

# **Proposal for a meeting to establish a “forest invasive species” network for Near East countries**

## ***Background***

At the request of member countries, information exchange networks and working groups on forest invasive species have been established in the Asia Pacific, North America and Africa and there is a pipeline proposal for the South Cone countries. These networks help to raise awareness of invasive species, develop databases, facilitate exchange of information and strengthen institutional capacity within member countries. A further forest invasive species network is proposed for the Near East.

During the 17<sup>th</sup> Session of the Near East Forestry Commission (Larnaka, Cyprus, 5-8 June, 2006) member countries expressed concern about the increased threat to the forests and trees outside forests posed by climatic changes that may influence movement and establishment of new insect pests and diseases. The Committee recommended that the issues be highlighted during the Task Force meeting in Cairo in December 2006 and again in Rabat in July 2007. The Task Force issued a Technical Paper on Forest Health in the Near East Region, and further recommended that an expert meeting should be organized by end of 2007 in order to discuss regional cooperation and regional strategies for addressing forest health and invasive species issues in the region.

It is proposed that in order to create a suitable “platform” from which scientists who are dealing with these pest problems can share information, experiences and benefit from activities within and beyond the Near East region, that an expert meeting be convened to discuss logistics. The major objective of the expert meeting would be to create a functional network which is able to foster integrated and dynamic forest pest management in the Near East region and provide decision makers with baseline data for making informed decisions.

This application has the support of the forestry protection officers from those countries. The success of the network will depend heavily upon these stakeholders sharing information and data on forest pest management on a regular basis.

The expert meeting will identify the mandate and membership of the network, including geographic coverage; confirm network dissemination methodologies; prepare a work plan; assign responsibilities for sharing information and prepare a budget.

## ***Venue***

The Expert Meeting will be held over a period of three days in Tunis, Tunisia, from 11-13 December 2007.

## ***Language***

The language of the meeting will be Arabic and English.

### *Proposed participation*

It is proposed that one representative will be invited to attend, preferably Heads of Forest Protection or equivalent, from the following thirteen countries, including the host country Tunisia:

Algeria  
Cyprus  
Egypt  
Iran  
Lebanon  
Libya  
Morocco  
Oman  
Saudi Arabia  
Syria  
Tunisia  
Turkey  
Yemen

The Secretariats of the ongoing Forest Invasive Species Network for Africa (FISNA) ([www.fao.org/forestry/site/26951/en](http://www.fao.org/forestry/site/26951/en)) and the Asia-Pacific Forest Invasive Species Network (APFISN) ([www.fao.org/forestry/site/35067/en](http://www.fao.org/forestry/site/35067/en)) will also be invited to attend as resource persons to provide guidance on establishment and operation of functioning networks; this will also foster linkages between the networks.

Technical representatives of the Canadian Forest Service and US Forest Service will be invited to provide technical input and hopefully enable further expansion and financial support to the network. FAO personnel will provide both technical and logistical input.