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Organización
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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**

AMENDMENT OF NAME AND MANDATE OF THE NEAR EAST FORESTRY COMMISSION TO THE NEAR EAST FORESTRY AND RANGE COMMISSION

1. This note serves to inform the Near East Forestry Commission of the latest developments related to the recommendation formulated at the Commission's 18th Session, 18-21 February 2008, Khartoum, Sudan, regarding the amendment of the Commission's name and mandate.

Rationale

2. In most Near East countries, the land which is regarded as forest land also includes extensive surfaces that are of considerable interest to the forester even if trees are sparse or non-existent. These areas are generally used for extensive and frequently indiscriminate and unregulated grazing by cattle.

3. In arid and semi-arid lands, where extensive grazing is practised, forests contribute a great deal to fodder production, and during severe weather conditions they play a critical role in reducing cattle loss by supplying fodder from tree foliage, flowers and fruits by direct browsing or branch pruning. However, under severe conditions, animal grazing can reach levels that jeopardize normal vegetation development. In addition, situations of conflict can arise between foresters and breeders or even between the breeders themselves. Conversely, grazing in forest land can be beneficial if it is rationally practised. In the Mediterranean countries, it is well established that grazing in forests helps to reduce the risk of forest fires.

4. The harsh ecological conditions, limited vegetation cover and the economic value of the resources require the implementation of a policy which aims at the best balance possible between

crop-lands, forests and grazing lands. The integration of these land uses within a common management programme is needed to promote the protection and improvement of the productive capacity of both timber and forage resources.

Recommendations

5. Following the recommendation of the 18th Session of the Near East Forestry Commission regarding the inclusion of range concerns in the name and activities of the Commission, amendment proposals were prepared by a group of countries mandated by the Commission namely: Cyprus, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, Sudan and Tunisia. At the last meeting of the Near East Forestry Executive Committee, which took place in December 2008, it was agreed that the amendments proposed would be submitted for formal endorsement and enforcement by the 19th Session of the Commission to be held in April 2010 in Tunisia.

6. The proposed amendments are:

Name: The Near East Forestry Commission (NEFC) will become the Near East Forestry and Range Commission (NEFRC).

Mandate: The Near East Forestry and Range Commission (NERFC) is a forum for member countries to exchange views and experiences and to formulate recommendations for implementation at national and regional levels in relation to forest, range, trees and their products.

In view of the fact that range covers more than seventy percent of the Near East land area, while forests continue to be heavily utilized for grazing, range and rangeland issues will be fully integrated in the work of the Commission.

The Commission examines the widening gap between present trends and the potential of forests and rangelands. It identifies the threats to forests and rangelands and recommends possible action. The outcomes of the Commission reflect the views of the member countries and their will to work together towards common goals.

7. These changes in the name and mandate of the Commission would require an amendment of Article I and Rule I of the Commission's Statutes and Rules of Procedure, respectively.

8. Article I of the Commission's Statutes, which refers to the functions of the Commission, will need to be amended in order to reflect the new name and mandate of the Commission. Article I currently provides that:

"1. The functions of the Near East Forestry Commission shall be to advise on the formulation of forest policy and to review and coordinate its implementation on the regional plane; to exchange information 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."

9. Proposed amendments to Article I of the Statute are shown in underlined text below:

1. The functions of the Near East Forestry and Range Commission shall be to advise on the formulation of forest, trees and their products (optional), and range policy, 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 recommends possible action. The outcomes of the Commission reflect the views of its members and their will to work together towards common goals (optional).

10. Rule I of the Commission's Rules of Procedures, which refers to "*Membership in the Near East Forestry Commission*", will also need to be amended in order to reflect the new name of the Commission.

11. As per past practice, the entry into force of the amendments to the Commission's Statutes will occur upon approval by the Council of the Organization. The entry into force of the amendments to the Rules of Procedure shall occur "*upon approval by the Director-General of the Organization*", as provided in Rule XII.

Discussion and decision

12. The Commission is invited to:

- endorse the proposed amendments following the request of the 18th Session;
- identify practical steps that can be taken to improve linkages and communication among government departments as well as among partners that deal with forestry and range issues; and
- outline follow-up activities, focusing principally on institutional synergy in support of combined sustainable forest and range management and developing integrated approaches that cut across the two sectors.