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NEAR EAST FORESTRY AND RANGE COMMISSION

TWENTY-SECOND SESSION

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REVIEW OF NEAR EAST FORESTRY AND RANGE COMMISSION AND OTHER FAO FORESTRY ACTIVITIES, INCLUDING FOLLOW-UP TO THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF NEFRC 21

Executive Summary

- This note has been prepared to inform the Near East Forestry and Range Commission (NEFRC) about FAO forestry activities of interest to the region carried out during 2014-2015. The activities undertaken by countries in response to the requests and recommendations of the 21st Session of the Commission are summarized in annex 1.
- Countries that submitted reports to the Secretariat are: Algeria, Cyprus, Jordan, Pakistan, Sudan, Turkey and Yemen.

I. FOREST POLICY AND RESOURCES DEVELOPMENT

The following are policy-related actions undertaken as a result of the Committee on Forestry (COFO) and NEFRC recommendations and other requests from the Near East and North Africa (NENA) countries:

1. The recommendation of the NEFRC and other Regional Forestry Commissions for stand-alone Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) on forestry was discussed during the 22nd Session COFO. COFO encouraged countries to strengthen their efforts in recognizing the potential contributions of forests to the SDGs and recommended that countries coordinate and collaborate at national, regional and international level to ensure adequate consideration and visibility of forests in the SDGs and the post-2015 Development Agenda. Information on the post-SDG Process is presented in agenda item 5 (document: FO:NEFRC/2015/7).

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2. In pursuance of NEFRC 21 recommendations, FAO conducted a regional review of forest and rangelands policies/strategies to identify strengths, weaknesses and gaps and to explore the extent to which national forest and rangelands policies/strategies are linked to national agendas and support sustainable development. The outcome of the study is reported as separate agenda item 7 (document: FO:NEFRC/2015/11).
3. An expert consultation meeting was organized in Cairo on 7-9 June 2015 for the development of Criteria and Indicators (C&Is) for Sustainable Management of Forests and Rangelands (SFRM) and of a work plan for their adoption and uses in the Near East and North Africa. The meeting was organized within the framework of FAO's Global C&I Project and in collaboration with the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Regional Office for West Asia. The proposed set of the sustainability indicators and the road map for their adoption and uses are reported separately under NEFRC agenda item 6 (document: FO:NEFRC/2015/3).
4. Following the recommendations of NEFRC 20 and 21, a regional assessment of the status of forestry education and knowledge in the NENA region was conducted. The study report was validated in a regional workshop organized in Algiers on 23-24 February 2015. The workshop participants also reviewed and endorsed a draft concept note for a project proposal on strengthening forestry education and knowledge in the region. Depending on the availability of a funding source, the concept note will be developed into a full project document. Further information will be provided on education under agenda item 10 (document: FO:NEFRC/2015/8).
5. On 22 and 23 October 2014, a sub-regional workshop on forest management and planning in the Maghreb countries was organized by FAO's sub-regional office for Northern Africa and the Moroccan Haut Commissariat for Water, Forest and the Fight against Desertification. Participants reviewed the methodologies currently used for forest management planning in the Maghreb and agreed on: (i) improving knowledge about the state of the forests and the impact of global change and management practices; (ii) integrating non-wood forest products; (iii) developing their value chains in the management plans and (iv) strengthening the forest management plans by taking more multi-sectorial and participative decision making approaches. Participants also recommended developing a sub-regional project to define common methodologies and increase the collaboration between the different forestry-related stakeholders.
6. FAO continued its support to NENA countries in analyzing forest and rangelands governance systems and developing appropriate policy frameworks that would provide an enabling environment for the development of the forest and rangelands sector. In this regard, FAO supported the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in developing a national rangelands strategy that guides the country's efforts of addressing rangelands degradation and establishing sustainable rangelands management systems.
7. FAO also responded to the requests of Governments of Oman and Jordan by developing a Unilateral Trust Fund (UTF) project proposal aimed at the development of an integrated rangelands and forest policy for Oman and approving a Technical Cooperation Programme (TCP) project for the development of a national forest policy and a multi-year programme of work for Jordan.
8. FAO supported Lebanon in assessing the extent of pine conelet losses in the country and in developing sustainable forest management systems for the stone pine forests. *Guidelines for sustainable management of stone pine forests in Lebanon* were developed and validated in a national workshop. National and subnational training workshops on the use of the guidelines were organized in November 2015 for forestry and extension staff of the Ministry of Agriculture and representatives of pine nut producers in the country. A TCP project proposal is under development to support the follow-up actions.
9. Responding to member countries' request to conduct a comprehensive analysis, evaluation and documentation of afforestation, reforestation and restoration projects, programmes and initiatives in drylands, FAO, in collaboration with the Turkish Government, supported the development of "*Global*

Guidelines for Restoration of Degraded Forests and Landscapes in Drylands: building resilience and benefiting livelihoods". The guidelines were published as FAO Forestry Paper 175 and launched in October 2015 at the UNCCD COP in Ankara, Turkey.

10. The 19th Session of COFO supported the request of the Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture to FAO for the preparation of *The State of the World's Forest Genetic Resources*. The report was produced and published in hard copy and online (SoW-FGR. <http://www.fao.org/3/a-i3825e.pdf>) and was launched on 3 June 2014.

11. A Global Plan of Action for the Conservation, Sustainable Use and Development of Forest Genetic Resources (GPA-FGR) was produced and adopted by the FAO Conference in June 2013. As a follow-up to the GPA-FGR, FAO encouraged its Members to develop national plans of action for the conservation, sustainable use and development of FGR. A synthesis report on the implementation of the GPA-FGR is presented in annex 2.

12. In response to COFO recommendations, a comprehensive technical package of knowledge tools, good practices, and examples of their application to facilitate the implementation of SFM under varied contexts was developed under the name of "*Sustainable Forest Management (SFM) Toolbox*". Details of the Toolbox and its target audience are provided in annex 3.

13. Within the framework of its collaboration with the African Union for the implementation of the Great Green Wall for the Sahel and Sahar initiative (GGWSSI), FAO provided support to Algeria, Egypt, Mauritania and Sudan for the development of their national strategies and action plans for the implementation of the Initiative. Subject to availability of funds and support from donors, FAO will support countries in the preparation of project proposals for the implementation of GGWSSI action plans (it is worth noting that both Mauritania and Sudan has secured GEF funding in support of two projects to be implemented under the frame of the GGWI).

14. In close collaboration with its key partners in the context of the Global Partnership for Forest and Landscape Restoration, FAO launched the Forest and Landscape Restoration Mechanism (FLRM) at the 22nd Session of COFO in 2014. The aim of FLRM is to help countries achieve their commitments towards the Bonn Challenge, the Aichi Targets, the UNCCD targets and other related goals. The FLR Mechanism is presented as separate NEFRC agenda item 8 (document: FO:NEFRC/2015/9.) The FLR Mechanism was first introduced to participants from the region in a CBD Aichi Target regional workshop held in Amman, Jordan in February 2014, back to back with NEFRC 21. So far, three NENA countries (Lebanon, Jordan and Sudan) have submitted requests for FLR Mechanism support. Lebanon request was considered for full support in 2015 - 2016, while Jordan and Sudan were selected in Category 2. They will receive limited support for organizing a national workshop in order to improve their requests and to identify additional financial partners.

15. Following the recommendation of the NEFRC 21st session, COFO recommended, at its 22nd Session in June 2014, that FAO undertake a global assessment of the extent and status of drylands forests, rangelands and agrosilvopastoral systems. As a follow-up to this recommendation, FAO with other partners organized, in Rome in January 2015, the first drylands monitoring week. The objectives and the outcomes of the week are presented as separate agenda item 11 (document: FO:NEFRC/2015/5). More details are available at: <http://www.fao.org/forestry/aridzone/88626/en/>.

16. In response to the request of NEFRC's members for addressing the challenges of climate change in the region, a project proposal "Sustainable ecosystem management for adaptation to climate change and livelihoods improvement in the Nile Basin" was developed and discussed in a Sub-regional workshop organized in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia on 9-11 December 2013. Efforts were made to secure funds for the proposed project from GEF 6 star allocation in the four targeted countries; Egypt, Ethiopia, Sudan and South Sudan but with no much success. The project concept note was submitted later for consideration to the Green Clean Fund (GCF) focal point at FAO.

17. Recognizing that NENA countries have very limited potentials in managing their forest resources for timber production and that their greatest potential lies in the development and valorization of NWFPs, FAO undertook, within the framework of the Small Scale Agriculture (SSA) regional initiative, an assessment in four countries (Morocco, Tunisia, Lebanon and Sudan) to identify and gather information on 1 – 2 NWFPs that hold potential for value chain development and value addition in each country, with the aim of developing a regional project for the promotion of NWFP-based rural microenterprises. The overall goal of this initiative is to unveil the potentials that NWFPs hold for diversifying rural income, providing employment opportunities for the different segments of the population and improving livelihoods of poor rural communities, while increasing the contribution of forests to the national economy and enhancing countries efforts in achieving sustainable forest management by adopting participatory forest management approaches.

II. FOREST AND RANGE INFORMATION

Information related to NENA countries was also updated and new plans were developed in a number of areas:

18. FRA 2015 was officially launched last September during the XIV World Forestry Congress (WFC). Based on NENA countries national FRA reports, a regional comprehensive report showing the extent, changes and trends in the forest resources in NENA region was produced and published for distribution. Both the global and regional FRA perspectives are reported as separate NEFRC agenda item 4 (document: FO:NEFRC/2015/6).

19. The State of the World Forests (SOFO) 2014 took a prime focus on the socio-economic benefits that people derive from forests by providing information on the number of people that use forest outputs to meet their needs for food, energy, shelter, income and employment. The report also assessed the policies and measures that countries have used to support and enhance the production of these benefits. The SOFO 2014 report can be accessed through the following link:
<http://www.fao.org/forestry/sofo/en/>.

20. SOFO 2016 will focus on ‘Forests and Agriculture: Land Use Challenges and Opportunities’, in view of the fact that loss of forest has long been predominantly due to demand for agricultural land. The document will examine; i) the competing demands for land at the global level, especially as they relate to forests and agriculture and different mechanisms countries use to plan and manage such land-use change; and ii) the relationship between forest cover changes and food security, focusing on countries that are exhibiting positive trends in both and the factors that contribute to these trends.

III. REGIONAL AND INTER-REGIONAL COOPERATION

A number of regional and global events were held during the 2014-2015 period. These include the following:

21. The first inter-sessional meeting of the Bureau of the Near East Forestry & Range Commission (NEFRC), which was held in Rome on 26 June 2014, during COFO 22. The meeting took stock of the progress made by FAO in the implementation of the recommendations of NEFRC 21. It also discussed the priority areas (topics and theme) to bring to the attention of the 22nd Session of NEFRC and agreed on the date and venue of the second intersession meeting.

22. The second Bureau meeting was held in Algiers, Algeria, from 25 to 26 February 2014. The meeting reviewed the progress on the implementation of the plan of work, the main achievements and agreed on the proposed agenda items for NEFRC 22. Recommendations of the 22nd Session of COFO on the Regional Forestry Commissions and the participation of the NENA region in the XIV WFC, the 11th UNFF Session, the 4th Mediterranean Forestry Week and the International Day of Forest (21 March) were discussed.

23. Activities of the Committee on Mediterranean Forestry Questions, *Silva Mediterranea*, are reported separately in annex 5. More information is also available at: www.med.forestweek.org.
24. The Thirty-second FAO Regional Conference (NERC-32) for the Near East was held at FAO headquarters in Rome, Italy, from 24 to 28 February 2014. Two information notes were produced for the Conference: one highlighting the outcomes of the International Conference on Forests for Food Security and Nutrition, organized by FAO in May 2013, and the second provided an update on the Third Mediterranean Week, organized by *Silva Mediterranea* in Tlemcen, Algeria on 17-21 March 2013.
25. While addressing its recommendations to the FAO Conference, the Regional Conference noted the recommendations of NEFRC 21 in: 1) properly positioning forests and rangelands in developmental policies and strategies; 2) recognizing the role of forests and rangelands and their role in enhancing synergies among the Rio Conventions; and 3) enhancing the work on valuation of forests' contribution to sustainable development; 4) supporting countries in developing forest and rangeland-related policies, strategies and programmes; and 5) strengthening the focus on capacity-building in areas comprised in the new Strategic Framework.
26. The 22nd Session of COFO and the 4th World Forest Week (WFW) were organized in Rome, Italy, on 23-27 June 2014 under the theme "The socioeconomic benefits from forests". The Committee expressed its appreciation to the Regional Forestry Commissions (RFCs) as a unique vehicle of regional – global collaboration and programme and policy coordination and encouraged the RFCs to provide guidance on areas of regional priority in forestry that inform and contribute to FAO's Strategic Objectives. The full report of COFO 22 is available on the COFO website at: <http://www.fao.org/forestry/57758/en/>.
27. The XIV WFC was organized in Durban, South Africa on 7-11 September 2015, under the theme "Forests and the people: investing in a sustainable future". The outcomes of the Congress are presented in a separate paper NEFRC/2015/7.1, which will be considered under agenda item 5 on Global Policy Processes.
28. The 11th Session of the United Nations Forum on Forest (UNFF) was held in New York on 4-15 May 2015. The outcomes of UNFF 11 are presented in a separate agenda paper FO:NEFRC/2015/7.

IV. FORESTRY FIELD PROGRAMMES

Forestry field programmes in NENA countries continued during 2014-2015:

29. FAO supported Lebanon for the development of the National Afforestation and Reforestation Programme (NARP), through the project TCP/LEB/3503 "*Strengthening the Coordination of the National Afforestation and Reforestation Programme in Lebanon*", which aimed at supporting the planned Reforestation Programme Coordination Unit (RPCU). The overall goal of the project is to enhance the capacity of the Lebanese forestry sector for the provision of environmental goods and services, which contribute to the improvement of livelihoods.
30. FAO provided support to Iran to assess the problems of oak dieback/decline in the Zagros region and the Boxwood blight in the Caspian region. The outcome of the assessment has led to the formulation of the TCP/IRA/302 project, which was launched last November. The expected outcomes of the project are strengthening the national capacities in forest assessment and monitoring and establishing participatory sustainable management systems, which include the management of the oak decline and the control of Boxwood blight.
31. FAO is actively engaged in including watershed management issues into the Near East Regional Initiative on Water Scarcity. An inter-regional TCP is currently being implemented in

Morocco and Mauritania (TCP/INT/3405), which focuses on combating poverty and desertification and on climate change adaptation through collaborative watershed management.

V. SUPPORT TO COUNTRY INITIATIVES

NENA countries benefitted from ongoing or new project activities during the reporting period:

32. GCP/IRA/064/GFF *"Rehabilitation of forest landscapes and degraded land with particular attention to saline soils and areas prone to wind erosion"*: The project aims at reducing land and forest degradation by investing in sustainable land and forest management in three target provinces and developing national and local capacity to support the widespread implementation of these techniques across the whole country.

33. UTF/SAU/039/SAU *"Sustainable Management of the Natural Forests and Rangelands in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia"*: The main outputs of the project is to strengthen the institutional capacity by assisting the creation of a National Forest Development Centre, the development of a national rangelands strategy, the development of forest and range management technologies, awareness raising efforts and establishment of a forest-range database aimed at providing decision makers and stakeholders with accurate information.

34. FAO formulated a UTF project under the framework of Libya/FAO Cooperative Agreement titled *"UTF/LIB/047/UTF Protection and Development of Forest and Natural Rangelands"*. The project operationalization is pending, due to the security situation in the country.

35. FAO is also supporting Lebanon in the implementation of the GEF co-funded project *"Sustainable Agricultural Livelihoods in Marginal Areas (SALMA)"*. The overall goal of the project is to strengthen the resilience of the mountains ecosystems and that of the people depending on them through an increased prevention of soil erosion, forest fire and pests; protection of water harvesting and storage infrastructure from floods and siltation; increase technical and management capacity of project beneficiaries on reforestation and sustainable land and water management for climate change adaptation and diversification of sources of income for rural poor and disseminating.

VI. Points for Consideration

36. The commission may wish to invite

Countries to:

- Seek means and ways of strengthening their engagement in and ownership of the NEFRC and proactively provide leadership for the Commission's in-country work.
- Develop national plans of action for the conservation, sustainable use and development of Forest Genetic Resources.
- Make better use of the available FAO tools and guidelines to achieve sustainable management of their forest and rangelands resources.
- Strengthen sub-regional collaboration within the framework of the GGWSSI and seek FAO support for the formulation of sub-regional projects and in mobilizing resources for their implementation.

37. FAO to:

- Give particular attention to the fragility of the region's terrestrial ecosystems and assist countries in the implementation of sound forest and rangelands restoration programmes under the framework of the FLR Mechanism.

ANNEX I**NEFRC 21 RECOMMENDATIONS AND COUNTRY'S ACHIEVEMENTS**

Recommendations made by the Near East Forestry and Range commission, Session 21	Activities linked to the recommendations	Other activities
1. Recommended countries to designate forestry or rangelands organizations as country focal points for the NEFRC and that heads of these organizations represent their countries in the Commission.	All six reported countries indicated the designation of the Heads of forestry institutions as focal points for the NEFRC.	
2. Recommended the establishment of a system of permanent sample plots across the region in a cooperative effort to monitor impacts.	Turkey and Cyprus reported establishment of a system of permanent sample plot under the frame of “the International Co-operative Programme on the Assessment and Monitoring of Air Pollution Effects on Forests (ICP Forests)” for Europe. Sudan is planning to establish a permanent sample plot grids under REDD+ programme. Algeria reported establishment a system of sample plots across the country to monitor the behavior of some species and monitor the recovery of steppe from overgrazing.	
3. Urged countries to continue developing and enhancing forest inventory system as a basis for informing climate change mitigation and adaptation strategies and measures and requested FAO to support countries’ efforts in this regard.	Pakistan reported developing National Forest Monitoring System Action Plan which has National Forest Inventory as integral component under UN REED and with FAO support. Algeria & Sudan national inventory was updated in 2008 and both countries indicated their intention for updating their national inventories.	
4. Recommended that countries consider the establishment of a coordination mechanism for	Algeria reported the establishment of collaborative mechanism under the frame of	

<p>providing input from the region to UNFF and that FAO provide support in this regard.</p>	<p>Siva Med and the CPMF with support from the French Fund for Global Environment Facility.</p> <p>As member states of UNFF, Cyprus, Turkey and Sudan have a designated UNFF National Focal Point and they provide unilateral national reports in advance of every UNFF Session.</p>	
<p>5. Stressed the need for sustained funding for forestry training and research, particularly physical restructuring and soft skills. The region could work together with FAO to specify needs further for discussion with donors or integration into Country Programming Framework.</p>	<p>Cyprus reported restructuring of the Cyprus Forestry College, aiming to cover the contemporary needs of Cyprus forestry to cover the urgent needs in short term vocational specialization training and educational programmes.</p> <p>Algeria and Sudan stressed the need for FAO support in this domain.</p>	<p>Algeria reported other capacity building and technical assistant programmes supported by the WB and UNDP</p>
<p>6. Highlighted the need for sound information and data on direct and, particularly, indirect in contribution of forests and rangelands to food security and nutrition and requested FAO support to countries in this regard.</p>	<p>Pakistan is presently developing National Forest Policy which integrates forests with other sectors like agriculture, food, water, tourism & health.</p> <p>Turkey reported establishment of a Department of Non-Wood Forest Goods and Services under the DG Forestry and undertaking inventory of target species to determine their economic and environmental potential and means of diversifying and increasing the quantity and quality of their products.</p> <p>Jordan reported an on-going GIZ supported project for the valuation of forests and</p>	<p>Algeria reported the finalization of forestry communication strategy with support from the WB and a wildlife and PAs communication strategy with support from FAO</p>

	rangelands ES. While Algeria, Sudan and Yemen indicated the need for FAO support in this field.	
7. Recommended countries to raise the awareness of decision-makers of the value of forest monitoring and use of the resulting data, and requested FAO to support countries in this regard.	To further develop and update the policies and strategies for Sustainable Forest Management, the forest monitoring, assessment and reporting mechanism of the Turkish Forest Service produces regular reports based on data and information pertaining to the set of quantitative and qualitative indicators of the defined criteria for sustainable forest management. Algeria and Sudan reported concerted efforts in raising the awareness of decision makers.	
8. Recommended countries and FAO to define criteria and indicators for sustainable forest and rangeland management which also include the contribution of sylvo-pastoral and agro-sylvo-pastoral systems to food security and nutrition.	A proposed set of sustainability indicators for SFRM were developed by FAO and experts from the region. The proposed C&Is and a proposed road map for strengthening their uses will be discussed and adopted in the NEFRC 22 session. Cyprus and Turkey reported using the version of the pan-European set of Criteria and Indicators for Sustainable Forest Management and adapted them to their national conditions.	
9. Recommended that countries and FAO work to increase the awareness of policy-makers on the importance of and benefits to be gained by sustainable dryland forest and rangeland management and restoration in an effort to raise the profile of drylands on the political agenda in the region and increase related investments.	Turkey contributes towards sustainable drylands forest and rangeland management through the regional, sub-regional and international forestry processes. The country organizes, in cooperation with FAO, training programmes and conduct bilateral and multilateral projects for better sustainable land management in arid and semi-arid regions. FAO-Turkey Forestry Partnership Programme (2014-2018) gives also special attention to	

	<p>sustainable drylands forest and rangeland management in Near East, Central Asia and North Africa.</p> <p>Sudan reported increasing awareness among policy makers resulting in a number of presidential decrees in support of forest conservation and development</p>	
<p>10. Highlighted the close relationship between forest and rangelands management, and recommended countries and FAO to pay adequate attention to the economic values of forests and rangelands.</p>	<p>In Algeria, forests and rangelands are under same Directorate where management activities are often coordinated.</p> <p>In Pakistan and Sudan, forests and rangelands are dealt by two different ministries and no joint initiative on forest and rangelands has so far been taken.</p> <p>Jordan and Algeria reported on-going work on economic valuation of forests, rangelands & PAs.</p> <p>Cyprus new forest policy provides for increased importance on non-timber products and services, tourism, provision of employment opportunities, enhancement of protective functions & broadening the economic contribution of forests and rangelands to the society.</p>	
<p>11. The Commission requested FAO and countries to collaborate in setting up a working group or network of forest monitoring for countries of Near East and North Africa.</p>	<p>No action has been taken</p>	

ANNEX II**IMPLEMENTATION OF THE GLOBAL PLAN OF ACTION FOR THE
CONSERVATION, SUSTAINABLE USE AND DEVELOPMENT OF FOREST
GENETIC RESOURCES****A. Introduction**

In 2007, the Commission on Genetic Resources for Food and Agriculture (CGRFA) requested FAO to prepare *The State of the World's Forest Genetic Resources (SoW-FGR)*¹ and established, in 2009, an Intergovernmental Technical Working Group on Forest Genetic Resources (ITWG-FGR) to guide the preparation of this report. In 2011, the CGRFA also requested FAO to prepare a synthesis paper on priority areas for action based on the information gathered for the SoW-FGR and the ITWG-FGR to review it. In April 2013, the CGRFA agreed the identified priority areas as *the Global Plan of Action for the Conservation, Sustainable Use and Development of Forest Genetic Resources (GPA-FGR)*² and in June 2013, the FAO Conference adopted the document³.

The GPA-FGR identifies four priority areas for action: 1) Improving the availability of, and access to, information regarding FGR, 2) Conservation of FGR (*in situ* and *ex situ*), 3) Sustainable use, development and management of FGR, and 4) Policies, institutions and capacity building. Under these areas, the GPA-FGR includes a total of 27 strategic priorities for action at the national, regional and international levels. The relative priority of each strategic priority and associated actions may differ significantly in different countries and regions. The GPA-FGR is a voluntary and non-binding document that can be updated by the CGRFA. The implementation of the GPA-FGR will strengthen sustainable management of forests and contribute towards the post-2015 development agenda and the Aichi Biodiversity Targets.

Activities on FGR are an integral part of the FAO's work in forestry and they are regularly reported to the Committee on Forestry (COFO) and the Regional Forestry Commissions. At its 22nd Session in June 2014, COFO welcomed the SoW-FGR and the GPA-FGR, and acknowledged the importance of FAO's work in this area. The COFO recommended FAO to support the implementation of the GPA-FGR, finalize the draft strategy for the implementation of the GPA-FGR for review by the CGRFA, encourage continued cooperation in addressing the global priorities of the GPA-FGR, and support countries as appropriate to address the strategic priorities of the GPA-FGR. This document presents information on follow-up to the GPA-FGR since the 22nd Session of COFO.

B. Follow-up to the Global Plan of Action

At its 3rd Session in July 2014, the ITWG-FGR considered the draft implementation strategy for the GPA-FGR and made several recommendations⁴. The ITWG-FGR recommended that FAO encourage its Members to develop national plans of action for the conservation, sustainable use and development of FGR. It also stressed the need to create linkages between these national plans and the National Forest Programmes, the National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans and other relevant planning processes.

At its 15th Session in January 2015, the CGRFA further considered the draft implementation strategy for the GPA-FGR and adopted the implementation strategy⁵. It includes seven areas of action: 1) Advocacy and international awareness on FGR, 2) Development and support of relevant global and

¹ SoW-FGR. <http://www.fao.org/3/a-i3825e.pdf>.

² GPA-FGR. <http://www.fao.org/3/a-i3849e.pdf>.

³ C 2013/REP, paragraph 77. <http://www.fao.org/docrep/meeting/028/mh093e.pdf>.

⁴ CGRFA/WG-FGR-3/14/Report, paragraphs 13-15. <http://www.fao.org/3/a-ml401e.pdf>.

⁵ CGRFA-15/15/Report, Appendix E. <http://www.fao.org/3/a-mm660e.pdf>.

regional networks, 3) Supporting countries in the development of national and regional strategies for the implementation of the GPA-FGR, 4) Supporting countries in securing adequate and sustainable funding for the implementation of the GPA-FGR, 5) Development of international technical standards for FGR and support to implement them, 6) Funding strategy for the implementation of the GPA-FGR, and 7) Monitoring and reporting on the implementation of the GPA-FGR and the status and trends of FGR. The CGRFA stressed that the strategy is fundamental for achieving the goals of the GPA-FGR and called for the implementation of the strategy in coordination with the COFO and relevant international organizations.

FAO has continued cooperation with relevant partners, such as Biodiversity International and the World Agroforestry Centre, in addressing the global priorities of the GPA-FGR. This cooperation was crucial for the preparation of the SoW-FGR and related thematic studies, and it will be also crucial for the implementation of the GPA-FGR at the international level. In December 2014, the results of the earlier collaboration were published in a special issue of *Forest Ecology and Management*⁶. The global reviews on various issues related to FGR provide valuable information for the implementation of the GPA-FGR in addition to the SoW-FGR. FAO is also strengthening its collaboration on FGR with the Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and other relevant members of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests (CPF), as well as various international and regional organizations.

Regional coordination is necessary for effective implementation of regional and national priorities of the GPA-FGR as the distribution ranges of forest trees and their genetic resources typically extend beyond individual countries. Regional networks on FGR play a crucial role for this purpose by providing a platform for countries to share experiences, exchange information and develop collaborative actions. In September 2014, the Asia Pacific Association of Forestry Research Institutes (APAFRI) and Biodiversity International organized, with technical inputs from FAO, a regional workshop in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia for the national coordinators of the Asia Pacific Forest Genetic Resources Programme (APFORGEN). The workshop prepared a strategy for regional collaboration to implement the GPA-FGR. In October 2014, Biodiversity International organized a similar workshop in Santa Cruz de la Sierra, Bolivia in collaboration with the Latin America Forest Genetic Resources Network (LAFORGEN), and with financial and technical support from Spain. FAO and its partners are planning to organize similar planning workshops in other regions, subject to the availability of financial resources. In Europe, FAO will continue its long-lasting collaboration with the European Forest Genetic Resources Programme (EUFORGEN) which has already agreed to contribute to the implementation of the GPA-FGR during its Phase V (2015-2019).

FAO has also contributed to the work of regional networks dedicated to combat invasive species affecting FGR. These networks aim to facilitate sharing of information and mobilizing resources, raising awareness and bringing together experts, institutions and other stakeholders concerned with forest invasive species. In November 2014, FAO organized, in collaboration with the Forest Service of the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the Chinese Academy of Sciences, a regional seminar in Beijing, China for the national focal points of the Asia-Pacific Forest Invasive Species Network (APFISN). FAO and its partners intend to rejuvenate the Forest Invasive Species Network for Africa (FISNA), the Near East Network on Forest Health and Invasive Species (NENFHIS) and Red de Países del Cono Sur sobre Especies Exóticas Invasoras a Ecosistemas Forestales which includes the South Cone countries (Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Paraguay and Uruguay) and Bolivia. Furthermore, FAO organized a regional seminar in Budapest, Hungary in June 2015 for European and Central Asian countries to promote the implementation of the phytosanitary standards in forestry. As a follow-up to this meeting, FAO is planning, in collaboration with its partners, to establish a network on forest invasive species for Europe and Central Asia. In addition, FAO and its partners are considering initiating a similar network in the Central American and Caribbean region.

⁶ Global Forest Genetic Resources : Taking Stock (special issue of *Forest Ecology and Management*) (open access). <http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/journal/03781127/333>.

Biodiversity International organized, with technical inputs from FAO, a side event on the GPA-FGR during the IUFRO World Congress, held in Salt Lake City, USA in October 2014. In May 2015, the Brazilian Agricultural Research Institute for Forests (EMBRAPA Florestas) and FAO organized an International Symposium on Forest Biotechnology for Smallholders in Foz do Iguacu, Brazil. FAO will continue, together with its partners, contributing to this type of events to facilitate sharing of information and raising awareness on the conservation, sustainable use and development of FGR, subject to the availability of financial resources.

FAO is continuing to explore the interest of different donors to support countries in implementing the GPA-FGR. In collaboration with selected countries and partner organizations, FAO has developed and submitted project proposals to donors and is now waiting for their response. Countries can also seek financial support for relevant projects through the decentralized FAO Technical Cooperation Programme (TCP).

C. Points for consideration

The Regional Forestry Commissions may wish to:

- Recommend that countries take action, as appropriate, to implement the Global Plan of Action for the Conservation, Sustainable Use and Development of Forest Genetic Resources;
- Recommend that countries support, as appropriate, the regional networks on FGR and forest invasive species, and contribute to the activities of these networks to strengthen regional collaboration in these areas.

The Regional Forestry Commissions may wish to recommend FAO to:

- Continue supporting the implementation of the Global Plan of Action for the Conservation, Sustainable Use and Development of Forest Genetic Resources.

ANNEX III**SUSTAINABLE FOREST MANAGEMENT TOOLBOX****A. Background**

The Sustainable Forest Management (SFM) Toolbox was developed in response to the request of the Committee on Forestry.

The aim of this note is to summarize the key issues in the further development of the SFM Toolbox.

B. What it is

The SFM Toolbox is a comprehensive technical package of knowledge tools, good practices, and examples of their application to facilitate the implementation of SFM under varied contexts. Its target audience is primarily (public and private) forest and land managers, and those who support them including extension services, civil-society organizations and non-governmental organizations as well as private sector associations.

The Toolbox has the following objectives: (i) increase capacities to effectively implement SFM by providing practical knowledge, tools and experiences at local and landscape levels; (ii) support forest managers and other stakeholders in progressing towards SFM with a more comprehensive approach; (iii) connect the different areas of FAO expertise related to SFM to facilitate its integration in a landscape approach to natural resources management; and (iv) identify and address knowledge and tool gaps, as well as possible incoherencies and conflicts.

The Toolbox is a user-friendly, interactive web-based platform, responsive to user's interests and needs. It includes:

- modules on SFM thematic areas, comprising (i) an overview of basic knowledge; (ii) more in-depth information; (iii) links to related tools; and (iv) links to SFM cases/examples and further references;
- a database of SFM tools and cases/examples that have been collated and arranged in an easy-to-access format; and
- a discussion forum.

The Toolbox uses knowledge references, tools and cases produced by FAO, Collaborative Partnership on Forests (CPF) members, other partners and member countries. The scope of the Toolbox is global (for all types of forests) however it will be an evolving set that will also include regional and national resources.

The development of the SFM Toolbox aligns with FAO's mandate and role as a knowledge organization. FAO, in collaboration with its many partners, creates, compiles and shares critical information about SFM, and facilitates a dialogue between those who possess the knowledge and those who need it, aiming at "turning knowledge into action". The Toolbox is included in the Organization's Strategic Objective 2, outcome 1 under Products & Services 5 *Knowledge management: Participatory assessment, development, and promotion of mechanisms for collating, managing and sharing knowledge on sustainable production and natural resources management practices.*

The SFM Toolbox website has been designed with the intention of allowing best interaction with users. It is available at <http://www.fao.org/sustainable-forest-management/toolbox/>.

C. Current status and main issues

The SFM Toolbox is a work in progress so its further development between July 2014 and August 2015 continued with the preparation of 15 additional modules, the addition of tools and cases to the existing modules (it currently contains 620 tools and 524 cases) and the improvement of the web-platform (e.g., usability, simplified registration system, revision of module filters, video translation, etc.).

The testing of the website is ongoing (in early 2015, a heuristic evaluation focusing on the user experience and information architecture of the Toolbox; and during the XIV WFC a user interface testing with a broad spectrum of participants) and the results will contribute to the improvement of the accessibility and usability of the site (e.g. retrieving and utilizing tools, modules and cases on specific forest management issues) and to users' understanding of what it offers.

The SFM Toolbox continues to be disseminated and promoted through (demo) presentations in international and national meetings, flyers (in EN, FR and SP), links with other online websites/tools and communications in various networks (e.g. TECA, NWFP, FRA, inFO news...). Since its launch in June 2014 there have been 14,500 users and over 55,000 page views.

The SFM Toolbox is being increasingly promoted as a key reference of FAO's work on several thematic areas as well as a learning source for project design and implementation.

D. Points for consideration

The Committee may wish to invite countries to promote the use of the SFM Toolbox to support planning and implementation of SFM-related programs/initiatives, for institutional strengthening, capacity development and others; and to provide further feedback to the Toolbox, including new tools and SFM cases.

The Committee may wish to recommend FAO to continue support the development and dissemination of the TB.

ANNEX IV**PROGRESS REPORT ON THE VOLUNTARY GUIDELINES ON NATIONAL FOREST MONITORING****A. Background**

During the Twenty-First session of the Committee on Forestry (COFO 21), member countries recommended that FAO continue to support countries strengthen national forest information systems and requested FAO to “work in close collaboration with member countries and relevant organizations to prepare a set of voluntary guidelines on national forest monitoring, which takes into account the requirements for REDD+ reporting and is in line with the principles and goals of the Forest Instrument”⁷.

The preparation process started just after the request from COFO 21, with the route map and the definition of the structure of the document. A two phase approach was defined to divide the process, Phase I comprised the development of section I and II with the definition of national forest monitoring, the scope and the principles; Phase II comprising of a compilation of good practices and technical recommendations on national forest monitoring.

COFO 22 endorsement of section I and II prepared in Phase I was an important step and milestone in the preparation process and highly related with the final version of the document. These two first sections provide background, the definition of forest monitoring and the principles for a national forest monitoring system which are the key elements guiding the technical recommendations and further development of the document.

As defined in the first sections of the voluntary guidelines, national forest monitoring is viewed as a comprehensive process that includes the collection, analysis and dissemination of forest-related data and the derivation of information and knowledge at regular intervals to allow monitoring of changes over time, and which focuses on national level data and information on forests and trees outside forests, their condition, values and uses. The timely, relevant and reliable information obtained supports forest-related decision making at the national and sub-national levels.

Fourteen principles were introduced in these sections: country ownership and responsibility; legal basis; national forest monitoring needs a landscape view; national forest monitoring should be institutionalized; research infrastructure and capacity building should be taken in consideration; it needs to be a participatory discussion process among national stakeholders on the scope and objectives of forest monitoring; the national forest monitoring must satisfy national level information needs; there should be integration of and consistency with existing information sources; a flexible approach in order to integrate emerging issues and allow for periodic revisions; a national forest monitoring should follow a multi-purpose approach; the feasibility including cost-efficiency should be taken in consideration; it should include a well-defined data and information sharing policy; has credibility through transparency and quality; and promote collaboration at international level.

This note provides an overview of the process up today and the next steps to finalize the document.

B. Progress to date and next steps

The development and dissemination of the voluntary guidelines on national forest monitoring was included in FAO’s new strategic framework and the programme of work for the present biennium under Strategic Objective 2: Increased and improved provision of goods and services from agriculture, forestry and fisheries in a sustainable manner, output 2.4.2: methodologies, norms, standards,

⁷ FAO (Food And Agriculture Organization of The United Nations). 2012. Report on the Committee on Forestry, Twenty-First Session: COFO 2012/REP paragraf 50, page 7. Rome, Italy. Available at: <http://www.fao.org/docrep/meeting/026/me988e.pdf>

definitions and other tools for the collection, management, aggregation and analysis of data are formulated and disseminated.

The first two sections were endorsed by the COFO 22 during the last session. For the preparation of these two sections, inputs from FAO member countries and relevant organizations were included, based on discussions, feedback and exchanges during the last six Regional Forestry Commissions (2013-2014), the FRA regional meetings and different technical meetings held during 2013 and 2014, and inputs from several member countries during COFO 22.

The section III is currently being finalized by FAO in collaboration with international experts. The section is based on a thorough literature review as well as on inputs provided in international workshops and technical meetings, which have taken place in 2014 and 2015. Valuable contribution and advice has been received also from many institutional stakeholders.

During the first three weeks of October 2015, an online consultation on the final section will be open for a wider number of experts for a drafting process allowing them to contribute and share opinions which will be taken into consideration during the final stage of preparation of the document. This process will allow broader awareness raising and buy in on the voluntary guidelines by national stakeholders. The online consultation and the draft version of the document will be available at <http://www.fao.org/fsnforum/forum/discussions/forestry>.

As a final step of the preparation of the document, a face-to-face meeting will be organized by the beginning of 2016 to gather feedback from international experts and potential users of the voluntary guidelines.

ANNEX V**REPORT ON SILVA MEDITERRANEA ACTIVITIES**

The Committee on Mediterranean Forestry Questions – *Silva Mediterranea* is an FAO Statutory body, currently chaired by Turkey. The proposed Secretariat note reports on the main achievements and activities conducted by the committee during the last two years with Secretariat support provided by FAO Forestry Department and France (secondment of Dr Nicolas Picard).

Follow-up on the Strategic Framework on Mediterranean Forests

- The Strategic Framework on Mediterranean Forests (SFMF) presented during the 3rd Mediterranean Forest Week in Tlemcen in March 2013 and endorsed by the high-level segment of this conference with the Tlemcen Declaration is a voluntary tool for policymakers in the forest sector in the Mediterranean.

A session was organized in Barcelona, during the IV Mediterranean Forest Week (IV MFW) to discuss the level of implementation of the SFMF at national level. Several countries highlighted the use of this regional tool for the formulation of their new country-level strategies and programmes (e.g. Algeria, France, Lebanon, Morocco, Portugal and Tunisia). Mediterranean Forest Week

- Together with several Mediterranean partners, the Secretariat of *Silva Mediterranea* organized the fourth Mediterranean Forest Week in Barcelona (IV MFW), Spain, on 16-21 March 2015, under the topic “Improving livelihoods: the role of Mediterranean forest value chains in a green economy”. Proceedings and main conclusions are available in a special issue of the journal " Forêt Méditerranéenne" and all presentations are accessible on IV MFW Website ⁸
- The fifth Mediterranean Forest Week (V MFW) will be organized in Morocco in 2017. This fifth meeting could be focused on “Desertification and Restoration of degraded Mediterranean Forests and Landscapes” as discussed with several Mediterranean partners and the Moroccan ‘Haut Commissariat of Water and Forests and Combating Desertification’ during an event held in Ankara at the occasion of the UNCCD COP12 in October 2015.

***Silva Mediterranea* Extraordinary Sessions**

- Two extraordinary sessions were held, on June 27, 2014 in Rome at the occasion of the 21st session of the FAO Committee on Forestry (COFO), and on March 18, 2015 at the occasion of the IV Mediterranean Forest Week in Barcelona. The 2014 extraordinary session focused on the preparations of the IV MFW and the evaluation of *Silva Mediterranea*. The 2015 extraordinary session focused on the official adoption of the recommendations proposed by the evaluation panel of the Committee.
- The *Silva Mediterranea* evaluation was conducted in 2013 by an independent panel chaired by Ms Christine Farcy. The final version of the evaluation report was shared with all *Silva Mediterranea* members in April 2014 and presented during the extraordinary session held in June 2014⁹.
- Based on the recommendations made by the evaluation panel and, taking into consideration the management response prepared by FAO Forestry Department, the members of *Silva Mediterranea* approved a number of decisions during the extraordinary session held in March 18, 2015 during the IV Mediterranean Forest Week in Barcelona¹⁰.

⁸ <http://med.forestweek.org/fr>

⁹ The *Silva Mediterranea* Evaluation Report is available at: <http://www.fao.org/forestry/4900/en>.

¹⁰ Report of the extraordinary session held in Barcelona is available at: <http://www.fao.org/forestry/4900/en>

- These decisions were endorsed during the high-level session of Directors in charge of Forestry organized on 20 March 2015 during the IV Mediterranean Forest Week¹¹.

Silva Mediterranea Working groups

- The working group on "**Forest Fires**" has carried on its cooperation with EU/Joint Research Center within the framework of the European Forest Fire Information System. Annual reports on 'Forest fires in Europe, Middle East and North Africa' were published with the working group support¹².
- The working group on "**Cork Oak and other Non-Wood Forest Products**" co-organized Vivexpo' 2014 conference on 11-13 June 2014¹³.
- The working group on "**Forest Genetic Resources**" released a policy brief entitled "Marginal and peripheral forests: a key genetic resource for enhancing the resilience of European Forests to global change" at the occasion of the World Forestry Congress held in Durban, in September 2015. New distribution maps were also produced for twenty four Mediterranean species in collaboration with INRA Avignon.
- The working group on "**Climate Change**" organized a session on "Climate Financing Instruments in Mediterranean Landscapes" within the framework of the IV MFW. As a follow-up, a Policy Brief was produced on "Mitigation and adaptation potential of Mediterranean forests to Climate Change" in English and French. Moreover, vulnerability assessments to climate change were conducted for several pilot sites in Algeria, Morocco, Tunisia, Lebanon and Turkey. The final report will be launched at a side event in Paris, during the UNFCCC COP 21.
- The working group on "**Urban and Peri-Urban Forestry**" focused its work on the priorities identified during the launching workshop in May 2014. Activities underway include the development of indicators for assessing urban and peri-urban forests/forestry (UPF) in the Mediterranean, drafting of policy and position papers aimed at raising awareness on UPF, as well as the development of project proposals for implementation at regional level. The next meeting of the working group will be held in November 2015 in Rome and will count on the participation of 30 experts from all over the region¹⁴.
- The working group on "**Desertification and Restoration of Mediterranean Drylands**" held its first meeting on October 16, 2015 at the Turkish Pavilion during the UNCCD CoP12 in Ankara, Turkey. A road map has been discussed and the following key actions have been proposed by participants¹⁵:
 - Produce a chapter on restoration initiatives in the next edition of the State of Mediterranean Forests (SoMF) and compile success stories on Forest and Landscape Restoration in the Mediterranean ;
 - Disseminate and support implementation of the "Global guidelines for the restoration of degraded forests and landscapes in Drylands: Building resilience and benefiting livelihoods¹⁶", published by FAO Forestry Department in collaboration with the Turkish Ministry of Forestry and Water Affairs and the Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency (TIKA);

11 See Barcelona Declaration at: <http://www.fao.org/forestry/silvamed/4900/en/>

12 See reports at: <http://forest.jrc.ec.europa.eu/effis/reports/annual-fire-reports/>

13 Proceedings of Vivexpo 2014 are available at : <http://www.institutduliège.com/colloque2014.php>

14 For further information, see website: <http://www.fao.org/forestry/80480/en/>

15 The full report of the Ankara Meeting and the newsletter will be soon available

16 See the full publication, launched at the UNCCD COP 12 in Ankara, in October 2015 at: <http://www.fao.org/documents/card/en/c/b7d56c46-ed26-4211-9911-f8e4dfe9a609/>

- iii) Organize the fifth meeting of the Mediterranean Forest Week on “Desertification and Restoration of degraded Mediterranean Forests and Landscapes” in March 2017 (Morocco) and move towards a regional initiative on Forest and Landscape Restoration in the context of the Bonn Challenge;
- iv) Support the implementation of the Strategic Line 6 “Restore degraded Mediterranean forest landscapes” of the Strategic Framework on Mediterranean Forests (SFMF), in particular through assessments, monitoring, knowledge sharing, sustainable financing and capacity development.

Collaborative Partnership on Mediterranean Forests

- *Silva Mediterranea* is one of the founding members of the Collaborative Partnership on Mediterranean Forests (CPMF) that was launched on 29 September 2010. The CPMF aims at improving cooperation between its members and at harmonising efforts and investments by the forestry sector in five partner countries (Algeria, Lebanon, Morocco, Tunisia and Turkey).
- The 5th steering committee meeting of the CPMF was held from 28 to 30 January 2015 in Rabat, Morocco and dealt with the evaluation of the CPMF and the organization of a Mediterranean booth at the World Forestry Congress, Durban, September 2015. Having an evaluation of the CPMF was agreed in 2013 by the 4th steering committee and was led by an independent expert, Ms Sabina Bianchini. The final version of the evaluation report was shared with all members of the CPMF in July 2015.
- The CPMF organized a Mediterranean booth at the World Forestry Congress, 7-11 September 2015, Durban, South Africa with the key support of the Secretariat of *Silva Mediterranea*. Two film projections followed by discussions were organized. Key documents and policy briefs produced in the context of *Silva Mediterranea* were displayed and disseminated at the booth.

The Commission may wish to:

Take note of:

- the Strategic Framework on Mediterranean Forests and the *Tlemcen Declaration* adopted by *Silva Mediterranea* member States during the 3rd Mediterranean Forest Week in Tlemcen 2013, as a voluntary tool for forest policy and make recommendations for its implementation by *Silva Mediterranea* member states;
- the decisions taken after the evaluation of *Silva Mediterranea* and facilitate their implementation;
- the evaluation report on the Collaborative Partnership on Mediterranean Forests;

and encourage countries to :

- contribute to activities of the *Silva Mediterranea* working groups and *in particular to the new working group on Desertification and Restoration in Mediterranean Drylands*, recently launched at the UNCCD COP 12 in Ankara, Turkey on 16 October 2015;
- contribute to the use and implementation of the “global guidelines for the restoration of degraded forests and landscapes in drylands: building resilience and benefiting livelihoods”, recently released at the UNCCD COP 12 in Ankara, Turkey on 14 October 2015
- contribute to the preparation and commit to high level participation in the V Mediterranean Forest Week to be held in March 2017 in Morocco, on “Desertification and Restoration of degraded Mediterranean Forests and Landscapes”.