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NEAR EAST FORESTRY AND RANGE COMMISSION

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Good Governance of Forests and Rangelands : Pillar of Food Security

SECRETARIAT REPORT ON FAO AND COUNTRY ACTIVITIES IN THE REGION AND FOLLOW-UP ON REQUESTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE 19TH SESSION OF THE COMMISSION

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 which were carried out in 2010-2011. These activities include those undertaken in response to the requests and recommendations of the Nineteenth Session of the Commission which are summarized in *Annex A*.

REVIEW OF NEFRC AND OTHER FAO FORESTRY ACTIVITIES, INCLUDING FOLLOW-UP TO THE RECOMMENDATIONS OF 19th NEFC FOREST POLICY

1. The Near East is among the least forested regions in the world. However, these forests are the “invisible” backbone of the rural people’s food security. They provide multiple wood and non wood products and a wide range of social and environmental services. A significant proportion of the population in the Near East who live in the drylands depend directly on forests and rangelands for their day-to-day subsistence. For example, trees and rangelands are important sources of wood that is used for energy.

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2. Forests and rangelands are closely inter-related natural resources, often operating as one ecosystem as a continuum rather than as discrete and autonomous land uses. Their proper management contributes to the sustainable provision of goods and services in arid and semiarid lands.
3. On requests and recommendations of the 19th Session of the Commission, the FAO Regional Office for the Near East (FAO/RNE) with support from the FAO Forestry Department and external partners continues to place strong emphasis to the support of national initiatives and regional collaboration. The FAO Regional Office took into account the national needs of institutional strengthening and capacity building and responded by means of regional workshops and meetings on issues related to climate change, forests and rangelands policy, National Forest Programmes, institutional strengthening, wildlife and protected areas management, forest fires and forest protection, afforestation, forest genetic resources and rangelands rehabilitation.

FAO AND COUNTRY ACTIVITIES IN THE NEAR EAST REGION

(i) Amendment of the Rules of Procedure of the NEFRC

4. In view of the rapid changes of socio-economic variables, the changing demand of society for goods and services from forests & woodlands, the growing role of rangelands in providing habitat and feed for livestock & wildlife and the pivotal role of the latter in food security, poverty alleviation and reduction of stress on forests, the Near East Forestry Commission (NEFC) was transformed into the Near East Forestry & Range Commission (NEFRC) by decision of the FAO Council at its Hundred and Thirty-ninth Session (17-21 May 2010) following the endorsement by the Commission.

5. On request of the Committee on Forestry for the Near East Forestry and Range Commission to review the activities of relevant bodies engaged in forest and rangeland activities in the region, with the view to promoting coordination and collaboration and report its findings to the next session of COFO, a study was completed on the topic.

(ii) Strengthening of FAO RNE Forestry Program

6. Following the call of the Commission to FAO to strengthen the capacity of its Office for the Near East, especially on rangelands to meet the complex requirements of the region's forestry programme, a Junior Professional Officer was recruited in July 2011. Explorations with donors are underway to recruit an associate professional officer.

(iii) Forestry policy and sustainable development

7. A common understanding has been reached in the region that the forest sector alone cannot achieve sustainable forest management. Other sectors' policies, especially those of agriculture and livestock management, energy, water and tourism may directly or indirectly influence the way forest and tree resources are managed. These policies may sometimes even foster deforestation and forest degradation which impact the livelihoods of the rural poor.

8. The FAO Forestry Department is promoting dialogue between forestry and other related sectors in order to foster policy coordination at the national level as well as good forest governance towards achieving sustainable forest management (SFM).

9. In the dynamic of policy dialogue and in response to a recommendation of the 19th NEFC, FAO conducted a regional study on "Public sector forestry institutions in Near East: Adapting to meet the challenges of a changing world". The study is based on case studies from Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Syria and Tunisia, and aims to draw the lessons learnt from four decades of policy and institutional adaptations. The study casts light on the drivers of decision making for institutional

adaptation and identifies the degree to which institutional adaptation was able to meet, or failed to meet, changing societal demands and forest and range sector requirements.

10. In response to the Commission's recommendation to FAO to provide support to capacity building for member countries in forest policy development and implementation, the Organization in partnership with Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) convened a regional workshop for the country members of NEFRC. The focus of the workshop was: (1) to identify needs to adjust existing policies, legislation, institutional framework and governance arrangements, using national forest program processes, and (2) to address the emerging challenges and opportunities posed by climate change. The workshop concluded that integration of forestry and rangelands into broader national development strategies and coordination with other sectors is still weak and needs particular attention from the decision makers in view of the challenges posed by climate change and the high population growth the region is facing and will continue to face in the future.

(iv) Forest and rangelands: knowledge sharing

11. Forests and rangelands in the Near East have significant productive and protective functions and as such offer many opportunities to contribute to the economic, environmental, and social development of the region. Despite that, they are receiving limited attention by decision makers. In response to request of the 19th NEFC and in an attempt to highlight the multiple functions of the region's forests and rangelands through facts and figures, FAO undertook valuable studies which lead to the production of a booklet called "Forests and Rangelands: Facts and Figures" outlining social, economic and environmental benefits and the role of the resources in food security.

12. NEFC 19 stressed the need for studies to constitute a solid information basis for decisions before large-scale afforestation or introduction of non-endemic oil tree species. Considering this, FAO/RNE conducted a study on "Oil trees in the Near East Region" reviewing available information on oil trees, with a focus on three main species in Near East region. It covers technical aspects, socio-economic feasibility and benefits of oil trees as well as opportunities and constraints faced by the sector to strengthen national capacities and develop regional cooperation.

13. The 20th Session of the Committee on Forestry requested FAO to prepare a long-term strategy for the global forest resources assessment process consistent with sustainable funding. The strategy proposes ways to use the strengths of the current process; continue improvements to meet global needs; explore opportunities to build successful partnerships and improve communication and outreach approaches. FAO is preparing a long-term strategy for the FRA programme consistent with prospects for sustainable funding. The long term FRA strategy encompasses the arid zones forestry. Near East countries can provide inputs for improved information on arid zones forests and their social and environmental contexts.

(v) Sustainable management of forests and rangelands

14. FAO's work on the sustainable management of forests and rangelands in arid zones encompasses a wide range of activities related to forests and forestry; rangelands; forest fire management; forest health; genetic resources; wildlife and protected areas, etc. On recommendation of the 19th NEFC, the rangelands issues were added to the mandate of the Commission and to the forestry program of work the FAO Regional Office for the Near East (RNE).

(a) Forests, rangelands and biodiversity conservation

15. FAO is actively working with its Members to assess the global state of genetic diversity in the world's forests and find solutions to the threats facing them. The Organization also

promotes best practices in forest genetic resources management specifically in the areas of conservation, exploration, testing, breeding and informed use of new biotechnology.

16. The challenging task of preparing a report on the State of the World Forest Genetic Resources (SOW-FGR) and the need for the active involvement of the countries was acknowledged by the 19th NEFC. In this regard, and in order to strengthen national capacities, FAO organized a regional training workshop in Hammamet, Tunisia in June 2011 for the national focal points on the SOW-FGR. Two sub regional TCP Facility projects were approved to support the national focal points in the preparation of the country reports.

17. On request of the 19th session of the Commission, FAO RNE communicated the revised “Guidelines for good forestry and range practices in arid and semi-arid zones of the Near East” to all member countries for final comments. Comments from very few countries reached FAO.

(b) Integrated watershed management and landscape restoration

18. It goes without saying that forests play an essential role in maintaining biodiversity and soil fertility, regulating freshwater flows and providing many other global environmental benefits.

19. FAO has been actively conducting work in the fields of integrated watershed management. Among the main FAO activities in this area is the support to formulation and implementation of field projects.

20. Following request from The Ministry of Agriculture and Irrigation (MAI), Yemen, FAO provided assistance to Yemen for the formulation and implementation of the Project: “Integrated Natural Resources Management in Watershed Wadi Tanef in the Ibb Governorate”. The project was launched in the beginning of 2011, but, due to the civil unrest in the country, it was halted few weeks after its launch.

21. To implement the Commission’s recommendation for use of sewage water in forest tree planting with required precaution when such waters are used, FAO organized a regional workshop on the use of treated waste water in forest restoration to sustain smallholders and farmers livelihood in Egypt, Algeria, Tunisia and Morocco. The workshop was supported by scientists from two Italian Universities and delegates from the Ministry of Foreign affairs of Italy. The workshop has lead to identified priorities in the four countries formulated in a logical framework. FAO aims at attracting donors interested in landscape restoration, and climate change mitigation in the Near East to support afforestation activities on marginal lands using treated waste water. The Government of Italy has provided financial contribution to launch pilot activities in the four countries. Depending on funding, the project has the potential to upscale its activities in the four countries and expand its geographic scope to include other countries.

22. Following the request from Lebanon, FAO provided assistance to the Ministry of Agriculture of Lebanon on the design and formulation of large scale national afforestation/reforestation plan. The project was formulated with the aim of raising the forest cover in Lebanon to 20% of the country land area.

(c) Regional Networks

23. A regional workshop on networks in the Near East was held in Cairo Egypt, from 7 to 9 November. The meeting was organised in response to a recommendation made by the Commission to evaluate a regional coordination mechanism network or “umbrella” under which to manage the three existing regional networks. Eleven countries from the region were represented; Cyrus, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Sudan and Yemen. All three regional networks were represented: the Near East Network on Forest Health and Invasive Species (NENFHIS), the Near East Working Group on Wildlife and

Protected Area Management (NEWPAM) and the Near East Regional Network on Forest and Wildland Fires (NENFIRE). NENFIRE and NEWPAM were both established in 2009 and have not yet been endorsed by NEFRC; while NENFHIS was created in 2007 and was endorsed by the NEFC in 2008.

24. Network members unanimously concluded that the three networks are important for forestry, range and wildlife sectors in the region. They agreed on the importance of maintaining the three technical networks as independent entities with functioning secretariats and considered that an “umbrella” network was not the most effective coordination mechanism for their operations. It was proposed that NEFRC should be requested to fill the role as the coordinating mechanism to which the three networks can report to and receive guidance.

(d) Wildlife and protected areas management

25. The Commission recalled the important experience of some Near East countries in wildlife and protected areas management, the reintroduction of some extinct wildlife species and the importance of regional collaboration amongst countries to ensure success in addressing trans-boundary issues related to wildlife conservation and management. An inter-regional project was prepared by FAO/RNE and FOMC on “Enhancing regional capacities for biodiversity conservation and sustainable wildlife and protected area management in the Near East and Sudan”. It concerns six countries: Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, Mauritania, Sudan, Syria, Tunisia and Yemen. The approval of funds is on its final stage from TCSD.

(e) Forest fire management

26. FAO continues to place strong emphasis on protection of forests against wild uncontrolled fires in the Near East Region. At the national level, three projects on forest fires were implemented in collaboration with FAO. These include: (1) the fire management project in Lebanon which was completed in 2011; (2) the second phase of the Italian funded project in Syria underway until 2012; and (3) the UTF project on forest policy in Morocco which includes a component on the development of a fire early alert system. At global level, the International Wildland Fire Conference organized its meeting in Sun City, South Africa, from 9 to 13 May 2011. Being part of the Conference, FAO made sure that the program was relevant for the fire management needs of developing countries by proposing sessions on Community Based fire Management, Fire and poverty alleviation and Traditional Fire Management and Knowledge. FAO also supported two presentations from the region.

(f) Forest and rangeland resources valorisation

27. For most people living in rural areas, especially the poor, forests and trees outside the forest are sources of food, fuel, fodder, medicines, and building materials as well as cash income. FAO has been assisting its member countries in developing income-generating tree and forest product enterprises with greater incentives to sustainably manage and protect those resources. The design of the community-based tree and forest product enterprises is based on market analysis as part of the national forest programme process.

28. In this context, FAO provided support to Tunisia for the design and formulation of a project: “Support to development of Non Wood Forest Products (NWFP) based on micro enterprises that aim at improving the living conditions of forest dependent people and sustainable management of forests and rangelands in Tunisia”. NWFPs are still poorly valorised by the local population. The public administration and the private sector do not have sufficient capacity for the promotion and management of small business exploitation of NWFPs.

29. FAO undertook a regional analysis on NWFPs based on a series of case studies on national experiences in utilization and processing of NWFPs and the role of small enterprises in

promoting NWFPs. These studies included: (1) The case of Gum Arabic in Sudan; (2) The case of Bee Honey & Wax in Yemen; (3) The case of Pistachio Nuts in Islamic Republic of Iran and; (4) The case of Stone Pine in Lebanon.

(g) Regional guidelines on good forestry and rangelands practices in Arid and Semi Arid Zones of the Near East

30. The NEFC, at its 19th session, recommended that countries, after adapting the “Guidelines for Forest Policy Development” to suit national circumstances and realities, use them in their efforts to update their forest policies and legislation. Countries are continuing their efforts to implement their respective forestry and rangelands programmes through putting in place institutional and policy changes and new administrative reform especially in Turkey and Iran.

31. Under the FAO normative program, FAO produced two major publications on arid forestry as working papers. The first paper on “management of dune plantations,” aims at contributing to and supporting country initiatives and activities related to combating desertification, arid zones restoration and protection of infrastructures as well as agriculture lands. This paper contributes essentially to the national, regional and sub-regional programs under implementation of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD). The second working paper addresses the State of Mediterranean Forests (SoMF). It is a concept proposal for periodic assessments of Mediterranean forest resources.

(h) Climate change and forest and rangelands in the Near East

32. With the growing concern of the high vulnerability of the Near East region to climate change, FAO acted in different fronts to assist countries understand the problematic of climate change and devise appropriate measures to mitigate its effects on the region and this with due consideration of the pivotal role of forests and rangelands in climate change mitigation. FAO published a regional analysis of forests and climate change in the Near East (FAO Working Paper 9). The publication is now available in English and French.

33. The regional workshop on “Forest, Rangelands and Climate Change in the Near East Region” was held in Cairo, Egypt from 20-22 September 2011 in partnership with GIZ Regional project and the FAO Finland Partnership Programme. The purpose of the project was to discuss the sub regional and regional priorities and formulate a regional project for forest and rangelands adaptation to climate change.

34. The Regional FAO Office for the Near East created a multidisciplinary Working Group (WG) on climate change. The WG organised a regional Forum on climate change held in Beirut in June 2011. The purpose of the Forum was to discuss investment opportunities in agriculture and rural development within the climate change framework with due consideration of the Regional Priorities Framework and food security. The Beirut Declaration underscored the challenges posed by climate change on food security in the region and the need for regional collaboration and national partnerships on climate change related issues.

(i) Global Forest Resources Assessment (FRA)

35. In order to promote a Global Forest Resources Assessment that meets long-term global needs, the Committee on Forestry (COFO) in its twentieth session (2010) requested FAO to prepare a long-term strategy for the FRA programme consistent with prospects for sustainable funding. In response to that request, FAO prepared a strategy for FRA until 2030. To ensure wide consensus on this strategy, FAO convened an expert consultation in Nastola, Finland in 13 – 15 September 2011. The strategy for the FRA program is introduced to the countries in the Regional Forestry Commissions for review and further input.

36. FAO RNE participated in the 3rd Mediterranean Scientific Conference of the Inter Academic Group (GID) for development with a communication on “Forests and range resources around the Mediterranean: State, functions and knowledge”.

(j) Forestry in the international level

37. In response to the Commission’s request to FAO to facilitate exchange of success stories from inside and outside the region and provide more support for targeted capacity building on international issues, according to countries specific needs, a GEF awareness workshop was held in 20-21 December, 2010, in Egypt. It was attended by representatives from Ministries of agriculture, forestry and fisheries in the region and FAO staff. The workshop provided information on the GEF objectives, institutional set-up, strategies, and policies; information about new developments for GEF-5; Understanding of GEF-FAO project cycle, formats, and procedures; and discussion of FAO-GEF opportunities in the region for the countries.

38. In 2011, FAO joined forest and forestry-related institutions and organizations around the world in celebrating the International Year of Forests: Forests for People. A toolkit providing key messages, outreach suggestions, templates for graphics, photos, videos, etc was distributed to all countries in the Near East.

39. FAO RNE supported Syria, Iran and Egypt in celebrating the IYF 2011. In Egypt an awareness event was held in collaboration with the Ministry of Agriculture and Land reclamation in Egypt. Activities included tree planting, posters and leaflets distributed among governmental institutions, NGOs, education institutions, farmers and civil society.

40. In its communication during the World Environment Day & International Day of Biodiversity celebrated on 27 May 2010, FAO underscored the important role of forests and rangelands in maintaining the ecosystems’ functions and ultimately in the food security.

DISCUSSION ITEMS

41. The Commission may wish to be informed of:

- The countries’ views on the achievements accomplished since the 19th session and where the countries have additional information to add on accomplishments in line with the Commission’s requests.
- The regional and countries’ priorities that can have greater long term impact on the development of the forest and rangelands sector.

42. The Commission may also wish to consider the following questions for a preliminary discussion on regional and countries’ priorities for forests and rangelands. Fuller discussions are envisioned in the course of the Session’s program which contains items to discuss and provide guidance to FAO and member countries on several of these priorities:

- How to ensure that forests and rangelands policies and practices in and among the countries are coherent with the principles of SFM and national climate change strategies in the perspective of concerted actions with other sectors? (see also item 5.1)
- How to improve financing of the Near East forest and rangelands sector through public and private investment and international financial mechanisms like CDM, REDD+ and GEF? (see also Heads of Forestry dialogue on forest finance)

- Linking science to forestry and range management by improving applied research including on financial valuation of the contribution of forest and range in the livelihood of the forest and rangelands dependent population.
- What future is envisioned for the regional networks established on Forest Health and Invasive Species (NENFHIS), Forest Fires (NENFIRE) and Wildlife and Protected Area Management (NEWPAM)? (see also item 5.9)
- What role of the forestry administrations in the Near East in promoting urban and peri urban forestry as part of the National Forest Program?

Annex A. FOLLOW-UP TO RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE NINETEENTH SESSION OF THE NEAR EAST FORESTRY AND RANGE COMMISSION

The following table presents a summary of the recommendations formulated at the Nineteenth Session of the Commission and the action taken or proposed:

<i>Recommendations</i>	<i>Actions By FAO</i>	<i>Actions by Countries</i>
Actions taken on the requests and recommendations of the 19 th Session of the Commission		
<p>1. 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, forests and rangelands 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 when such waters are used.</p>	<p>At the Mediterranean level, and through its Silva Mediterranea, FAO achieved in collaboration with its partners organizations and countries the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New Collaborative Partnership on Mediterranean Forests (CPMF) launched in Avignon, France in April 2011 with positive media impact (www.fao.org/forestry/silvamed/66624/en/). Six countries (Algeria, Morocco, Tunisia, Lebanon, Syria & Turkey) and 12 regional organizations and cooperation agencies active in the Mediterranean are involved in this partnership. This partnership was a key instrument for successful mobilization of financial resources and for the improvement of quality and delivery of technical collaboration in the region. • Collective position papers on key Mediterranean forest related issues, prepared and adopted Silva Mediterranea members, private sector, research institutions, NGOs, cooperation agencies, etc for effective advocacy at regional (European and Mediterranean) and national levels in the targeted countries. • Solid platform of Mediterranean partners developed based on the regular organization of Mediterranean forest weeks. The 1st organized in Antalya, Turkey (April, 2010), the 2nd in Avignon, France (April, 2011) and the 3rd is planned in Algeria 2013). See website: http://www.fao.org/forestry/silvamed/66625/en/ • Project proposal approved by the French Global Environment Facility (FFEM) with budget of 1.35 million euro focuses on 	

<i>Recommendations</i>	<i>Actions By FAO</i>	<i>Actions by Countries</i>
	<p>REDD+ in the Mediterranean, involving Six countries (Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Syria, Lebanon and Turkey). The project complements the GIZ funded project. It was developed under the collaborative partnership on Mediterranean forests. The agreement with FFEM was signed in December 2011. Two other projects were submitted to EU COST on forest genetic resources (300,000 Euro) and to FFEM on implementation of activities in pilot sites in Mediterranean landscapes (1.3 million euro).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Besides the two enlarged executive committee meetings of the Silva Mediterranea organized in 2010 and 2011, the two Mediterranean forest weeks cited above, three workshops for project proposals preparation were organized – The first in Tunisia in March 2010 for the preparation of the EU Cost action on forest genetic resources, the 2nd in Tunisia in April 2010 for the preparation of the AECID proposal on cork oak, and the 3rd in France in June 2011 for the preparation of the FFEM projects on REDD+ in the Mediterranean. Three meetings/workshops of the Silva Mediterranea working groups were organized successively on forest fires in Rhodes in May 2010, on cork oak in April 2011 and on sustainable management of Mediterranean forests in April 2011. • Two capacity building workshops were organized with support of EFFIS and USSE on forest fires in Avignon in April 2011 on EFFIS extension to the Mediterranean for the preparation of a position paper on wild fire prevention. Two meetings of the New CPMF were organized in Istanbul in September 2010 and in Avignon in April 2011. An extraordinary meeting of Silva Mediterranea members was organized during COFO in October 2010, Rome to inform delegates and partners on Silva Mediterranea achievements for the period (2009-2010) and planned activities up to December 2011. <p>At Africa level, support to the GGWSSI</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project proposal submitted to the EU, in collaboration with the African Union Commission and other partners including 8 countries was approved in December 2010. The project is developed in support of implementation of the great green wall for the Sahara and the Sahel Initiative. The mobilized budget is 	

<i>Recommendations</i>	<i>Actions By FAO</i>	<i>Actions by Countries</i>
	<p>1.750.000 EUR for duration of 30 months. The project started its inception phase in March 2011. Four countries Near East Region (Algeria, Egypt, Mauritania and Sudan) are part of this project. The first project steering committee meeting was held in Addis Ababa in collaboration with the African Union Commission and the European Union in 26-27 September 2011.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Project proposal on "Rehabilitation of forest landscapes and degraded land with particular attention to saline soils and areas prone to wind erosion" developed in collaboration with FRWO (Iran), and submitted to GEF was approved and endorsed by GEF on 29 March 2011. <p>Support of the National Forest Programme Facility to the Region</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The National Forest Programme Facility was able to actively support the nfp processes in Kyrgyzstan, Pakistan, Sudan, Tunisia, and Uzbekistan. This was done through the Forestry Departments which are taking the lead in organizing the nfp, assisted by their national multi-stakeholder steering committee who in an open session defined the priorities of the forestry sector to work on. These priorities were then supported by the Facility through contracts (small grants) with civil society organizations. These organizations (NGOs, Institutions, associations, etc.) were ranked and selected through an open call for proposals by the National multi-stakeholder Steering Committee. • The activities carried out are always in support of institutional strengthening, capacity building, information gathering and dissemination to stakeholders and the public at large. The Facility provided the funds (through the selected service providers) to support for example the revision of forestry codes (Uzbekistan), the revision of the national forestry law (Pakistan), the drafting of bylaws (Kyrgyzstan) and the revision of the national forest programme (Sudan, Tunisia); these activities are all done in a highly participating manner, engaging local communities and stakeholders in the process. • The NFP Facility supported also a regional exchange of information and lessons learned, such as in early November 2012 	

<i>Recommendations</i>	<i>Actions By FAO</i>	<i>Actions by Countries</i>
	<p>where a participant from Kyrgyzstan came to Uzbekistan to attend a workshop on building the forest finance strategy of Uzbekistan. Both countries welcomed and appreciated that exchange.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Raising the “profile” of the forestry sector is also an important activity which is supported through - for example - documenting the role and impact of the forestry sector on livelihoods and GNP (Sudan, Tunisia). With good information at hand the Forestry sector can better collaborate with other sectors which have an impact on forestry. Forestry has a role to play in the overall development of the country and good information on the role and impact are essential for that. <p>Other support National initiatives for reforestation: Upon request of the Lebanese Ministry of Agriculture FAO developed a project proposal for national reforestation in Lebanon in consultation with stakeholders.</p> <p>Use of sewage water in forest planting: FAO organized a workshop in Tunisia on “Forest restoration in Algeria, Egypt, Morocco and Tunisia using treated waste water to sustain smallholders and farmers livelihoods”. The workshop facilitated knowledge sharing among specialists and decision makers from the participating countries. The Government of Italy is showing keen interest in funding a project in this area and decided at the moment to support the preliminary activities planned in the first year. At the same time FAO is also submitting the project proposal to other funding agencies.</p>	
FAO AND COUNTRY ACTIVITIES IN THE NEAR EAST REGION		
Forestry policy and sustainable development		
2. The Commission recommended that countries, after adapting the Guidelines to suit national circumstances and realities, use them in their efforts to update their	FAO Regional office for the Near East and the Forestry Department with support from the German cooperation (GIZ) organized a regional workshop on “Forest policy and Integrating Climate change in NFPs in the Near East Region”. The workshop was held in Cairo on 23 – 25	

<i>Recommendations</i>	<i>Actions By FAO</i>	<i>Actions by Countries</i>
forest policies and legislation	May 2011. It was attended by 30 experts dealing with the national forest program and climate change from 17 countries.	
Forest and range sustainable management		
3. 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	<p>A regional workshop was held in Hammamet, Tunisia to train the national focal points from the Near East countries in preparation of country report on the World Forest Genetic Resources (So W FGR).</p> <p>An agreement has been reached with the RNE TCP Unit to reserve an amount from the regional TCP Facility to assist the Near East countries in the preparation of the country report on the State of the World Forest Genetic Resources (So W FGR).</p>	
4. 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 neighboring 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.	<p>An inter-regional project was prepared by FAO/RNE, FOMC on “Enhancing regional capacities for biodiversity conservation and sustainable wildlife and protected area management in the Near East and Sudan”. It concerns six countries: Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, Mauritania, Sudan, Syria, Tunisia and Yemen. The project was approved in November 2011 and declared in operation in December 2011.</p> <p>The Forestry Unit of RNE supports and contributes to the inter-disciplinary work on climate change including concepts, studies, project formulation and meetings e.g. Regional Forum on climate change</p>	
5. 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	<p>In Uzbekistan, the NFP facility has assisted in drafting the programme for developing the hunting sector, and make to a study of traditional knowledge for sustainable forest management.</p> <p>In Pakistan, the NFP Facility has supported the development of a set of guidelines and methodologies for valuation of forests and forest products. In the 2011 support was provided to developing the National Response Strategy (NRS) to combat impact of climate change on forest in Pakistan.</p>	Some countries in the Near East are more advanced than the others in developing cooperation and dialogue with other sectors. Iran is cooperating with international donors like FAO, UNDP, GEF, JICA to implement activities that cross sectors such as: (i) rehabilitation and development of forests in Arid and Semi- Arid Zone in Ilam Province;

<i>Recommendations</i>	<i>Actions By FAO</i>	<i>Actions by Countries</i>
<p>Desertification (UNCCD), United Nations Convention on Biodiversity (UNCBD), United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) and monitor progress across the region</p>		<p>(ii) Building multiple-use forest management framework to conserve biodiversity in the Caspian forest landscape in Mazandaran Province; (iii) Rehabilitation of forest landscapes and degraded land with particular attention to saline soils and areas prone to wind erosion and; (iv) Integrated natural resources management</p> <p>In Turkey Forest and Agriculture Administrations have joint legislation and education studies about forest and range lands.</p> <p>Lebanon organized an international seminar on desertification in June 2011 involving all stakeholders. Many other activities in relation with the recommendation were carried out.</p> <p>Syria is implementing its part of the international conventions by large scale afforestation 10,000 hectares per year and expanding the protected areas system.</p>
<p>6. 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.</p>		<p>Some countries like Iran and Turkey have made good progress in implementation of this recommendation.</p> <p>Iran prepared preliminary phase of NFP & formulation of forestry polices including for research. The role of the private sector and cooperatives in forest rehabilitation and development is strengthened under Article 15 of the Productivity Enhancement Act (PEA)</p> <p>Turkey passed a Law on rangelands although some rangelands and forestry/afforestation issues remain. Draft law on water was prepared. New General Directorate of Water Management was under Ministry of Forests</p>

<i>Recommendations</i>	<i>Actions By FAO</i>	<i>Actions by Countries</i>
		<p>and Water Affairs.</p> <p>Lebanon signed memoranda of understanding with many neighboring on forestry, research countries like Turkey, Morocco, Iran, Qatar, Sudan, Syria and Tunisia</p> <p>Mauritania is implementing policy based on decentralization and local community involvement in resources management</p> <p>Syria formulated its new policy and vision for the forest sector with involvement of the local communities</p>
<p>7. 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 sectors was also stressed</p>	<p>FAO assisted Tunisia in the formulation of a TPC project: “Appui à la promotion des micro-entreprises forestières en Tunisie”. The project is under consideration by FAO</p> <p>In the framework of the FAO Arid Zones forestry program, a concept was developed for the preparation of a study on analysis and evaluation of afforestation and forest restoration projects / programs implemented by e.g. FAO, GIZ, WWF, IUCN, CIFOR, World Bank, Governments, in arid zone countries including the Near East region countries. For this purpose, an expert consultation workshop is planned in early 2012 in Turkey in collaboration with the desertification and erosion control Directorate of Turkey, involving the Near East region countries</p>	
<p>Oil trees</p>		
<p>8. In discussing experiences with regard to oil trees, the Commission underlined the need for studies to constitute a solid information basis for decisions before</p>	<p>A number of studies and articles, some in collaboration with FAO and other UN agencies, have been published on the suitability of oil-trees, in particular <i>Jatropha</i>, for large-scale afforestation. Among these:</p>	

<i>Recommendations</i>	<i>Actions By FAO</i>	<i>Actions by Countries</i>
<p>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.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Challenges and Opportunities of Agrofuel Production in Africa. Paper prepared by the Land, Climate and Energy Division (NRC) of FAO for the FAO Regional Conference for Africa 2010. - IFAD/FAO, 2010, Jatropha-A smallholder bioenergy crop. The potential for pro-poor development. - Publication on “Oil trees in the Near East Region”. The paper focuses on three main species in Near East region (<i>Jatropha</i>, <i>Moringa</i> and <i>Jojoba</i>). It covers the technical, socio-economic and environmental challenges, risks and opportunities associated with afforestation using these tree species. 	
<p>9. 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</p>	<p>Ranges issues have been included into the activities of RNE Forestry Unit. Study on “Forests and Rangelands: facts and figures” was prepared underlying the social, economic and environmental benefits of forests and rangelands in the Near East.</p>	
<p>REGIONAL GUIDELINES ON GOOD FORESTRY AND RANGE PRACTICES IN ARID AND SEMI-ARID ZONES OF THE NEAR EAST</p>		
<p>10. 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.</p>	<p>The revised Guidelines which included the principle of combating desertification were distributed to the countries for comments before editing and publication. Very few countries responded</p>	

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<p>11. 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</p>		<p>Some countries benefited from the guidelines on good forestry and range practices in Arid and Semi Arid Zones in the Near East.</p> <p>Iran prepared terms of reference for NFP based on the guidelines and applied them in implementing Biological operations as well as improving rainfall reserves for plantations.</p> <p>Mauritanian society is adapted to its desert environment.</p>
<p>12. The Commission recognized the social, economic and environmental values of traditional local knowledge in the advancement of the forests and rangelands sectors in the region and recommended that countries work to preserve it and to strengthen partnership among stakeholders</p>		<p>Some countries in the region value traditional knowledge in forestry and rangelands. Iran collects information on traditional knowledge through local workshops and based on that developed & implemented a multiple forestry plans for sustainable conservation of biodiversity and forest management.</p> <p>Turkey has success stories in good forestry and agriculture including research that can benefit other countries of the region</p> <p>In some countries like Turkey, significant part of the local knowledge was lost due to migration of villagers to cities. It is becoming a serious problem at present.</p> <p>Lebanon is capitalizing the local knowledge in sustainable management of forests and is supporting local communities to preserve such knowledge. Multi-disciplinary committees were created by the Ministry for this purpose</p> <p>The Community Based Fire management in Syria capitalize the local knowledge.</p>

<i>Recommendations</i>	<i>Actions By FAO</i>	<i>Actions by Countries</i>
13. In addition, the Commission recommended that member countries send to FAO before the Commission's 20 th 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		
14. 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	Two regional workshops were held in response to this recommendation: 1. One on forest policy and integrating climate change in NFPS was organized in Cairo, Egypt, on 23 -25 May 2011. It was attended by 30 participants from 17 countries in the Near East. 2. The other on forests, rangelands and climate change in the Near East Region from 20-22 September 2011. The meeting was attend by more than 40 people from the region as we as from the international organization.	
15. 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	A regional workshop on networks in the Near East was held in Cairo Egypt, from 07 to 09 November. The meeting was organized to evaluate the relevance usefulness of a regional coordination mechanism network or "umbrella" under which to manage the three existing regional networks. Eleven countries from the region were represented; Cyrus, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Sudan and Yemen. All three regional networks were represented: the Near East Network on Forest Health and Invasive Species (NENFHIS), the Near East Working Group on Wildlife and Protected Area Management (NEWPAM) and the Near East Regional Network on Forest and Wildland Fires (NENFIRE). NENFHIS and NEWPAM were both established in	

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	<p>2009 and have not yet been endorsed by NEFRC; while NENFHIS was created in 2007 and was endorsed by the NEFRC in 2008</p> <p>Network members unanimously concluded that the three networks are important for forestry, range and wildlife sectors in the region. They agreed on the importance of maintaining the three technical networks as independent entities with functioning secretariats and considered that an “umbrella” network was not the most effective coordination mechanism for their operations. It was proposed that NEFRC should be requested to fill the role as the coordinating mechanism to which the three networks can report and receive guidance.</p>	
<p>HEADS OF FORESTRY DIALOGUE: NEAR EAST FORESTRY INSTITUTIONS: CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT TO MEET THE CHALLENGES OF A CHANGING WORLD</p>		
<p>16. 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.</p>	<p>FAO is undertaking a study on “Adapting to meet the challenges of a changing world: Public sector forestry institutions in Near East countries”, with focus on the drivers that shaped the forestry institutions in the region during the last decades</p> <p>FAO is also developing a capacity development module to support public forestry administrations improve their performance and adaptability in the face of societal changes.</p>	
<p>GLOBAL FOREST RESOURCES ASSESSMENT (FRA) 2010 AND NATIONAL FOREST MONITORING AND ASSESSMENT</p>		
<p>17. The Commission requested FAO to provide support to countries in the region to build their capacity for national forest and range monitoring and assessment</p>		

<i>Recommendations</i>	<i>Actions By FAO</i>	<i>Actions by Countries</i>
18. 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		Based on its knowledge about the carrying capacity of rangelands, Iran developed a National Program of Removal of livestock from some areas of rangelands Turkey undertook an environmental impact assessment study on forest and range lands
19. 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	FAO RNE coordinated Jordan on the project. During a meeting with mission from the IsDB to RNE, the project was discussed and agreed to follow up between the countries, IsDB and FAO	
CURRENT AND EMERGING INTERNATIONAL ISSUES		
20. The Commission requested that FAO facilitate the exchange of success stories from inside and outside the region	The First Africa Dry lands Week was held in 10-17 June 2011, in Dakar, Senegal on the theme “ Towards a global vision & partnership on sustainable land and climate risk management for the Sahara and the Sahel Initiative”. For this event and in the framework of its support to the Great Green Wall Initiative for the Sahara and the Sahel, FAO mobilized over 17 partners including members of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests and over 200 experts from governmental bodies, research, NGOs, technical institutions, EU and cooperation agencies and UN sister agencies The Week was also organized in celebration of the International Year of Forests “dry land forests” and the UN decade for deserts and the fight against desertification. A publication was prepared by FAO in collaboration with the Mountains partnership Secretariat, the UNCCD Secretariat, the Swiss Cooperation and the Centre for Development and Environment, and	

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	<p>was launched during the high level segment of the COP 10 of the UNCCD. It advocate for better and increased investments in dry land mountains.</p> <p>On fighting sand encroachment FAO supported GCP/MAU/022/BEL “Support to the Rehabilitation and Extension of the Nouakchott Green Belt – Mauritania, funded by the Walloon region (Belgium). Lessons learnt and techniques used in this project were published in Forestry Paper 158: “Fighting sand encroachment – Lessons from Mauritania” in English, French and Arabic. This publication and experience are being replicated in other regions of Mauritania and will be promoted for adaptation and implementation in other countries of the GGWSSI. See self-explanatory link: http://www.fao.org/news/story/en/item/43305/icode/.</p> <p>The Case of Acacia Operation project - Support to food Security, Poverty alleviation, and soil degradation control in the Gums and Resins Producer countries. Based on lessons learnt from the project, a publication “Guidelines on sustainable management of drylands in sub-Saharan Africa” was prepared as a working paper in English and French. A 7mn video reporting on project success (in Senegal) was also produced and disseminated to major international media outlets. See website: http://www.fao.org/forestry/aridzone/62998/en/ as well as the publication and the success story</p>	
<p>21. The Commission requested FAO to provide more support for targeted capacity building on international issues, according to countries specific needs</p>		
<p>22. 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</p>	<p>See actions taken under recommendation 14</p>	

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<p>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</p>		
<p>23. 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</p>	<p>Awareness event was held in Egypt in collaboration with the Ministry of Agriculture and Land reclamation including tree planting, posters and leaflets distributed to governmental institutions, NGOs, education institutions, farmers and civil society</p> <p>Taking the opportunity of the celebration of the International year of forests and the Decade on Deserts and fighting against desertification, FAO took the lead in collaboration with the members Collaborative Partnership on Forests (UNCCD Secretariat, UNCBD, etc) to organize in Senegal (Dakar, 10-17 June 2011), the First Africa Drylands Week . See link: http://www.unccd.int/publicinfo/june17/2011/docs/Concept%20Note%20Africa%20Drylands%20Week_en.pdf . This forum has enabled building a momentum and synergies with other programs and organizations.</p> <p>See press release too on UNCCD website : http://www.unccd.int/publicinfo/june17/2011/menu.php?newch=111 Agreed statement from participants: http://www.unccd.int/publicinfo/june17/2011/docs/English_Dakar_statement.pdf.</p>	<p>Most countries in the Near East region celebrated the IYF 2011. Syria, Jordan, Iran Egypt coordinated with FAO their activities related the IYF.</p> <p>Iran published a stamp as well as articles and reports on the occasion of IYF. News conferences was held also on the IYF and the International Decade of Desertification 2010-2020</p> <p>Turkey is celebrating the International Forest Year 2011 with a variety of special events all year round.</p> <p>Lebanon is developing communication strategy with support of international experts. Forestry is part of such strategy.</p> <p>Syria celebrated the IYF 2011 and developed strategy on communication for awareness about forests, rangelands</p>
<p>24. The Commission recommended that World Forest Day focus on a different theme each year</p>		
<p>25. The Commission requested FAO to facilitate the preparation of meetings for international conventions and congresses</p>		

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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		
26. 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	See FAO action under Recommendation 15.	
27. The Commission recommended that as far as possible activities of <i>Silva Mediterranea</i> and the Commission should be coordinated	This was done based on the CPMF. It is also proposed this year that both the NEFRC and Silva Mediterranea session are held back to back. The active involvement of member countries in the Silva Mediterranea activities is highly dependent on the importance of Mediterranean forest cover. Some countries are historical members but are not really active in this regional cooperation.	
ANY OTHER BUSINESS		
28. 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		
29. The Commission also recommended that greater cooperation between countries of the north and south Mediterranean region be encouraged	A paper on “Forests and range around the Mediterranean region: State , functions and knowledge” was prepared and presented at the 3 rd Scientific Conference on Mediterranean held at Alexandria in June 2010. The article reviews the state of knowledge about forests and	Many countries in the Near East continued their active cooperation with the countries in the north of the Mediterranean. Iran cooperated with Turkey on natural resources

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	<p>ranges in the Mediterranean region focusing on social, economic and environmental contexts of forest and range and their use, the importance of NWFPs and services.</p> <p>The collaborative partnership on Mediterranean Forests: new Collaborative Partnership on Mediterranean Forests, signed in 2010 by FAO, Plan Blue, France (French Ministry of Agriculture, MAAPRAT), Germany (German International Cooperation, GIZ), EFIMED and many other organizations involved in the adaptation of Mediterranean forests to climate change.</p>	<p>and watershed management in 2010 and with Iraq on desertification and dust storm mitigation in 2011</p> <p>Turkey assisted neighboring countries in the region. Among these Syria where assistance was provided in forest management plan design.</p> <p>This type of collaboration between countries in the region on forestry and rangelands can be strengthened and can lead to shared benefits</p> <p>Lebanon entertains extended collaboration with countries from North and South of the Mediterranean</p> <p>Mauritania cooperates with many countries in forestry and rangelands related issues</p>