Introduction

A significant part of the Mediterranean region is considered as drylands and a large part of the Mediterranean area is affected by desertification. These areas are under increasing pressure caused by demographic and economic drivers, and are prone to desertification, land degradation and drought. Moreover, these effects will be exacerbated by climate change. According to the State of Mediterranean Forests (FAO, 2013), it is expected that climate change will strongly affect the region, through increased mean temperatures and extreme weather events including heat waves, resulting in increased drought and forest fires. If no action is taken, land degradation will cause major losses of the goods and services provided by these landscapes, with severe consequences on the environment, biodiversity and the economy, and in particular for rural livelihoods.

Although Mediterranean forests have low productivity in terms of wood production, they provide a wide range of ecosystem goods and services; they are in fact of great economic, social, and ecological significance, provide resilience and are an essential provider of the productive functions (of wood and non-wood forest products such as cork, nuts, medicinal plants, fodder) and protective functions (such as protection against soil and water erosion) of dryland ecosystems.

Forest and Landscape Restoration (FLR) is being increasingly recognized for its potential to reverse land degradation processes. Countries have started to engage in global commitments to restore degraded lands, such as with the Bonn Challenge, a global aspiration to restore 150 million hectares by 2020. Efforts are also being made at the regional level, such as the through the Initiative 20x20, aiming to bring 20 million hectares of degraded land in Latin America and the Caribbean into restoration by 2020.
During its twenty-first session in February 2012 in Antalya, Turkey, the Committee on Mediterranean Forestry Questions Silva Mediterranea adopted a decision to create a working group on “Desertification and Restoration of Forest Ecosystems in Arid Zones” (WG8). It was agreed that this new working group was to be led as a start by Turkey. It was also agreed that technical support was to be provided by FAO, recognizing FAO’s Forestry Department expertise on dryland forestry and Forest and Landscape Restoration matters and other led initiatives.

The need to address degradation in the Mediterranean region has also been prioritized during the III Mediterranean Forest Week (III MFW) in March 2013, through the policy orientations that were conceptualized under the Strategic Framework for Mediterranean Forests (SFMF). Strategic line 6 explicitly calls to “Restore degraded Mediterranean forest landscapes” through a series of ten recommendations. Restoration is promoted as a way to enhance resilience, food security and livelihoods, regain environmental and cultural services, while managing, monitoring and evaluating restored forest ecosystems.

The policy orientations of the SFMF were endorsed in the Tlemcen Declaration and adopted during the high-level segment of the MFW; the Declaration calls for an effective implementation of the SFMF. It also explicitly reflects a strong political support to the “promotion of resilience in forest ecosystems (…)” including by “restoring degraded Mediterranean forest landscapes”.

The establishment of a new working group would be a way to contribute in addressing the issues of desertification and restoration in the Mediterranean region, including by:

- Supporting the implementation of Strategic Line 6 “Restore degraded Mediterranean forests landscapes” of the SFMF in Mediterranean countries;
- Promoting and supporting the implementation of FAO’s “Global guidelines for the restoration of degraded forests and landscapes in drylands – Building resilience and sustainable livelihoods” at the Mediterranean level;
- Promoting and sharing best practices and lessons learned at the regional level through projects, programs and other initiatives on restoration of forest and landscapes in drylands with, in particular, the support of the new Forest and Landscape Restoration Mechanism (FLRM) launched by FAO at the occasion of COFO in June 2014;
- Supporting and contributing to the future editions of the State of Mediterranean Forests with regard to issues related to degradation/restoration affecting the Mediterranean region (e.g. degradation of Mediterranean dryland forests, post-fire restoration, …)

It is to be noted that the new working group -or thematic group- should be consistent with the results of the evaluation of the Silva Mediterranea working groups that was carried out in 2013; the latter recommends that “the Committee should have a shared vision and strategy based on the identification of priority thematic areas from the Strategic Framework for Mediterranean Forests” and that focus should be made on the “areas for which the FAO Forestry Department has experts” including the combating desertification and restoration of degraded lands and. The evaluation also calls for a gradual transition of the working groups into a lighter and more flexible system of task forces and thematic working groups.

For each priority issue identified by the Committee, “thematic working groups should monitor, follow-up and provide an interface with future or on-going initiatives, projects and programs on the Mediterranean forest scene, including with FAO’s agenda”. The evaluation panel recommended that these thematic groups should “lead and facilitate the network of national focal points during the intersession of the committee and intervene in thematic debates during formal sessions”.

Rationale for a workshop on Desertification and Restoration of Mediterranean drylands
## Outline of the workshop

The workshop will be organized and hosted by the Government of Turkey, with the technical support from FAO. Its main objectives are:

- To provide a focus on desertification issues and restoration opportunities in the Mediterranean region
- To launch a new *Silva Mediterranea* thematic group on “Desertification and Restoration in Mediterranean drylands”, by defining its terms of reference and agenda

### Venue
UNCCD COP, Ankara, 16th October 2015 (Turkish Pavilion)

### Organizers
Minister of Forestry and Water Affairs, Turkey, with technical support from the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)

### Objectives
The objectives of the workshop will be the following:

- To establish the new *Silva Mediterranea* working group:
  - To define the terms of reference, objectives and priority thematic issues to be covered by the thematic group
  - To define the group's organizational structure with a clear definition of respective roles and tasks (leader, focal points, membership, working and communication modalities, etc.)
- To identify and discuss opportunities for collaborative efforts for FLR at the regional level and mainly:
  - To discuss the feasibility of a strong Mediterranean Commitment on FLR in the context of the Bonn Challenge (Initiative 20 by 30 – 20 million hectare by 2030?)
  - Discuss opportunities for having the V Mediterranean Forest Week to be held in Morocco in 2017 focused on FLR with, at the end, the launch of the Mediterranean initiative 20 by 30 on FLR

### Languages
English, French

### Expected audience
Stakeholders willing to take part in the group’s activities include the following:

- FAO, *Silva Mediterranea* secretariat, CPMF and FLRM
- UNCCD focal points
- *Silva Mediterranea* Country focal points + members of national institutions active in restoration and combating desertification
- International/regional institutions including IUCN, ICARDA, EFIMED, CTFC, CIHEAM, WWF, TIKA, Bioversity, GM-UNCCD
- International experts
- CSO’s

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