

NEAR EAST FORESTRY COMMISSION
NINETEENTH SESSION
NEAR EAST FORESTRY WEEK
HAMMAMET, TUNISIA 5 – 9 APRIL 2010
Forests and range: adapting to global changes for sustainable development

INTRODUCTION AND OPENING OF THE SESSION

1. The Nineteenth Session of the Near East Forestry Commission (NEFC) was held in Hammamet, Tunisia, from 5 to 9 April 2010 at the kind invitation of the Government of the Republic of Tunisia. The session was attended by 36 representatives from 18 member countries and one observer country. Fifteen representatives of eight observer organizations also attended. *Appendix B* provides a full list of participants. The session was conducted in English and Arabic.
2. The Commission session was held together with the first Near East Forestry Week (NEFW) under the common theme of “*Forests and range: Adapting to global changes for sustainable development*”. The rationale behind the NEFW theme was to contextualize the important contribution of forests and range in reducing poverty, hunger and malnutrition in the Near East region and to re-emphasize to policymakers the significance of forests and range in national economies and their potential as viable sectors for the livelihood improvement of their populations.
3. Mr. Eduardo Rojas-Briales, Assistant Director-General, Forestry Department, represented the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO). Mr. Mohamed Saket, Senior Forestry Officer, FAO Regional Office for the Near East, Cairo, served as Secretary of the NEFC session.
4. Mr. Erdogan Sirin, Turkey, acting Chair of the Eighteenth Session of the Commission, opened the session and welcomed the participants.
5. The Honourable Minister for Agriculture of the Republic of Iraq, His Excellency Akram Mousa Hadi Al-Hakim, spoke of his country’s efforts to improve agriculture and forest management and to

combat desertification, and expressed the hope that the work of the Commission would reinforce his country's efforts.

6. The Honourable Federal Minister for Animal Resources and Fisheries, Republic of Sudan, His Excellency Faisal Hassan Ibrahim, expressed support for an expanded mandate of the Commission to include rangelands and highlighted the activities of Sudan's Green Renaissance Network.

7. Mr. Rojas-Briales delivered a statement on behalf of the Director-General of FAO and its Forestry Department. Referring to the topic of the session, he highlighted the need to adapt the forestry sector to address new challenges, including those of climate change and the achievement of sustainable development. He hoped the Near East Forestry Week would help raise the profile of forests in the region. The proposed change in the mandate of the Commission would allow it to make links between the management of forests and rangelands in the region.

8. Mr. Ahmed Ridha El Fekih Salem, Director-General of Forests, Republic of Tunisia, delivered the opening keynote address on behalf of the Honourable Minister for Agriculture, Water Resources and Fisheries of the Republic of Tunisia, His Excellency Abdessalam Mansour. He described how Tunisia has developed several new national strategies and amended legislation relevant to forests, intensified efforts to address social dimensions of forests, and expanded its forest monitoring programmes. Tunisia supports the Commission, recognizing it as an ideal forum for discussing forestry issues in the region.

9. The 19th Session of the Commission was declared officially open.

ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA (Item 2)

10. The Agenda (*Appendix A*) was adopted. The documents considered by the Commission are listed in *Appendix C*

ELECTION OF OFFICERS (Item 3)

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

Chair: Mr. Ahmed Ridha Fekih (Tunisia)

Vice-Chairpersons: Mr. Chadi Mohanna (Lebanon)
Mr. Alisher Shukurov (Uzbekistan)

Rapporteur: Mr. Melaku Taddese (Ethiopia)

FOLLOW-UP ON REQUESTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE 18th SESSION OF THE COMMISSION (Item 4)

(i) Amendment of the name and mandate of the Near East Forestry Commission to the Near East Forestry and Range Commission

12. The Commission endorsed the proposed amendment of the name of the Commission and of Article I of its Statutes to read as follows (changes underlined): The functions of the Near East Forestry and Range Commission shall be to advise on the formulation of management policy of forests, trees, range and their products, and to review and coordinate its implementation at the national and regional levels; to exchange views and experiences and, generally, through special subsidiary bodies, advise on suitable practices and action in regard to technical problems and make appropriate recommendations in relation to the foregoing. The Commission shall examine the widening gap between present trends and the potential of forests and rangelands. It shall identify the threats to forests and rangelands and recommend possible actions. The outcomes of the Commission reflect the views of its members and their will to work together towards common goals

(ii) Secretariat report on actions taken on the requests and recommendations of the 18th Session of the Commission

13. The Secretariat presented an overview of FAO forestry activities in the region over the past two years. The Commission appreciated the follow-up actions taken by FAO on the recommendations and requests addressed to it by its last session.

14. The Commission noted with concern the decrease in the number of field projects in the region and requested FAO, in partnership with national, international and regional funding institutions, to allocate adequate financial resources for the development of the forest and rangelands sectors.

15. The Commission highly recommended that FAO continue to give strong emphasis to supporting national initiatives and regional collaboration, taking into account the national needs of institutional strengthening and capacity building, through regional workshops and meetings on issues related to climate change, forest and rangeland policy, institution strengthening, wildlife and protected areas,

forest fires and forest protection, afforestation and rangelands rehabilitation. It also encouraged countries to use sewage water in forest tree planting with required precautions.

FAO AND COUNTRY ACTIVITIES IN THE NEAR EAST REGION (Item 5)

(i) Forestry policy and sustainable development

- a) Institutions and legislation
- b) Guidelines for forest policy formulation

16. The Secretariat introduced the agenda item and reported on the preparation of draft “Guidelines for Forest Policy Development”. It was confirmed that the Guidelines were fully compatible with those for national forest programmes. Countries were invited to present their experiences, identify their needs related to formulation and revision of forest policy and legislation and related capacity strengthening, and to indicate how FAO might assist them with the use of the Guidelines.

17. Several countries shared information on their recent efforts to develop or revise their forest policies and legislation. A variety of successful experiences were cited. Challenges encountered related to achieving inter-sectoral integration, including ensuring coherence among forest, range, combating desertification, and other policies; engaging stakeholders and balancing their various concerns; and planning for multifunctional use of forests.

18. The Commission recommended that countries, after adapting the Guidelines to suit national circumstances and realities, use them in their efforts to update their forest policies and legislation.

(ii) Forest and range sustainable management

- (a) Rangelands and biodiversity conservation
- (b) The State of the World’s Forest Genetic Resources
- (c) Wildlife and protected areas management

The Commission was informed of FAO’s activities related to (i) rangelands and biodiversity conservation; (ii) wildlife and protected areas management, which recommended the establishment of a network on wildlife and protected areas management (NEWPAM) and support project development and implementation for strengthening or building national capacity and (iii) the ongoing preparations for the first Report on the State of the World’s Forest Genetic Resources (SOW-FGR) to be finalised by 2013. Particular reference was made to the regional workshops conducted in relation to the

preparations for the elaboration of the report on SOW-FGR as well as the regional workshop organized in Damascus in 2009 on wildlife and protected areas.

19. With regard to sustainable management of forest and range , the Commission reiterated its endorsement of the identified recommendations and called for the development and dissemination of a harmonized approach and methods to forest and range monitoring, development of manuals and guidelines on different subjects such as the participation of local communities and benefits sharing. The Commission expressed its appreciation of the support provided by FAO on related issues.

20. The challenging task of the preparation of the SOW-FGR report and the need for the active involvement of the countries was acknowledged. In this regard, the Commission recommended that FAO support capacity building activities and that the existing Guidelines be disseminated to support all countries of the region in the preparation of their national reports.

21. The Commission stressed the importance of forests and rangelands in the region and the many threats and challenges posed for the conservation and sustainable use of these multifunctional systems, including their related biodiversity, in order for them to be of benefit to and sustain local livelihoods, contribute to poverty alleviation and provide environmental services.

22. The importance of the active participation of Commission members in the UNCCD strategy implementation for the improvement of the status of ecosystems, including range and forests as well as populations' conditions was recalled. The Commission recalled also the important experience of some Near East countries in wildlife management and the reintroduction of some extinct wildlife species and the importance of working with neighbouring countries to ensure success in addressing trans-boundary issues related to wildlife conservation and management. The Commission recommended that FAO support and facilitate the promotion of regional and trans-boundary work in the region. The Commission also recommended that the forest and range country institutions develop collaboration and dialogue with other sectors (i.e. Development, Environment, etc.) and work in synergy at country level for joint implementation of the international conventions such as United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD), Convention on Biodiversity (CBD), United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) and monitor progress across the region.

23. The Commission also recommended that countries develop harmonized national as well as across borders and regional policies and legislation, with the focus on developing appropriate mechanisms to secure access to, and use rights of, local communities as well as benefits sharing. The Commission recommended that FAO continue facilitating sharing of experiences on best practices and

knowledge and supporting studies including on legislation and regulations to ensure the protection of resources and benefits sharing with local communities. The role of non-governmental organizations, the private sector and civil society in promoting the forest and range sector was also stressed.

(iii) Forests protection

- a. Forest and fire management
- b. Forest health

Item 5 (iv) - Oil Trees

24. The Commission exchanged experiences and described results achieved in fighting fires in different contexts in the region. The experiences underlined the importance of an integrated forest fire management strategy, encompassing prevention, suppression, and rehabilitation. The Commission also underlined the importance of further promoting and strengthening the participatory approach to forest fire management. It was furthermore observed that mechanisms of coordination and cooperation, especially amongst neighbouring countries, as well as a legal framework conducive for participation by different groups, constitute an important component of the expected strategy.

25. The Commission discussed developments with regard to forest dieback and diseases, noting that a number of outbreaks in different countries call for attention, irrespective of whether these were related to climate change or a consequence of other causes, and for rehabilitation of infected areas.

26. In discussing experiences with regard to oil trees, the Commission underlined the need for studies to constitute a solid information basis for decisions before large-scale afforestation or the introduction of non-endemic oil tree species, including studies on economic feasibility and benefits as well as on environmental consequences such as on soils, and ecosystem dynamics. The Commission also stressed that priorities in the region are water and food securities for which more attention be given to the use of scarce water and arable land.

27. The Commission recommended that FAO strengthen its capacity in the FAO RNE Office especially on rangelands to meet the requirements of the complex forestry programme in the Near East region and considering that rangelands issues are added to the duties of the FAO Forestry Group in Cairo.

IMPLEMENTATION OF REGIONAL GUIDELINES ON GOOD FORESTRY AND RANGE PRACTICES IN ARID AND SEMI-ARID ZONES OF THE NEAR EAST (Item 6)

28. In considering the Secretariat paper, which deals with the implementation of regional guidelines for good forestry and range practices in arid and semi-arid zones of the Near East Region, the Commission appreciated the version of the Guidelines presented to it and recommended that a ninth principle related to combating desertification be added to the existing eight principles of the Guidelines. The Commission highlighted the need to better reflect issues related to rangelands in the Guidelines' content. The issue of local communities and their role in the management of forests and range was also discussed. In order to ensure the sustainable management of forests and range, the Commission strongly recommended the implementation of the Guidelines.

29. The Commission recognized the social, economic and environmental values of traditional local knowledge in the advancement of the forest and rangelands sector in the region and recommended that countries work to preserve it and to strengthen partnerships among stakeholders

30. In addition, the Commission recommended that member countries send to FAO before the Commission's 20th Session further comments on the Guidelines' content and a progress report on the status of its implementation.

ASSESSING RISKS AND VULNERABILITY TO CLIMATE CHANGE OF THE FORESTRY AND RANGE SECTORS IN THE NEAR EAST: (Item 7)

31. The Commission noted with concern the high vulnerability of the Near East region to climate change and recommended that FAO assist countries, through the provision of information and capacity building, to (i) access climate change funds and strengthen their activities on mitigation of and adaptation to climate change and (ii) raise awareness among decision-makers of the pivotal role of forests and rangelands in climate change adaptation.

32. The Commission noted that, in order for climate change adaptation measures to be effective and sustainable, they must address livelihood needs. It urged its members to take into account climate change dimensions when they elaborate national strategies, plans and programmes in the forest and rangelands sectors

33. Furthermore, the Commission recommended that FAO provide opportunities for exchange of experiences among countries in the region on impacts of climate change and actions for adaptation in the forest sector.

34. The Commission suggested that the FAO Regional Office for the Near East take the lead in developing the concept of regional or sub-regional networks or support mechanisms on climate change, possibly under an umbrella network encompassing various technical areas.

HEADS OF FORESTRY DIALOGUE: NEAR EAST FORESTRY INSTITUTIONS: CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT TO MEET THE CHALLENGES OF A CHANGING WORLD. (Item 8)

35. The dialogue was moderated by Mr. Abdelhamid Khaldi, INGRES, Tunisia. The panellists were Mr. Abdu Al Assiri (Saudi Arabia), Mr. Abdelazim Mirghani Ibrahim (Sudan), Mr. Ziad Al-Jbawi (Syria), Mr. Alisher Shukurov (Uzbekistan), Mr. Erdogan Sirin (Turkey), Mr. Ahmed Ridha Fekih Salem (Tunisia). Following the panellists' presentations, several other countries shared their experiences.

36. The Panellists and other speakers gave rich and detailed information on past and ongoing institutional adaptations in response to evolving needs of societies and changing contexts in which forests are utilized and managed. Speakers mentioned efforts to integrate forest aspects into national development strategies and different sector policies; to adjust to changes in social, economic and environmental realities and political priorities; and to take advantage of new opportunities, e.g. REDD+ and eco-tourism. Institutional structures that are flexible and dynamic were seen as conducive to accommodating new demands. Several speakers referred to institutional changes made to support decentralization and devolution. They noted that decentralization facilitated rapid responses to changing environments, but that strong coordination mechanisms between central and decentralized entities needed to be in place. Several speakers reported that coordination mechanisms set up to address cross-cutting issues (e.g. climate change) were helping to break down "silos" and to improve information flow and coordination among agencies. Many mentioned that demands on forestry agencies were increasing, but the forestry agencies' ability to effectively meet the new demands was constrained by limitations in human and financial resources.

37. Each country pursued tailor-made strategies for institutional adaptation depending on their unique situation and the larger policy framework in which forest policies and institutions are integrated. Forest related institutions were seen as benefiting from opening up and integrating a wider range of stakeholders in its activities, despite the large number of associated challenges. Among the benefits mentioned were better recognition by society, a stronger role in general policy making and related implications for budgets, and higher potential to maximize contributions of forests to society.

38. The Commission noted the usefulness of having such exchanges of experiences to tap into the wealth of knowledge in the region was. A number of ways were suggested to strengthen and perpetuate such an exchange, including through national reports to enhance the Secretariat Notes or

discussions at Commission sessions, as well as through regional publications describing past experience of each country in institutional adaptation.

GLOBAL FOREST RESOURCES ASSESSMENT (FRA) 2010 AND NATIONAL FOREST MONITORING AND ASSESSMENT (item 9)

Global Forest Resources Assessment (FRA) 2010:

39. The Commission discussed the key findings of FRA 2010. For the Near East region as a whole, forest area has slightly increased in the last decade, although forest area in some of the countries in the region is decreasing.

40. The Commission requested that FAO makes more efforts to identify and analyze the drivers and underlying causes of deforestation and forest degradation processes in the Near East. The Commission recognized that the socio-economic developments are closely thought to be interlinked with the drivers of land-use change dynamics, leading to an increase or decrease in forest areas.

41. The Commission further requested that remote sensing data be integrated with field inventories and be used to improve forest information in the future.

National Forest Monitoring and Assessment (NFMA)

42. The secretariat informed the Commission that assessments were needed to develop new plans, strategies and policies. NFMA should be permanent and embedded in updated national forest statistic and information systems. Following the Commission's endorsement to change its name and mandate to include rangelands, it proposed that national assessments also include rangelands assessments. The secretariat commended the work done by some countries in North Africa, Kyrgyzstan, Saudi Arabia, and Turkey in forest and range assessments and monitoring. Other countries were encouraged to develop forest and rangeland assessment and monitoring. Countries stressed that the Secretariat notes include report on national efforts done in this area.

43. The Commission requested FAO to provide support to countries in the region to build their capacity for national forest and range monitoring and assessment.

44. The Commission recommended that countries take into consideration rangelands in national studies to produce more integrated assessments, including environmental and social services. Countries were encouraged to prioritize information generation and to allocate resources accordingly.

45. The Commission also requested FAO to follow up together with the concerned countries on the regional project “Assessment of forests, trees and range resources to support policy harmonisation in six Near East countries (Egypt, Iran, Jordan, Oman, Syria and Yemen)” submitted to the Islamic Development Bank.

REGIONAL ISSUES IDENTIFIED BY THE 19th SESSION OF THE COMMISSION FOR THE ATTENTION OF THE 20th SESSION OF THE COMMITTEE ON FORESTRY (COFO) AND THE 30th REGIONAL CONFERENCE FOR THE NEAR EAST (Item 10)

46. Regional issues to the attention of the 20th Session of the Committee of Forestry (COFO)

- (i) Decrease in the number of field projects in the region: the Commission noted with concern the decrease in the number of field projects in the region and requested FAO, in partnership with national, regional and international funding institutions, to allocate adequate financial resources for the development of the forest and rangelands sector
- (ii) Weak national institutional capacities: The Commission recommended that FAO give strong emphasis to supporting national initiatives and regional collaboration, taking into account the national needs of institutional strengthening and capacity building on issues related to national forest programmes, climate change, forest and rangeland policy, institution, wildlife and protected areas, forest fires, forest protection, afforestation and rangelands rehabilitation
- (iii) Insufficient information about forest and range: The Commission noted with concern the scarcity of information on forest and rangelands resources and requested FAO to provide support to countries in the region to build their capacity for national forest and range monitoring and assessment. It recommended that countries take into consideration rangelands in national studies to produce more integrated assessments, including environmental and social services. It also encouraged countries to prioritize information generation and to allocate resources accordingly
- (iv) Local knowledge not sufficiently recognised in the region: The Commission noted with concern that local knowledge is not sufficiently recognised in national policies and programmes and is being lost and recommended that countries work to preserve the social, economic and environmental values of traditional local knowledge in the advancement of the forest and rangelands sector in the region and to strengthen partnership among stakeholders
- (v) Increasing risk and vulnerability to climate change: The Commission noted with concern the high vulnerability of the Near East region to climate change and recommended that FAO assist countries, through the provision of information and capacity building, to (i) access climate

change funds and strengthen their activities on mitigation of, and adaptation to, climate change and (ii) raise awareness among decision-makers of the pivotal role of forests and rangelands in climate change adaptation. . It also urged its members to take into account climate change dimensions when they elaborate national strategies, plans and programmes in the forest and rangelands sectors.

47. Regional issues to the attention of the 30th Regional Conference

- (i) Decrease in the number of field projects in the region: the Commission noted with concern the decrease in the number of field projects in the region and requested FAO, in partnership with national, regional and international funding institutions, to allocate adequate financial resources for the development of the forest and rangelands sector
- (ii) Weak national institutional capacities: The Commission recommended FAO give strong emphasis to supporting national initiatives and regional collaboration, taking into account the national needs of institutional strengthening and capacity building on issues related to national forest programmes, climate change, forest and rangeland policy, institution, wildlife and protected areas, forest fires, forest protection, afforestation and rangelands rehabilitation
- (iii) Insufficient information about forest and range: The Commission noted with concern the scarcity of information on forest and rangelands resources and recommended that countries take into consideration rangelands in national studies to produce more integrated assessments, including environmental and social services. It also encouraged countries to prioritize information generation and to allocate resources accordingly
- (iv) Local knowledge not sufficiently recognised in the region: The Commission noted with concern the local knowledge is not sufficiently recognised in national policies and programmes and is being lost and recommended that countries work to preserve the social, economic and environmental values of traditional local knowledge in the advancement of the forest and rangelands sector in the region and to strengthen partnership among stakeholders
- (v) Low participation of the Near East countries in international meetings: The Commission requested FAO to facilitate the preparation of meetings for international conventions and congresses and link forests and forestry with other international years such as for the current International Year of Biodiversity 2010 and develop synergies between the International Year of Forests and the International Decade of Desertification 2010-2020. It furthermore recommended that greater cooperation between countries of the north and south Mediterranean region be encouraged

- (vi) Increasing risk and vulnerability to climate change: The Commission noted with concern the high vulnerability of the Near East region to climate change and urged its members to raise awareness among decision-makers of the pivotal role of forests and rangelands in climate change adaptation and to take into account climate change dimensions in national strategies, plans and programmes for the forest and rangelands sectors.

UPDATE ON CURRENT AND EMERGING INTERNATIONAL ISSUES (Item 11)

Item 11: Update on current and emerging international issues

General

48. The Commission urged its Bureau to prepare the agenda for the Near East Forestry Commission, focusing on fewer and more central issues, thereby allowing time for more focused and in-depth discussions. The Commission requested that FAO facilitate the exchange of success stories from inside and outside the region.

49. The Commission identified the need to coordinate the position of countries in international conventions in order to ensure adequate consideration of the forestry situation in the region and requested FAO to assist in securing membership of a region representative in the Collaborative partnership of Forests (CPF

50. The Commission requested FAO to provide more support for targeted capacity building on international issues, according to countries specific needs.

(i) Report of the Near East Forestry Day (13th World Forestry Congress, Buenos Aires, Argentina 2009)

51. The Commission commended the side event organized at the 13th World Forestry Congress in Buenos Aires, which had contributed to raising awareness of national forestry programmes (nfps) as well as providing a forum for learning from other regions, governmental organizations, non-governmental organizations and civil society representatives.

(ii) Recommendations of the 19th Session of COFO (March 2009)

52. The Commission reiterated its request that increased financial and human resources be provided to the FAO Regional Office in Cairo. The addition of rangelands in the Commission's area of work reinforced this requirement.

53. The Commission recommended that COFO recommendations of relevance to the Near East be selected for national and regional implementation.

(iii) National Forestry Programmes

54. The Commission shared experiences on countries' efforts to adopt, adjust and apply national forest programmes (nfps) as a comprehensive forest policy framework, as agreed by countries in the international dialogue on forests. It was noted that considerable progress had been made in some countries towards broader, more participative and better integrated policy frameworks and processes, but that many challenges remain. This includes further developing a full and widely-shared understanding of the comprehensive nature of nfps. It also comprises strengthening capacity and financing means related to the process and implementation of resulting policies and strategies.

55. The Commission recommended that FAO identify ways to further strengthen countries' efforts towards developing nfps as comprehensive forest policy frameworks. To that end it was recommended that FAO promote the exchange of experiences and best practices, build specific capacity needed by countries towards that goal, and identify ways to overcome obstacles in using international support effectively. It was also noted that particular emphasis is called for to integrate forest and range issues into nfps of the countries in the region.

(iv) International Year of Forests (2011)

56. The Commission recommended that countries (i) promote joint action in the framework of international conventions, fora and congresses; (ii) develop synergies between the International Year of Forests and the International Decade of Desertification 2010-2020 and; (iii) establish communications strategies for the International Year of Forests, including professional communicators such as journalists as well as forest communications networks.

57. The Commission recommended that World Forest Day focus on a different theme each year.

58. The Commission requested FAO to facilitate the preparation of meetings for international conventions and congresses and recommended that FAO link forests and forestry with other

international years such as for the current International Year of Biodiversity 2010. It requested FAO to provide guidance and recommendations for the International Year of Forests.

59. The Commission urged the countries to raise awareness and highlight the important benefits of forest goods and services and their impact on the environment in order to create a better understanding of the pivotal role of forests and forestry.

(v) Working groups and networks

60. The Commission noted the increasing number of newly proposed networks and working groups. It recommended that an umbrella or core regional network be established, coordinated by the FAO Regional Office in Cairo.

(vi) *Silva Mediterranea*

61. The Secretariat informed the Commission of the latest developments undertaken by the Committee.

62. The Commission recommended that, as far as possible, activities of *Silva Mediterranea* and the Commission should be coordinated.

ANY OTHER BUSINESS (Item 12)

63. The Commission suggested that the main publications of the FAO Forestry Department also be translated into Russian and Arabic.

64. The Commission recommended that member countries prepare country reports prior to each session and submit them to FAO for use in the preparation of the FAO secretariat papers for the session. They further requested that the secretariat papers be more comprehensive and detailed.

65. The Commission was informed that a number of parallel events were successfully organized under the NEFW covering various topics i.e. forest management; cork oak; forests and climate change in the Near East and forest fire management in the Near East (*Appendix D*). The Commission was also informed of the two parallel events that took place on Tuesday, 6th April, the main conclusions of which are indicated below:

Within the region there was a need to:

66. Forests and Climate Change in the Near East

- a) improve the flow of information and coordination between national entities responsible for climate change and forests;
- b) raise awareness among climate change negotiators of the essential roles of forests in climate change mitigation and adaptation; and
- c) ensure pro-active involvement stakeholders in national and international policy processes on climate change and to explore the potential for regional cooperation.

67. Fire Management in the Near East

- a) develop national capacities and fire research on the root causes of fires;
- b) review and amend national legislation frameworks related to fire management; and
- c) endorse the Near East Network on Forests and Wildland Fires, given the need for regional cooperation.

Mediterranean Regional Office of the European Forest Institute (EFIMED)

68. In his presentation, Mr. Marc Palahi, head of the Mediterranean Regional Office of the European Forest Institute (EFIMED), informed the Commission of the important role that Mediterranean forests play in sustaining biodiversity and conserving soil and water. The expected impacts of climate change on Mediterranean forests were highlighted in respect of the goods and services they provide.

69. He described how fragmented and outdated research and considered that the cooperation and efficient resource mobilization were areas of major concern in the region. In this regard, more than 100 experts from 15 countries were mobilized by EFIMED for the preparation of the Research Agenda on Mediterranean Forests for the next decade (2010-2020). He stated that the Agenda's focus was on four major topics:

- 1) Impacts of climate and land use changes
- 2) Increasing risk of forest fires
- 3) Provision of forest goods and services
- 4) Management of Mediterranean forests

70. The response to the above-mentioned topics was the design of the project “Advancing Mediterranean forest resources capacities AGORA”, which was prepared and approved by the European Community for funding.

71. The Commission stressed the need for local communities’ direct involvement in and direct input to the implementation of the project “Advancing Mediterranean Forest Resources Capacities AGORA”. The Commission also recommended that greater cooperation between countries of the north and south Mediterranean region be encouraged.

72. With regard to forestry education, the need for Mediterranean-oriented higher education and research in forestry was highlighted, especially in the socio-economic field. The Commission welcomed the preparatory steps for a shared M.Sc in Mediterranean forestry.

DATE AND PLACE OF NEXT SESSION (Item 13)

73. The Commission noted with appreciation the offer of the delegations of Egypt, Syria, Turkey and Yemen to host the 20th Session of the Near East Forestry Commission in the early part of 2012. It advised member countries which had expressed interest in hosting the session to send an official letter to the Director-General of FAO. The exact dates of the meeting would be further determined in consultation with the country concerned after appropriate logistical and organizational consultations.

APPENDIX A**AGENDA**

1. Opening of the 19th Session of the Near East Forestry Commission (NEFC) and of the 1st Near East Forestry Week
2. Adoption of agenda
3. Election of officers
4. Follow-up on requests and recommendations of the 18th Session of the Commission
 - (i) Amendment of name and mandate of the Near East Forestry Commission to the Near East Forestry and Range Commission
 - (ii) Secretariat report on actions taken on the requests and recommendations of the 18th Session of the Commission
5. FAO and countries activities in the region:
 - (i) Forestry policy and sustainable development
 - a) Institutions and legislation
 - b) Guidelines for forest policy formulation
 - (ii) Forests and range sustainable management
 - a) Rangelands and biodiversity conservation
 - b) The State of the World's Forest Genetic Resources
 - c) Wildlife and protected areas management
 - (iii) Forests protection
 - a) Forest and fire management
 - b) Forest health
 - (iv) Oil trees
6. Implementation of regional guidelines for good forestry and range practices in arid and semi-arid zones of the Near East
7. In-session seminar: *assessing the risks of and vulnerability to climate change of forests and range in the Near East*
8. Heads of Forestry Dialogue – *Near East forestry institutions: capacity development to meet the challenges of a changing world*
9. Global Forest Resources Assessment (FRA) 2010 and National Forest Monitoring and Assessment (NFMA)
10. Regional issues identified by the 19th Session of the NEFC for the attention of the 30th Regional Conference for the Near East (November 2010) and of the 20th Session of the Committee on Forestry (October 2010)
11. Update on current and emerging international issues

- (i) Report of the Near East Forestry Day (XIII World Forestry Congress, Buenos Aires, Argentina, 2009)
- (ii) Recommendations of the 19th Session of the Committee on Forestry (March 2009)
- (iii) National forestry programmes (nfps)
- (iv) International Year of Forests (2011)
- (v) Working groups and networks
- (vi) *Silva Mediterranea*

12. Any other business

13. Date and place of next session

14. Adoption of the report

15. Closure of the 19th Session of the Near East Forestry Commission and of the 1st Near East Forestry Week

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APPENDIX C

LIST OF DOCUMENTS

FO:NEFC/2010/1/Rev.1 Provisional agenda

FO:NEFC/2010/4.1 Amendment of name and mandate of the Near East Forestry Commission to the Near East Forestry and Range Commission

FO:NEFC/2010/4.2 Secretariat report on FAO and country activities in the region and follow-up on requests and recommendations of the 18th Session of the Commission

FO:NEFC/2010/5.1 Forestry policy and sustainable development

- (a) Institutions and legislation
- (b) Guidelines for forest policy formulation

FO:NEFC/2010/5.2 Forest and range sustainable management

- (a) Rangelands and biodiversity conservation
- (b) Wildlife and protected areas management

FO:NEFC/2010/5.3 Forest protection

- (a) Forest and fire management
- (b) Forest health

FO:NEFC/2010/5.4 Oil trees

FO:NEFC/2010/5.5 Preparation of the State of the World's Forest Genetic Resources Report

FO:NEFC/2010/6 Implementation of regional guidelines on good forestry and range practices in arid and semi-arid zones of the Near East

FO:NEFC/2010/7 In-session seminar: Assessing the risks of and vulnerability to climate change of forests and range in the Near East

FO:NEFC/2010/8 Heads of Forestry Dialogue – Near East forestry institutions: capacity development to meet the challenges of a changing world

FO:NEFC/2010/9 National Forestry Monitoring and Assessment

FO:NEFC/2010/11.1 Report of the Near East Forestry Day (XIII World Forestry Congress, Buenos Aires, 2009)

FO:NEFC/2010/11.2 Recommendations of the 19th Session of the Committee on Forestry

FO:NEFC/2010/11.3 National forestry programmes (nfps)

FO:NEFC/2010/11.4 International Year of Forests (2011)

FO:NEFC/2010/11.5 Working Groups and Networks

FO:NEFC/2010/11.6 Silva Mediterranea: progress report on activities

FO:NEFC/2010/Inf.1 Information note for participants

FO:NEFC/2010/Inf.2 Provisional timetable

FO:NEFC/2010/Inf.3 List of documents

FO:NEFC/2010/Inf.4 List of participants

ANNEX 1**Chairperson's Summary of the
Parallel Event on Forests and Climate Change
Tuesday, 6 April 16:00-18:00**

The Chair, Mr. Chadi Mohanna (Lebanon), welcomed the 30 participants and presented the objectives of the parallel event: to discuss global and regional issues and national responses to forests and climate change adaptation and mitigation. He asked participants to consider areas for possible future regional collaboration in climate change that the Commission could consider in its discussion under agenda item 7.

Ms Susan Braatz (FAO) summarized the key outcomes of UNFCCC's negotiations in Copenhagen in December 2009, highlighting issues of importance to forest stakeholders in the region.

Dr. Ahmed El-Baha (Egypt) presented the key findings of a regional analysis on forests and climate change in the Near East undertaken for FAO, including future scenarios, impacts and vulnerabilities of forests in the region, adaptation needs and mitigation options, and key policy issues.

Dr. Ahmed Azeroual (Morocco) made a presentation on the management of forest ecosystems in Morocco, focusing on research on predicted impacts of climate change on forests and the country's actions that will contribute to adaptation.

Dr. Balgis Elasha (Sudan) delivered a presentation on socio-economic aspects of climate change and forests. She advocated a more human-centred approach to adaptation actions in the forestry sector and more effective coordination and policy integration among livelihood sectors.

During the discussion, the limited involvement by forestry departments in many countries in preparing for or participating in climate change negotiations was noted. The need for improved flow of information and coordination between national entities responsible for climate change and forestry departments was stressed.

The importance of raising awareness among climate change negotiators of the positive contributions of forests to the global carbon cycle and mitigation, as well as reduced vulnerabilities and adaptation

to climate change, was emphasized. It was suggested that FAO could assist by preparing such positive messages for use in regional policy processes.

The low share of forestry in Clean Development Mechanism (CDM) financed projects, due largely to complicated modalities and procedures, was discussed. Concern was raised that REDD+ projects might face similar constraints. The distinction between REDD, REDD+ and Nationally Appropriate Mitigation Actions (NAMA) was clarified.

In response to queries about FAO's internal coordination and relationship with UNFCCC, FAO explained that it had various interdepartmental mechanisms that facilitated good communication and coordination on climate change, and that FAO, in a technical capacity, actively supports UNFCCC's negotiations and scientific and technical work in forestry, and more recently in agriculture and fisheries.

The participants stressed the importance of pro-active involvement in national and international policy processes on forests and climate change and of exploring the potential for regional cooperation.

ANNEX 2**Summary of the Parallel Event on Fire Management in the Near East****Tuesday 6 April 16:00-18:00**

The facilitator, Mr. Pieter van Lierop, FAO, welcomed the 21 participants representing Commission members and one private enterprise which attended the parallel event. He described the objectives of the event i.e. to present global and regional activities on fire management and to discuss possible future activities. At the conclusion of the meeting, participants agreed on points of action with the highest priority for fire management in the region.

Mr. van Lierop presented FAO's activities in fire management at the global and regional levels. The development of a global strategy for international cooperation in vegetation fire management and the Fire Management Voluntary Guidelines, endorsed by the Regional Forestry Commissions and COFO 2009, as useful instruments to develop or revise national fire management policies and/or action plans for integrated fire management were highlighted.

Mr. Kostakis Papageorgiou (Cyprus) presented the proposed structure, mission and secretariat of the Near East Forest and Wildland Fire Network. During COFO 2007 and earlier Commission meetings, FAO was requested to support the establishment of such a network. A meeting has been organized by FAO in Syria in 2009 and the Italian Forest Service had supported development of the proposal. Among the activities of the network coordination with other networks such as the European Forest Fire Information System Network (EFFIS) and *Silva Mediterranea* was mentioned. The proposal was submitted for endorsement by the Commission.

Mr. Bel Hadj (Tunisia) described the current status of fire management in Tunisia as well as latest developments. Developing national capacity in fire research through training of special teams was of specific interest to the event's participants, who considered it a regional priority, given the huge portion of fires reported in national statistics which were often classified in the category of fires without a known cause.

Mr. Al Zjibawi (Syria) made a presentation on Project Integrated and Community-Based Fire Management in Syria. "He highlighted the importance of the participation of local populations in fire prevention activities such as tree pruning and the importance of rural development activities to prevent forest fires.

Mr. Kök (Turkey) described current fire management activities in Turkey, with particular mention of the use of cameras for smoke detection and the ongoing establishment of an international training centre on forest fires in Antalya as well as its possibility to be used for training of people from outside the region. He further mentioned Turkey's interest in providing bilateral support to countries in the region.

Mr. Hicham Harrak (ITURRI, Spain) raised the importance of partnerships between private enterprises and governmental bodies on fire management and highlighted the experience developed in Andalusia to develop defence plans against forest fires. Of special interest was the creation of special brigades for forest fire causes, the need for long- and medium-term investment plans, awareness raising and coordination with neighbouring communities.

After the presentations and discussion, the participants wished to draw the attention of the Commission to the following needs, to:

- develop national capacities and fire investigation on root causes of fires
- review and amend national legislation frameworks related to fire management
- endorse the Near East Network on Forests and Wild Land Fires, given the importance of regional cooperation.