategic planning for their forestry sectors.

highlighted that the forest sector is subject to multiple international agendas and demands from other sectors that are unclear, contradictory and make it difficult to implement sustainable forest management.

called on countries to contribute actively to the global processes, including to promote and monitor progress on the forest-related indicators and to report on progress during the High-Level Political Forum review of SDG 15 in 2018.

invited countries to consider the recommendations of the Forest Action Day to foster enabling environments for cooperation among multiple stakeholders; facilitate implementation of open

access tools for monitoring forests and land use, such as Collect Earth; and recognize the NDCs as an opportunity to mainstream REDD+ into national planning processes.

requested countries to continue their efforts in implementing sustainable forest management and restoration as the forest sector's contribution to the mainstreaming of biodiversity.

highlighted the importance of involvement of local communities; addressing land tenure issues; establishing functional seed banks and enhancing knowledge on plant and tree genetic resources, as key for successful implementation of sustainable management and restoration of rangelands.

invited countries to enhance the work on dryland forests and agrosilvopastoral systems and to nominate experts to participate in the COFO Working Group on Dryland Forests and Agrosilvopastoral Systems.

encouraged countries to invest more in addressing land tenure, building capacities of communities and supporting community action towards sustainable and participatory management of rangelands.

recommended countries to implement assessment programmes to determine the extent of rangelands in Near East and North Africa countries, their contribution to GDP and value their goods and services including in food security and nutrition, carbon sequestration, annual feed balance, job and income creation, poverty reduction, recreation and ecotourism.

requested members to review and their guidelines, policies and strategies on sustainable management of forests and rangelands taking into consideration the SDGs.

highlighted the need for raising awareness of decision makers and citizens on the importance and contributions of forests and rangelands to the achievement of SDGs in the countries *and requested* members to increase the understanding of forest goods and services through communication strategies and tools, including using tree planting campaigns and major national and international events.

requested countries to encourage decision makers to prioritize investments in forestry and rangelands programmes and to use the academia and universities for the assessment of the socio-economic values of these resources.

encouraged countries to develop activities related to the youth and women entrepreneurship in bioeconomy as a means to address the challenges faced by forests in the context of global changes and to promote creating job opportunities.

highlighted interlinks between forest health questions and environmental degradation, demographic pressure, land tenure issues, urban development, forest fires, and land use and *invited* members to strengthen coordination efforts and collaboration between countries on the issue of transboundary invasive species.

encouraged countries to strengthen their participation in the Near East Network on Forest Health and Invasive Species (NENFHIS) and contribute to the activities of this network to strengthen regional collaboration on forest health and control of invasive species in the Region.

stressed the need to focus more on the economic contribution of Urban and Periurban Forestry (UPF) and to promote private sector investment, including in recreation and ecotourism.

called on members to raise the awareness of policy makers and urban planners for promoting the role of UPF as essential element of sustainable cities and in the implementation of SDG11.

invited countries to promote integrated urban planning as a strategic tool for maintaining an optimal balance between the green and the built environment and to boost investments in the development and sustainable management of UPF.

invited countries to explore the possibility of developing national forest funds taking, as an inspiring model, the experience of other members in this regard.

encouraged members to mobilize national resources for co-financing large-scale projects and ensure investments sustainability to meet GCF and GEF-7 funding requirements.

encouraged countries engagement in the proposed GEF-7 Impact Program to address the commitment under the Agadir Commitment and complement the countries' baseline efforts on the sustainable management of forests and rangelands.

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

FOR THE ATTENTION OF FAO

The Commission:

recommended that FAO support the organization of exchange visits to promote learning and knowledge sharing to benefit from the technical experience and the successful resource mobilization strategies of other countries.

recommended further engagement of FAO in providing technical assistance in accessing financial mechanisms and instruments and mobilizing the required financial resources for the development and implementation of forestry and rangelands related projects and initiatives, including within the context of Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN), desertification control and combating climate change effect in the Region.

requested FAO to identify, document and disseminate best practices regarding food security mainstreaming in forestry.

requested FAO to integrate rangelands data into the dedicated online web platform under development, and took note of the need to combine different assessment tools, including satellite imagery, field inventories and observations to cover both quantitative and qualitative assessment requirements and biodiversity.

praised FAO's past efforts in the training of countries' experts on forest assessment and monitoring tools and methods such as Collect Earth and the support provided in the preparation of the FRA reports and *requested* FAO to extend and intensify its technical and financial support through additional training workshops and capacity development programmes at country and regional levels on the use of these tools to help countries undertaking periodic and frequent assessment and inventories of forests and rangelands in support of their efforts for achieving sustainable forest and rangelands management.

supported FAO's efforts for developing a new strategy for Forest and Forestry and *requested* FAO to undertake broader consultations with all partners at all levels and to publicize the Strategy document to inform countries strategic planning for their forest sectors.

stressed the need for coordination among partners to develop the Strategy, and to work horizontally to integrate all forest-related sectors, including agriculture and rangelands, noting that FAO Technical Committees may represent a suitable forum to build consensus across sectors.

recommended COFO to consider, in collaboration with other FAO Technical Committees, addressing the opportunities for translating the outcomes of the international negotiations into concrete actions.

requested FAO to assist countries in strengthening their capacity to monitor forest-related SDG indicators and in strengthening the wider contributions of forests to the SDGs.

requested FAO to continue contributing to the Global Climate Action Agenda and to promote forest related initiatives, projects and programmes at COP23 and support countries in the development of forests and land use related proposals for the Green Climate Fund;

urged FAO to explore ways and means to help further enhance the forest sector's contribution to the mainstreaming of biodiversity;

called on FAO to support the task of United Nations Forum on Forestry (UNFF) including through analytical work, such as the State of the World's Forests and the Global Forest Resources Assessment.

requested FAO to facilitate experience sharing between countries and other dryland regions on successful practices and technologies for drylands forests and rangelands monitoring, their sustainable management and restoration using quality seeds of adapted native species and water harvesting techniques.

recommended that FAO undertake an analysis of resilience strategies and practices in drylands by focusing on sustainable management and restoration of forests and rangelands and their contribution to sustainable rural development in the Region.

requested FAO to support the development of seed banks for forest and rangelands native species adapted to climate change for the sustainable provision of suitable material for large-scale restoration of dryland forests and rangelands.

urged FAO to support countries in the development of a regional rangelands strategy and adoption of a harmonized definition for rangelands in the Region.

called on FAO to support members to review and update their national forest and rangelands policies/strategies and enhance capacities of national institutions and stakeholders in restoration, sustainable management and development of rangelands.

recommended FAO to continue supporting NENFHIS in implementing its activities.

requested FAO to support regional collaboration in UPF through development of regional networks and exchange of experiences.

The Commission *welcomed* FAO support to some countries in the Region in preparing and implementing forests and rangeland related projects under the GEF and the GCF and *requested* FAO to extend this support to other countries for the preparation of a project portfolio on sustainable management and restoration of forests, rangelands and agrosilvopastoral landscapes.

requested FAO to organize regional and national workshops to further develop the capacities of the members on preparation of GCF and GEF-7 projects and impact programmes.

requested FAO to support countries in the preparation of forest and rangelands communication strategies and enhance cross-sectoral dialogue to increase investments.

welcomed FAO's support to some countries in the Region in aligning their national forest and rangelands policies/strategies with the SDGs and *requested* FAO to extend this support to other countries.

INTRODUCTION AND OPENING OF THE SESSION

1. The Twenty-third Session of the Near East Forestry and Range Commission (NEFRC) was held in Beirut, Lebanon, from 11 to 14 December 2017, at the kind invitation of the Government of the Republic of Lebanon. The meeting attracted 40 participants for the opening session. The Commission session was attended by 19 representatives from 13 member countries and 1 representative from global intergovernmental organizations. *Annex A* provides a full list of NEFRC participants. The session was conducted in Arabic and English.
2. A technical session on forest health: “Implementation of phytosanitary standards in forestry” was held during week. The session highlighted the linkages between trade in forest products, international travel and climate change and the growing outbreak of forest invasive species (pests, pathogens and plant invasive species) and underscored the importance of regional collaboration, including through strengthening the work of the Near East Network on Forest Health and Invasive Species (NENFHIS). The session introduced an e-learning Training of Trainers (TOT) course on implementation of phytosanitary standards in forestry. The programme is given in *Annex B*.
3. In his opening remarks Mr Abdelkader Yettou, outgoing Chairman of the Commission, welcomed participants and thanked them for the trust they have given to him for chairing NEFRC 22. He also thanked Lebanon for hosting the 23rd Session.
4. During the opening session, Mr Chadi Mohanna, Director, Rural Development and Natural Resources Directorate, Ministry of Agriculture, Lebanon, made an overview presentation of the forest sector in Lebanon. He highlighted the country efforts to increase the total forest cover and to establish a National Forest Fund for the implementation of the National Afforestation and Reforestation Programme.
5. Mr Hiroto Mitsugi, Assistant Director-General of the FAO Forestry Department, expressed, on behalf of the Director-General, FAO’s gratitude to the Republic of Lebanon for hosting the session. He praised Lebanon for its efforts in forest development and thanked the Presidency for the ceremony held the day before on the occasion of the inauguration of the country’s 2017-2018 Tree Planting Campaign. He underlined the importance of forest and rangelands ecosystems in the provision of multiple goods and services and urged member countries to ensure nominating their experts to the COFO Working Group on Drylands Forests and Agrosilvopastoral Systems. Mr Mitsugi also recalled FAO’s work in promoting forest and landscape restoration in the drylands and noted FAO’s support to countries in achieving their Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) and developing their national adaptation plans.
6. His Excellency Mr Ghazi Zeaitar, Minister of Agriculture of the Republic of Lebanon opened the Twenty-third Session of the Commission. He expressed his Government’s pleasure to host the Session and voiced his country’s commitment to address the negative effects of climate change through its various ongoing afforestation programmes in collaboration with all sectors of the society (private sector, research and scientific institutions, etc.). He also indicated his country’s commitment to achieve the Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN). He called for stronger commitment from member countries and invited NEFRC members to strengthen their collaboration through exchange of experiences and expertise.

ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA (Item 1)

7. Under the guidance of Mr Abdelkader Yettou, the provisional agenda (FO:NEFRC/2017/1/Rev.1) was adopted (see *Annex C*). The documents considered by the Commission are listed in *Annex D*.

ELECTION OF OFFICERS (Item 2)

8. In accordance with the provisions of Rules II-1 and II-5 of its Rules of Procedure, the Commission elected the Chair, two Vice-Chairs and one Rapporteur. The composition of the Bureau is as follows:

Chairman: Mr Chadi Mohanna (Lebanon)
1st Vice-Chairperson: Mr Osman Omer Abdalla (Sudan)
2nd Vice-Chairperson: Ms Ozlem Yavuz (Turkey)
Rapporteur: Mr Mohammed Moqbel Taher Mareai (Yemen)

9. Mr Abdelhamied Adam Hamid, Senior Forestry Officer, FAO Regional Office for the Near East, Cairo, served as Secretary of the Commission.

FAO AND COUNTRY ACTIVITIES IN THE REGION AND FOLLOW-UP ON REQUESTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE 22ND SESSION OF THE COMMISSION (Item 3)

10. The Secretariat presented an overview of FAO and countries' forestry and rangelands activities in the Region. Outlining those activities that took place during 2016-2017 in response to the recommendations of the 22nd session of the NEFRC, the Secretariat noted the low number of country reports (8) submitted on measures taken to implement last session's recommendations. A summary of countries' reports is presented in Annex E.

11. The Commission noted countries' and FAO's ongoing initiatives, particularly in promoting restoration of dryland forests and agrosilvopastoral landscapes and in resource mobilization efforts through the increased projects portfolio.

12. Members commended their excellent collaboration with FAO, highlighting FAO's technical assistance for the ongoing initiatives and projects and the preparations for submission of project proposals to the Green Climate Fund.

13. Members also underscored the importance of identifying and understanding the root causes of deforestation and rangelands degradation as a key step to address them to achieve sustainable management and restoration of dryland forests and agrosilvopastoral systems.

14. Member countries highlighted their successful experiences in the use of treated waste water in afforestation and reforestation programmes. Some informed about their years of experience in mapping and assessing past and ongoing reclamation projects, green belts establishment and restoration programmes.

15. Furthermore, countries recommended that FAO support the organization of exchange visits to promote learning and knowledge sharing to benefit from the technical experience and the successful resource mobilization strategies of other countries.

16. The Commission recommended further engagement of FAO in providing technical assistance in accessing financial mechanisms and instruments and mobilizing the required financial resources for the development and implementation of forestry and rangelands related projects and initiatives, including under the context of LDN, desertification control and combating climate change effect in the region.

THE HIGH LEVEL PANEL OF EXPERTS ON FOOD SECURITY AND NUTRITION (HLPE) REPORT ON SUSTAINABLE FORESTRY FOR FOOD SECURITY AND NUTRITION (Item 4)

17. The Commission welcomed the HLPE Report, which highlighted the centrality of food security and nutrition to the core work of FAO and indicated that sustainable management of forests is essential for achieving Sustainable Development Goal 2. The Commission also underscored the importance of raising awareness on the role of forests for the four dimensions of food security and nutrition.

18. Countries highlighted the importance of considering both the direct and indirect contributions of forest to food security and nutrition, noting the importance of agroforestry and agrosilvopastoral systems in sustaining food production and the need to integrate forests into the agrosilvo-pastoral production systems. The role of non-wood forest products in food security and income and employment generation in the Region was also highlighted.

19. Countries also highlighted the issue of encroachment on rangelands, including for mining activities and tourism, and stressed on the need to rehabilitate the areas affected by mining activities and to achieve a balance between the different uses.

20. The Commission invited countries to consider the recommendations of the High Level Panel of Experts (HLPE) and the Committee on World Food Security (CFS) and to take appropriate actions.

21. The Commission requested FAO to identify, document and disseminate best practices regarding food security mainstreaming in forestry.

FRA 2020 AND EFFORTS FOR REDUCING REPORTING BURDEN BY STREAMLINING INTERNATIONAL FOREST REPORTING (Item 5)

22. The Commission took note of the process and status of implementation of the Global Forest Resource Assessment (FRA) 2020, in particular the dedicated online web platform under development. Members requested FAO to integrate rangelands data into the platform, and took note of the need to combine different assessment tools, including satellite imagery, field inventories and observations to cover both quantitative and qualitative assessment requirements and biodiversity.

23. The Commission praised FAO's past efforts in the training of countries' experts on forest assessment and monitoring tools and methods such as Collect Earth and the support provided in the preparation of the FRA reports. The Commission requested FAO to extend and intensify its technical and financial support through additional training workshops and capacity development programmes at country and regional levels on the use of these tools to help countries undertaking periodic and frequent assessment and inventories of forests and rangelands in support of their efforts for achieving sustainable forest and rangelands management.

24. The Commission requested countries to participate actively in the FRA 2020 reporting process, including in the review and validation of the remote sensing products.

A NEW STRATEGIC DOCUMENT FOR FORESTS AND FORESTRY (Item 6)

25. The document highlighted the outcome of the XIV World Forestry Congress, in particular the possible implementation of the 2050 Vision for Forests and Forestry and recalled FAO strategic objectives, FAO Common Vision for Sustainable Food and Agriculture and the FAO Strategy for Climate Change.

26. Countries supported FAO's efforts for developing a new strategy for Forest and Forestry and requested FAO to undertake broader consultations with all partners at all levels and to publicize the Strategy document to inform countries' strategic planning for their forest sectors.

27. Countries stressed the need for coordination among partners to develop the Strategy, and to work horizontally to integrate all forest-related sectors, including agriculture and rangelands, noting that FAO Technical Committees may represent a suitable forum to build consensus across sectors.

OUTCOME OF THE GLOBAL POLICY PROCESSES OF RELEVANCE FOR THE REGIONAL FORESTRY COMMISSIONS (Item 7)

28. The Commission took note of the forest-related outcomes of the global processes presented by the Secretariat and highlighted that the forest sector is subject to multiple international agendas and demands from other sectors that are unclear, contradictory and make it difficult to implement sustainable forest management.

29. The Commission requested countries to:

- contribute actively to the global processes, including to promote and monitor progress on the forest-related indicators and to report on progress during the High-Level Political Forum review of SDG 15 in 2018;
- consider the recommendations of the Forest Action Day to foster enabling environments for cooperation among multiple stakeholders; facilitate implementation of open access tools for monitoring forests and land use, such as Collect Earth; and recognize the NDCs as an opportunity to mainstream REDD+ into national planning processes;
- continue their efforts in implementing sustainable forest management and restoration as the forest sector's contribution to the mainstreaming of biodiversity.

30. The Commission recommended COFO to consider, in collaboration with other FAO Technical Committees, addressing the opportunities for translating the outcomes of the international negotiations into concrete actions.

31. The Commission requested FAO to:

- assist countries in strengthening their capacity to monitor forest-related SDG indicators and in strengthening the wider contributions of forests to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs);

- continue contributing to the Global Climate Action Agenda and to promote forest related initiatives, projects and programmes at COP23 and support as well countries in the development of forests and land use related proposals for the GCF;
- explore ways and means to help further enhance the forest sector's contribution to the mainstreaming of biodiversity;
- support the task of the United Nations Forum on Forestry (UNFF) including through analytical work, such as the State of the World's Forests and the Global Forest Resources Assessment.

ASSESSMENT, MANAGEMENT AND RESTORATION OF DRYLAND FORESTS AND AGROSILVOPASTORAL SYSTEMS (Item 8)

32. Members took note of FAO's Global Drylands Assessment and countries' experiences in developing rangelands strategies and highlighted the need for capacity development and south-south cooperation in this regard.

33. The Commission requested FAO to facilitate experience sharing between countries and other dryland regions on successful practices and technologies for drylands forests and rangelands monitoring, their sustainable management and restoration using quality seeds of adapted native species and water harvesting techniques.

34. Members also highlighted the importance of involvement of local communities; addressing land tenure issues; establishing functional seed banks and enhancing knowledge on plant and tree genetic resources, as key for successful implementation of sustainable management and restoration of rangelands.

35. The Commission invited countries to enhance the work on dryland forests and agrosilvopastoral systems and to nominate experts to participate in the COFO Working Group on Dryland Forests and Agrosilvopastoral Systems.

36. The Commission recommended FAO to undertake an analysis of resilience strategies and practices in drylands by focusing on sustainable management and restoration of forests and rangelands and their contribution to sustainable rural development in the Region.

37. The Commission requested FAO to support the development of seed banks for forest and rangelands native species adapted to climate change for the sustainable provision of suitable material for large-scale restoration of dryland forests and rangelands.

RANGELANDS MANAGEMENT IN THE NEAR EAST AND NORTH AFRICA (NENA) REGION (Item 9)

38. The Secretariat highlighted the importance of rangelands in the NENA Region, as source of animal feed and livelihoods of millions of people. The Secretariat emphasized the knowledge gap on pastoral systems, the multiplicity of concerned actors and institutions, lack of inter-sectoral coordination and lack of investments.

39. The Commission urged FAO to support countries in the development of a regional rangelands strategy and adoption of a harmonized definition for rangelands in the Region and encouraged countries to invest more on addressing land tenure, building capacities of

communities and supporting community actions towards sustainable and participatory management of rangelands.

40. The Commission recommended countries to implement assessment programmes to determine the extent of rangelands in NENA countries, their contribution to Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and value their goods and services including in food security and nutrition, carbon sequestration, annual feed balance, job and income creation, poverty reduction, recreation and ecotourism.

41. The Commission requested FAO to support members to review and update their national forest and rangelands policies/strategies and enhance capacities of national institutions and stakeholders in restoration, sustainable management and development of rangelands.

FOREST HEALTH IN THE NENA REGION (Item 10)

42. Countries took note of the climate-driven issues on invasive species, forest dieback and decline, with further aggravation from human activities. Countries highlighted interlinks between forest health questions and environmental degradation, demographic pressure, land tenure issues, urban development, forest fires, and land use.

43. The Commission invited members to strengthen coordination efforts and collaboration between countries on the issue of transboundary invasive species.

44. The Commission encouraged countries to strengthen their participation in the Near East Network on Forest Health and Invasive Species (NENFHIS) and contribute to the activities of this network to strengthen regional collaboration on forest health and control of invasive species in the Region.

45. The Commission requested FAO to continue supporting NENFHIS in implementing its activities.

URBAN AND PERIURBAN FORESTRY (Item 11)

46. Countries took note of the challenges associated with the growing urbanization in the Region, and the potential of Urban and Periurban Forestry (UPF) to address these challenges and provide a wide range of goods and services.

47. Countries stressed the need to focus more on the economic contribution of Urban and Periurban Forestry and to promote private sector investment, including in recreation and ecotourism.

48. The Commission called on members to raise the awareness of policy makers and urban planners for promoting the role of UPF as essential element of sustainable cities and in the implementation of SDG11, and requested FAO to support regional collaboration in UPF through the development of regional networks and exchange of experiences.

49. The Commission invited countries to promote integrated urban planning as a strategic tool for maintaining an optimal balance between the green and the built environment and to boost investments in the development and sustainable management of UPF.

ACCESSING CLIMATE CHANGE FUNDS AND THE ROLE OF FAO (Item 12)

50. The Commission took note of the important opportunities offered by the Green Climate Fund (GCF) and the GEF-7 replenishments to scale up climate finance and support countries in the Region to reach their commitments in the NDCs, particularly in the Forest and Rangelands sectors.

51. The Commission welcomed FAO's support to some countries in the Region in preparing and implementing forests and rangeland related projects under the Global Environment Fund (GEF) and the Green Climate Fund and requested FAO to extend this support to other countries for the preparation of a project portfolio on sustainable management and restoration of forests, rangelands and agrosilvopastoral landscapes.

52. The Commission also requested FAO to organize regional and national workshops to further develop the capacities of the members in preparation of GCF and GEF-7 projects and impact programmes.

53. The Commission encouraged members to mobilize national resources for co-financing large-scale projects and ensure investments sustainability to meet GCF and GEF-7 funding requirements.

54. The Commission invited countries to explore the possibility of developing national forest funds taking, as an inspiring model, the experience of other members in this regard.

IMPLEMENTING THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS, INCLUDING THROUGH NATIONAL FOREST PROGRAMMES AND POLICIES (Item 13)

55. The Commission requested members to review and update their guidelines, policies and strategies on sustainable management of forests and rangelands taking into consideration the SDGs.

56. The Commission highlighted the need for raising awareness of decision makers and citizens on the importance and contributions of forests and rangelands to the achievement of SDGs in the countries.

57. The Commission requested members to increase the understanding of forest goods and services through communication strategies and tools, including using tree planting campaigns and major national and international events; encourage decision makers to prioritize investments in forestry and rangelands programmes; and to use the academia and universities for the assessment of the socio-economic values of these resources.

58. The Commission requested FAO to support countries in the preparation of forest and rangelands communication strategies and enhance cross-sectoral dialogue to increase investments.

59. The Commission welcomed FAO's support to some countries in the Region in aligning their national forest and rangelands policies/strategies with the SDGs and requested FAO to extend this support to other countries.

SILVA MEDITERRANEA (Item 14)

60. Countries took note of the activities of the five working groups of Silva Mediterranea (forest fire, forest genetic resources, non-wood forest products, urban and peri-urban forestry, desertification and restoration) and of its taskforce on forest management and sustainable development.

61. Countries took also note of the Fifth Mediterranean Forest Week held in March 2017 in Agadir, Morocco and its focus on the topic of restoration of Mediterranean forests and landscapes and the adoption of Agadir Commitment as the main outcome of the Week.

62. The Commission encouraged countries to develop activities related to the youth and women entrepreneurship in bioeconomy as a means to address the challenges faced by forests in the context of global changes and to promote the creation of job opportunities.

63. The Commission encouraged countries to develop projects/programmes on forest and landscape restoration and to request FAO's support in this regard.

INPUT TO FAO GOVERNANCE (Item 15)

64. The Secretariat presented a template for providing coordinated input to the agenda of the FAO Committee on Forestry, the FAO Regional Conference and for the FAO Programme of Work in Forestry and recalled the recommendations made by the Commission in the course of its deliberations.

65. The Chairman of the Commission presented the proposal of the Executive Committee for the recommendations for the agendas of the FAO Regional Conference for the Near East and the FAO Committee on Forestry.

66. The Commission made recommendations for the agenda of the FAO Committee on Forestry as contained in *Annex F*.

67. The Commission also considered recommendations to the FAO Regional Conference for the Near East as contained in *Annex G*.

68. Regarding the Commission's recommendations for the FAO programme priorities in Forestry, the Commission requested the Secretariat to compile the recommendations made by the Commission during the session, establish linkages between these recommendations and the Strategic Objectives of FAO, and attach the compilation to this report as in *Annex H*.

ANY OTHER BUSINESS (Item 16)

69. The Commission took note of the proposed GEF-7 Impact Program on landscape restoration with its focus on sustainable forest management as a crosscutting topic in addressing three GEF focal areas; biodiversity, climate change and land degradation which are of particular relevance for the Mediterranean forests and rangelands. Countries also took note on the possibility to raise additional funds on top of their national projects allocation, using global set aside funds.

70. The Commission encouraged countries engagement in the proposed GEF-7 Impact Program to address their commitment under the Agadir Commitment and complement the countries' baseline efforts on the sustainable management of forests and rangelands.

DATE AND PLACE OF THE NEXT SESSION (Item 17)

71. The Commission welcomed the generous offers of the Government of the Republic of the Sudan and the Government of the Islamic Republic of Iran to host the 24th Session of the Near East Forestry and Range Commission. The Commission requested the NEFRC Secretariat to consider these proposals when deciding on the date and venue of the next session, in consultation with member Governments in the Region.

ADOPTION OF THE REPORT OF THE 23rd SESSION (Item 18)

72. The Committee adopted the report as amended.

CLOSURE OF THE SESSION

73. Mr Maurice Saade, FAO Representative in Lebanon thanked the host country and its Ministry for Agriculture for the excellent host arrangements, as well as the Chairman for setting the favourable conditions to convene the sessions. He expressed his appreciation to the country and organizations representatives, who held valuable discussions around the themes of the session and produced challenging set of recommendations. He highlighted the need for countries within the Region to collaborate and share expertise and resources and to strengthen cross-sectoral collaboration and partnership for achieving the SDGs, the NDCs and the other global commitments.

74. Mr Chadi Mohanna, in his capacity as representative of Lebanon, also thanked the national organizing team, the participants and the FAO Secretariat for the good collaboration in organizing the Session.

75. The Chairman closed the session at 14.50 hours.

ANNEX A

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ANNEX B**TECHNICAL SESSION PROGRAMME****on**

**Strengthen country capacity to reduce pest presence and to prevent pest spread
through train the trainers workshop on implementation of the
*Guide to implementation of phytosanitary standards in forestry***

Wednesday 13 December		
Time	Topic	Facilitator/presenter
9:00 – 11:00	Visit Shouf biosphere reserve and a Municipal pine forest – open discussion on major pests on Lebanese pines; history, extent, causes and control measures.	Mr Mohamed Ben Jamaa, Secretary Near East Network on Forest Health and Invasive Species (NENFHIS)
Thursday 14 December		
9:00 – 9:05	Opening remarks	Mr AbdelHamied A Hamid, Senior Forestry Officer, RNE
9:05 – 9:30	Strengthening NENFHIS work	Mr Mohamed Ben Jamaa, Secretary NENFHIS
9:30 – 10:30	Good practices for forest health protection	Ms Shiroma Sathyapala, Forest Health and Protection Officer, Forestry Department, Rome
10:30 – 11:00	Coffee Break	
11:00 – 12:00	Trade in forest commodities and the role of phytosanitary measures	Ms Shiroma Sathyapala
12:30 – 14:00	Lunch	

PROVISIONAL AGENDA

1. Opening and Adoption of the Agenda
2. Election of Officers
3. FAO and Country Activities in the Region and Follow-up on Requests and Recommendations of the 22nd Session of the NEFRC
4. The High-Level Panel of Expert on Food Security and Nutrition Report on Sustainable Forestry for Food Security and Nutrition
5. Forest Resources Assessment 2020 and Efforts for Reducing Reporting Burden by Streamlining International Forest-related Reporting
6. A New Strategic Document for Forests and Forestry
7. Outcome of the Global Policy Processes of Relevance for the Regional Forestry Commissions
8. Assessment, Management and Restoration of Dryland Forests and Agrosilvopastoral Systems
9. Rangelands Management in the Near East and North Africa (NENA) Region
10. Forest Health in the NENA region
11. Urban & Periurban Forestry
12. Accessing Climate Change Funds
13. Implementing the SDGs Including through National Forestry Programmes
14. *Silva Mediterranea*
15. Input to FAO Governance
16. Any Other Business
17. Date and Place of Next Session
18. Adoption of the Report and Closure of the Session

ANNEX D**LIST OF DOCUMENTS**

FO:NEFRC/2017/1	Provisional Agenda
FO:NEFRC/2017/2	FAO and Country Activities in the Region and Follow-up on Requests and Recommendations of the 22 nd Session of the NEFRC
FO:NEFRC/2017/3	The High Level Panel of Experts on Food Security and Nutrition Report on Sustainable Forestry for Food Security and Nutrition
FO:NEFRC/2017/4	FRA 2020 and Efforts for Reducing Reporting Burden by Streamlining International Forest Reporting
FO:NEFRC/2017/5	A New Strategic Document for Forests and Forestry
FO:NEFRC/2017/6	Input to FAO Governance
FO:NEFRC/2017/7	Outcome of the Global Policy Processes of Relevance for the Regional Forestry Commissions
FO:NEFRC/2017/8	Rangelands Management in the NENA Region
FO:NEFRC/2017/9	Forest Health in the Near East and North Africa Region
FO:NEFRC/2017/10	Urban & Periurban Forestry
FO:NEFRC/2017/11	<i>Silva Mediterranea</i> Progress Report
FO:NEFRC/2017/12	Accessing Climate Change Funds and the Role of FAO
FO:NEFRC/2017/13	Assessment, Management and Restoration of Dryland Forests and Agrosilvopastoral Systems
FO:NEFRC/2017/14	Implementing the Sustainable Development Goals, including through National Forest Programmes and Policies
FO:NEFRC/2017/Inf.1	Information Note for Participants
FO:NEFRC/2017/Inf.2	Provisional Timetable
FO:NEFRC/2017/Inf.3	List of Documents

ANNEX E

NEFRC 22 recommendations and countries' achievements

Recommendations made by the Near East Forestry and Range Commission, Session 22	Activities linked to the recommendations	Other activities ¹
<p>1. The Commission <i>Suggested</i> that countries formulate projects and programmes with a greater focus on climate change issues and with particular emphasis on adaptation due to its high relevance for forests and rangelands in the NENA region and to access multilateral funding.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • With the assistance of FAO, Lebanon has two ongoing projects focusing on climate change adaptation; the FLRM phase two and the SALMA project. • The National Forest Seed Center of Lebanon, which under establishment with FAO support, will focus of the provision of native tree, shrubs and rangeland plant seeds to be used in new reforestation and rangeland enrichment project • Qatar has number of projects addressing climate change, including though the rehabilitation of Mangroves forests on Qatar coastal areas, conservation and rehabilitation of endangered native plant species & Rehabilitation of “Raud الروض” using indigenous species. • Egypt is putting great efforts in establishment of shelterbelts, windbreaks and promotion of agroforestry to enhance adaptation of agriculture to climate change. • Libya is implementing a nation-wide rangelands development project for the rangelands rehabilitation. The project focuses on climate adaptation by planting native drought tolerant range plant species. 	<p>Additional project was also formulated with support from French Development Agency (AFD) with large scale reforestation components focusing on social and climate related issues .</p>

¹ Any other activities led by the country of relevance to the subject recommendation

<p>2. The Commission <i>agreed</i> to consider the proposed C&I for sustainable management of forest and rangelands as an umbrella framework and <i>requested</i> countries to undertake national consultations, given each country context, and <i>recommended</i> each country to identify those indicators that are already used at the national level, indicate potential indicators that could be applied as well as report on the results of testing their application in country selected pilot sites</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lebanon organized a national workshop on adopting the framework C&Is for sustainable forest and range management to the country context. The workshop was held as part of the Technical days of the Forest and Landscape Restoration Mechanism Project. 	
<p>3. The Commission <i>encouraged</i> countries to update their forest and rangelands policies and strategies, integrate them with other sectors, and demonstrate the economic and social contribution of forests and rangelands to national development and <i>further recommended</i> countries to strengthen the linkages of their policies and strategies with climate change and other emerging concerns², in order to better communicate and attract interest of decision makers, investors, and multilateral funds</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lebanon has recently developed its National Forest Program 2015-2025 and is updating the law relevant to Forests and Rangelands. Lebanon has also enacted a National Reforestation and Afforestation Programme (NARP) that aims at increasing the country forest cover from 13% of its total area (currently) to 20% over a period of 20 years Jordan had developed a rangelands strategy that support the revitalization of traditional rangelands management systems “Hima”. Jordan is also developing, with support from FAO, a national forest policy and undertaking as well a forest legislation revision. Egypt is planning to prepare a new forest law. 	<p>Number of countries are engaged in LDN targets setting which brings rangelands and forestry development related issues to the forefront at country national agenda.</p>
<p>4. <i>Recommended</i> that member countries undertake measures for strengthening their national development efforts, including through the inclusive participation of local communities and reforms of policy and legal frameworks to create favourable conditions for private financing in the forest sector for small and large scale forest enterprises</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lebanon is developing a National Forest Fund through establishment of crowd funding platform to mobilize funds from private sector, Lebanese Diasporas and international donor for afforestation/ reforestation projects. 	
<p>5. Recommended countries to share experiences and improve communication on forests, gender and youth</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Jordan has established a specialized academy for training on the protection of nature and 	

² Reference could be made to forestry in the country NDCs for UFCCC and/or in the national LDN goals for UNCCD

<p>initiatives to improve the understanding of these themes in the field of forests and rangelands and <u>suggested</u> the sensitization of local communities via forest extension and the creation of e-learning materials to improve forest education</p>	<p>sustainable development under the auspicious of HRH Crown Prince Hussein; “<i>Royal Academy for Nature Conservation</i>” which has a special visual and e-training/online awareness and training curriculum.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Through the EU funded “Agriculture and Rural Development Programme Project”, the approach of a global managed reforestation projects at local level showed good experience and message on reforestation and gender 	
<p>6. The commission <u>suggested</u> that countries engage youth in country-level initiatives including on forest monitoring, inventories and the collection of data, and to create incentives for youth to participate in diversified forestry education programmes.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lebanon, Libya and Jordan reported involvement of youth and schools in their reforestation projects annual tree planting programmes 	

ANNEX F

NEFRC recommendations for the attention of COFO

<i>Priority issues for COFO to consider</i>	<i>Expected outcome (information/discussion/decision)</i>	<i>Possible follow up activities for COFO and FAO</i>	<i>RFC</i>
Mainstreaming biodiversity	Discussion/decision		NEFRC, NAFC, EFC, APFC
Forests for food security Including agroforestry, agrosilvopastoral, NWFPS	Discussion/decision		NAFC, EFC, APFC, NEFRC
Urban and Periurban Forestry (special attention to the role of youth and women as well as to coordination between those in charge of urban planning and UPF)	Discussion/decision		NEFRC, NAFC, EFC
Identify, document and disseminate best practices regarding food security mainstreaming in forestry	Discussion/decision		NEFRC, NAFC, EFC, APFC
Contribute to the Global Climate Action Agenda and promote forest related initiatives at COP23	Discussion/decision		NEFRC
Addressing, in collaboration with other FAO Technical Committees, the opportunities for translating the outcomes of the international negotiations into concrete actions	Discussion/decision		NEFRC
Supporting the work of UNFF including through analytical work, such as the State of the World's Forests and the Global Forest Resources Assessment	Discussion/decision		NEFRC
Capacity enhancement for reviewing/updating forest and rangelands policies/strategies and for restoration & sustainable management of forest and rangelands	Discussion/decision		NEFRC
Analysis of resilience strategies and practices in drylands by focusing on sustainable management and restoration of forests and rangelands and their contribution to sustainable rural development	Discussion/decision		NEFRC
FRA and related capacity building/ Global set of C&I	Discussion/decision		NEFRC, NAFC, EFC, APFC
Capacity building for accessing CC funds (GEF7, GCF, REDD+ and related investment planning	Discussion/decision		NEFRC, APFC
Integrating rangelands data into FRA planning and implementation	Discussion/decision		NEFRC
Forest and landscape restoration (Agadir Commitment)	Discussion/decision		NEFRC, APFC
Fire management	Discussion/decision		NEFRC (NAFC)

*ANNEX G***NEFRC Recommendation for the attention of the Regional Conference for the Near East**

<u>Priority issues</u>	Expected outcomes (information, discussion, decision)	Possible follow up activities by FAO
<u>highlight</u> that the forest sector is subject to multiple international agendas and demands from other sectors that are unclear, contradictory and make it difficult to implement sustainable forest management	Information/discussion	
Consider the development of a regional rangelands strategy and a harmonized definition for rangelands in the Region and encourage investment on addressing land tenure issues and supporting community action towards sustainable and participatory management of rangelands	Discussion/decision	
Enhance the work on dryland forests and agrosilvopastoral systems and encourage nomination of national experts to participate in the COFO Working Group on Dryland forests and agrosilvopastoral systems	Discussion/decision	
Strengthen coordination efforts and collaboration on forest health and control of transboundary invasive species	Discussion/decision	
Promote integrated urban planning that maintain optimal balance between the green and the built environment and encourage investments in the development and sustainable management of Urban and Periurban Forestry	Discussion/decision	

*Annex H***Recommendations for the FAO programme priorities in Forestry**

Area/action for FAO programme of work	Priority (High, Medium, low, De-emphasis)	Type (new, continued)	Level of action (sub-regional, regional, global)	Strategic Objectives (1-5)
Support the organization of exchange visits to promote learning and knowledge sharing to benefit from the technical experience and the successful resource mobilization strategies of other countries		New	Regional	SO2
Identify, document and disseminate best practices regarding food security mainstreaming in forestry		New	global	SO1
Capacity development on assessment tools and strengthen their usability to support sustainable forest and rangelands management		New	Regional	SO2
Strengthen countries' capacities to monitor forest-related SDG indicators and in strengthening the wider contributions of forests to the SDGs	High	New	Global	SO2
Facilitate experience sharing between countries across dryland regions on successful practices and technologies for drylands forests and rangelands monitoring, their sustainable management and restoration using quality seed of adapted native species and water harvesting techniques	high	New	Global	SO2
Support the development of seed banks for adapted forest and rangelands native species for sustainable provision of adapted material for large-scale restoration of dryland forests and rangelands	High	New	Regional	SO2
Continue supporting the Near East Network on Forest Health and Invasive Species in the implementation of its activities	High	New	Regional	SO5
Support countries in the preparation of communication activities and enhance cross-sectoral dialogue to increase investments	Medium	New	Regional	SO2
Capacity support in aligning national forest and rangelands policies with the SDGs	High	Continued	Regional	SO2
Develop countries Capacitates in preparation of GCF and GEF-7 projects and impact programmes	High	New	Regional	SO2

Provide technical support in accessing the required financial resources and mechanisms to support implementation of the developed reforestation and restoration plans.	Medium	New	regional	
Technical assistance for the development and implementation of forestry and rangelands related projects and initiatives, including in the context of the increasing land degradation, desertification and climate change in the Region	High	Continued	Regional	SO2

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