

REPORT

**Khartoum,
Republic of the Sudan
18-21 February
2008**

**NEAR EAST
FORESTRY
COMMISSION**

Eighteenth Session



**Food
and
Agriculture
Organization
of
the
United
Nations**

PREVIOUS SESSIONS OF THE COMMISSION

First session	Tehran, Iran	24-29 September 1955
Second session	Cairo, Arab Republic of Egypt	27 October – 1 November 1958
Third session	Adana, Turkey	30 April – 5 May 1962
Fourth session	Beirut, Lebanon	15-22 June 1964
Fifth session	Amman, Jordan	25-30 September 1967
Sixth session	Tehran, Iran	25-30 April 1970
Seventh session	Baghdad, Iraq	30 November– December 1974
Eighth session	Khartoum, Sudan	23-28 February 1978
Ninth session	Nicosia, Cyprus	6-10 June 1983
Tenth session	Tunis, Tunisia	29 June – 3 July 1987
Eleventh session	Ankara, Turkey	15-19 October 1990
Twelfth session	Cairo, Arab Republic of Egypt	21-24 October 1996
Thirteenth session	Damascus, Syria	6-9 December 1998
Fourteenth session	Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran	1-4 July 2000
Fifteenth session	Khartoum, Republic of the Sudan	28-31 January 2002
Sixteenth session	Beirut, Republic of Lebanon	24-27 May 2004
Seventeenth session	Larnaka, Cyprus	5-9 June 2006

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REPORT

of the

EIGHTEENTH SESSION

of the

NEAR EAST FORESTRY COMMISSION

**Khartoum, Republic of the Sudan
18 to 21 February 2008**

FOOD AND AGRICULTURE ORGANIZATION OF THE UNITED NATIONS
Cairo, 2008

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SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS
FOR THE ATTENTION OF
MEMBER COUNTRIES OF THE COMMISSION

- i. The Commission recommended that member countries strive to create synergies and strengthen cooperation among all the institutions and sectors dealing with forest-related activities and trees outside forests, including urban forests and trees, protected areas and other ecosystems.
- ii. The Commission recommended that member countries undertake forest tenure reforms that could provide favorable conditions for rural communities, the private sector and other relevant stakeholders to sustainably manage forests.
- iii. The Commission further urged member countries to take action and recommended that they seek support from FAO to conduct a regional workshop on participatory forestry, to take stock of on-going participatory forestry initiatives, clarify the concept of participatory forestry, share best practices, raise awareness and to decide how to further promote participatory forestry in the region.
- iv. The Commission recommended that participation of and partnership with all stakeholders concerned in forest-related activities be increased. This would lead to the greater visibility and importance of the sector, in order to obtain enhanced political, institutional and financial support from national authorities.
- v. While recognizing FAO's efforts to support member countries, the Commission however expressed concern at the very limited number of projects as well as the small size of existing projects. It therefore recommended that:
 - a. FAO assist member countries to identify the priority forestry issues to be addressed through a coherent field programme portfolio;
 - b. FAO and member countries increase their efforts to seize opportunities offered by the Global Environment Facility (GEF) and which remain under-tapped, especially for forestry in the Near East Region;
 - c. given the fact that some countries were not eligible for donor funding, priority be given to regional projects and, in that context, countries were requested to endorse such projects within an adequate timeframe; and
 - d. countries seek contributions from the newly-established Arab Environmental Funds for Forestry Development. In this regard, FAO assistance in the preparation of project proposals would be welcomed.
- vi. The Commission urged member countries to provide political support to and facilitate the participation of their respective Focal Points in the Network's activities.
- vii. The Commissions (NEFC and AFWC) therefore urged member countries to:
 - a. share and exchange experiences from the Clean Development Mechanism (CDM) and voluntary market forestry projects, in particular ways in which difficulties had been overcome;
 - b. promote the development of forest carbon projects through training, extension and policy and financial measures; and
 - c. seek to fully engage the private sector in climate change mitigation projects in forestry.
- viii. The Commissions (NEFC-AFWC) strongly recommended that African and Near East countries address adaptation and mitigation opportunities in their forestry sectors in a holistic way in order to

capture synergies, incorporate them into national forest programmes (nfps), and link them with human development needs.

ix. The potential for dryland forests in adaptation and mitigation deserved higher attention at the international level. The Commissions (NEFC-AFWC) therefore urged their member countries to highlight this potential in the international climate change dialogue and to include these forests in their climate change programmes.

x. The Commissions (NEFC-AFWC) therefore recommended that collaboration and information exchange on forests and climate change mitigation and adaptation be strengthened and that, while recognizing the variability among countries, unified responses to international initiatives be developed.

xi. The Commissions (NEFC-AFWC) urged countries to work to harmonize their efforts in climate change with their commitments under other forest-related international conventions and agreements. They also requested that FAO and other members of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests (CPF) continue and increase their collaboration and cooperation in their forest and climate change programmes.

xii. The Commissions (NEFC-AFWC) further urged member countries to evaluate with care the costs and benefits of investing in bioenergy, as such investments may compete with food production and increase deforestation.

xiii. The Commissions (NEFC-AFWC) therefore recommended that (i) local communities be trained and engaged in fire management; (ii) regional cooperation be promoted, including the development of transboundary strategies; and (iii) intersectoral approaches be adopted for integrated fire management at local and national levels.

xiv. The Commissions (NEFC-AFWC) recommended that (i) linkages between forests and water resources be studied further; (ii) integrated management of water and trees be encouraged, including incorporating forestry in watershed management plans; and (iii) innovative mechanisms, including payments for environmental services, be put in place to ensure efficient and sustainable water, trees and forests management.

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

FOR THE ATTENTION OF THE FOOD AND AGRICULTURE ORGANIZATION OF THE UNITED NATIONS

xv. The Commission recommended that similar meetings and joint programmes on forests and range in the region be pursued and strengthened by FAO.

xvi. The Commission further urged FAO to consider the repeated request to amend the title and the mandate of the Commission in order to include range concerns, as was the case for wildlife in the African Forestry Commission.

xvii. The Commission urged FAO to undertake a study on the forest policies, laws and institutions in the countries of the region. The study would serve as a baseline for providing the necessary support to countries when updating their legislation and policies, where these exist, and when drafting new policies and legislation, if necessary, and to create synergies among all the institutions concerned.

xviii. The Commission urged FAO to undertake a study to document and highlight the economic, social and environmental importance of forests, trees outside forests, urban forests, oases and other particular formations.

xix. The Commission recommended that the FAO Regional Office for the Near East organize a workshop to share experiences in successful mechanisms to increase funding and stakeholder participation in forest-related activities.

xx. While recognizing FAO's efforts to support member countries, the Commission however expressed concern at the very limited number of projects as well as the small size of existing projects. It therefore recommended that:

- a. FAO assist member countries to identify the priority forestry issues to be addressed through a coherent field programme portfolio;
- b. FAO and member countries increase their efforts to seize opportunities offered by the Global Environment Facility (GEF) and which remain under-tapped, especially for forestry in the Near East Region;
- c. given the fact that some countries were not eligible for donor funding, priority be given to regional projects and, in that context, countries were requested to endorse such projects within an adequate timeframe; and
- d. countries seek contributions from the newly-established Arab Environmental Funds for Forestry Development. In this regard, FAO assistance in the preparation of project proposals would be welcomed.

xxi. The Commission endorsed the principle of preparing the guidelines but requested that the deadline for providing comments on the proposed document be extended. It was therefore decided that amendments and comments would be accepted until 15 March 2008, after which date drafting of the detailed guidelines would commence.

xxii. The Commission urged the FAO Regional Office for the Near East to move ahead with the preparation of the guidelines and their submission in final form to the next session of the Committee on Forestry in 2009.

xxiii. The Commission therefore welcomed and endorsed the establishment of a Near East Network on Forest Health and Invasive Species (NENFHIS) as a regional platform to share information and experience on integrated and dynamic forest pest management and on the generation of baseline data for decision-making. It further recommended that the number of executive committee members be limited to five countries, to be selected on the basis of balanced geographical representation.

xxiv. The Commissions (NEFC-AFWC) requested FAO and other relevant organizations to pursue and increase their support to African and Near East countries in forests and climate change, including technical assistance and capacity strengthening in areas such as forest inventories, monitoring carbon stocks, development of forest carbon projects, and accessing carbon markets.

xxv. The Commissions (NEFC-AFWC) urged countries to work to harmonize their efforts in climate change with their commitments under other forest-related international conventions and agreements. They also requested that FAO and other members of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests (CPF) continue and increase their collaboration and cooperation in their forest and climate change programmes.

xxvi. The Commissions (NEFC-AFWC) therefore recommended that FAO assist member countries in their efforts to enhance national and regional capacities for the development, implementation and monitoring of wood energy systems, including the establishment of information systems.

xxvii. The Commissions (NEFC-AFWC) recommended that FAO assist member countries in their efforts to implement the voluntary guidelines and to develop national and regional fire management plans.

xxviii. The Commissions (NEFC-AFWC) requested FAO to circulate the draft strategy in mid-2008, including by means of an official communication to the national heads of forestry and being posted on the FAO forestry and forestry strategy websites. They agreed to engage actively in the process, and requested that FAO present the new strategy to the 19th Session of COFO in March 2009 for its consideration. Members further expressed a number of views and highlighted priorities areas on sustainable forest management, updating the capacity of countries and on the importance of emphasizing wildlife in FAO's future work in forestry.

xxix. While they appreciated the planned regional and sub-regional training workshops from April to December 2008, the Commissions (NEFC-AFWC) stressed the importance of the review and validation of the country reports by their national correspondents, and requested that FAO increase its efforts to strengthen the capacity of national correspondents and provide them with the necessary support for procuring accurate data of high quality on all types of forests and other land uses.

INTRODUCTION

1. The Near East Forestry Commission (NEFC) and the African Forestry and Wildlife Commission (AFWC) held their Eighteenth and Sixteenth Sessions respectively in Khartoum, Sudan, from 18 to 21 February 2008, at the kind invitation of the Government of the Republic of the Sudan. The NEFC session was attended by 28 representatives from 15 member countries and observer countries, and 2 representatives of the United Nations system. Observers from 7 intergovernmental and international non-governmental organizations also attended. *Appendix B* provides a full list of participants.

2. Mr. Jan Heino, Assistant Director-General, Forestry Department, represented the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO). Mr. Pape Djiby Koné, Senior Forestry Officer, FAO Regional Office for the Near East, Cairo, and Mr. Eduardo Mansur, Senior Forestry Officer, FAO Regional Office for Africa, Accra, served as Secretaries of respectively the Near East Forestry Commission and the African Forestry and Wildlife Commission.

3. The outgoing Chair of the NEFC's 17th Session, Mr. Alexandros Christodoulou, Cyprus, and of the AFWC's 15th Session, Mr. Mandrate Nakala Oreste, Mozambique, participated in the opening ceremony, which was held under the patronage of H.E Omer Hassan Ahmad El Bashir, President of the Republic of Sudan. Mr. Abdelazim Mirghani Ibrahim, General Manager of the Forests National Corporation, welcomed the participants and invited Professor Olavi Luukkanen, as guest of honour of the host country, to address the meeting. Professor Luukkanen highlighted the potential of dry land forests in the conservation of endangered biodiversity, sustainable livelihoods and in the mitigation of the impacts of climate change in the Africa and Near East regions.

4. The floor was then passed to Mr. Jan Heino, who delivered a statement on behalf of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO). Mr. Heino stressed the uniqueness of this first-ever joint meeting of the African and Near East Forestry Commissions, and the opportunity the Commissions provide to promote dialogue and create synergies among countries that have issues in common in the sustainable use and conservation of their natural resources.

5. In his opening address, His Excellency Elzubier Bashir Taha, Minister for Agriculture and Forests of the Republic of the Sudan, expressed his government's pleasure at hosting for the third time a session of the Near East Forestry Commission and for the first time a joint meeting of the Commission with the African Forestry and Wildlife Commission. He also expressed the commitment of the Government of the Republic of the Sudan to support the forestry and wildlife sectors, highlighting the social, economic and environmental relevance of Sudan's natural resources.

6. Doctor Mustafa Osman Ismail, in his capacity as Special Advisor to the President of the Republic of Sudan, delivered a statement on behalf of H.E. the President, to conclude the opening ceremony, in which he invited participants to apply their experience and commitment in favour of better management of natural resources in the African and Near East regions. The Special Advisor to the President and the Minister also used this occasion to award three distinguished Sudanese foresters with medals of honour, after which the 16th AFWC Session and the 18th NEFC Session were declared officially open.

ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA (Item 1)

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

ELECTION OF OFFICERS (Item 2)

8. 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:	Mrs. Hoda Salah El-Din Rashed (Egypt)
Vice-Chairpersons:	Mr. Sabah Al-Kawaz (Iraq) Mr. Erdogan Sirin (Turkey)
Rapporteur:	Mr. Said Helal (Tunisia)

SUSTAINABLE USE OF NATURAL RESOURCES IN NEAR EAST ARID AND SEMI-ARID ECOSYSTEMS (Item 3)

3.1 Management of Forests and Rangelands

9. The Commission stressed the importance of range and rangeland resources in the region and their close inter-linkages with forests. It commended the FAO Regional Office for the Near East for having organized in Cairo in November 2007 the first regional expert meeting on range monitoring, including under forest systems, grouping forestry and range experts of the region

10. The Commission recommended that similar meetings and joint programmes on forests and range in the region be pursued and strengthened by FAO.

11. The Commission further urged FAO to consider the repeated request to amend the title and the mandate of the Commission in order to include range concerns, as was the case for wildlife in the African Forestry Commission.

12. The Commission therefore mandated its Chairperson and the FAO Forestry Department to follow up on this issue during the course of the inter-sessional period.

3.2 Forest Policies, Laws and Institutions

13. The Commission stressed the importance of forest policies and legislation and the role they play in the conservation and management of forests, other wooded lands, rangelands and trees outside forests.

14. The Commission noted that, while all countries in the region have developed forest laws and legislation in the past, some were in the process of updating them and developing new policies. It was noted, however, that some countries lacked the necessary measures and institutional setting to implement such laws and legislation.

15. The Commission recommended that member countries strive to create synergies and strengthen cooperation among all the institutions and sectors dealing with forest-related activities and trees outside forests, including urban forests and trees, protected areas and other ecosystems.

16. The Commission noted the importance and benefits of including the various stakeholders concerned in the formulation of policies and legislation.

17. The Commission urged FAO to undertake a study on the forest policies, laws and institutions in the countries of the region. The study would serve as a baseline for providing the necessary support to countries when updating their legislation and policies, where these exist, and when drafting new policies and legislation, if necessary, and to create synergies among all the institutions concerned.

3.3 Participatory Approaches and Inter-sectoral Linkages

18. The Commission noted that global trends such as decentralization and the devolution of management rights to local stakeholders were having an influence on the forestry sector and needed to be addressed adequately.

19. The Commission also stressed the importance of participatory forestry as a means of contributing to poverty alleviation and as an efficient and cost-effective alternative to state forest management.

20. The Commission further acknowledged that, while most forests are state owned, there was an urgent need to better involve the private sector, community groups and civil society organizations in the sustainable management of forest resources.

21. Despite recent improvements, forestry legislation in some countries still hindered the efficient participation of the private sector and local communities in forestry-related activities.

22. The Commission further noted the importance and benefit of including the various stakeholders concerned in the formulation of policies and legislation that better respond to societies' needs and concerns. When supported and agreed upon by stakeholders, policies were more likely to be implemented in an efficient manner.

23. The Commission acknowledged that participatory policy formulation would ensure necessary cross-sectoral linkages as well as better reflect the recent changes that have occurred in the forestry sector at the international level.

24. The Commission recommended that member countries undertake forest tenure reforms that could provide favorable conditions for rural communities, the private sector and other relevant stakeholders to sustainably manage forests.

25. The Commission further urged member countries to take action and recommended that they seek support from FAO to conduct a regional workshop on participatory forestry, to take stock of on-going participatory forestry initiatives, clarify the concept of participatory forestry, share best practices, raise awareness and to decide how to further promote participatory forestry in the region.

3.4 In-Session Seminar: *Mobilization of domestic resources for forestry development in the Near East Region*

26. The in-session seminar devoted to "Mobilization of domestic resources for forestry development in the region" was organized as a panel discussion around four sub-themes:

- a. national allocations to forestry institutions; and
- b. national allocations to other institutions for forestry-related activities; and
- c. contributions of local communities, non-governmental organizations and civil society organizations to forestry and related activities; and
- d. private sector investment in forestry and related activities

27. The Commission commended the secretariat on the paper on the mobilization of domestic resources for forestry development in the region and underlined the importance of highlighting such an issue at the national and regional levels. The Commission noted the limited resources provided to the forestry sector in most of the countries of the region.

28. The Commission noted the difficulties being faced in the attempts to secure the participation of the private sector both in the financing and in the management of forests.
29. The Commission noted the lack of coordination between the different institutions in charge of forests and trees outside forests at the country level. The lack of coordination and cooperation between the organizations working in the region was also noted.
30. The Commission urged FAO to undertake a study to document and highlight the economic, social and environmental importance of forests, trees outside forests, urban forests, oases and other particular formations.
31. The Commission stressed the need to undertake major changes at the decision-making and institutional levels in order to take better account of forest goods and services in national economies.
32. The Commission further noted the need to strengthen forestry institutions in order to increase their ability to attract necessary funds and to mainstream forestry-related issues within national development programmes.
33. The Commission recommended that the FAO Regional Office for the Near East organize a workshop to share experiences in successful mechanisms to increase funding and stakeholder participation in forest-related activities.
34. The Commission recommended that participation of and partnership with all stakeholders concerned in forest-related activities be increased. This would lead to the greater visibility and importance of the sector, in order to obtain enhanced political, institutional and financial support from national authorities.

FAO AND OTHER FORESTRY ACTIVITIES OF INTEREST TO THE NEAR EAST REGION (Item 4)

4.1 NEFC and other FAO Forestry Activities of Interest to the Near East Region

35. The Commission was informed about FAO forestry activities of interest to the Near East Region carried out in 2006-2007, in particular the various experts meetings, inter-sessional meetings and other normative and field activities.
36. While recognizing FAO's efforts to support member countries, the Commission however expressed concern at the very limited number of projects as well as the small size of existing projects. It therefore recommended that:
 - a. FAO assist member countries to identify the priority forestry issues to be addressed through a coherent field programme portfolio;
 - b. FAO and member countries increase their efforts to seize opportunities offered by the Global Environment Facility (GEF) and which remain under-tapped, especially for forestry in the Near East Region;
 - c. given the fact that some countries were not eligible for donor funding, priority be given to regional projects and, in that context, countries were requested to endorse such projects within an adequate timeframe; and
 - d. countries seek contributions from the newly-established Arab Environmental Funds for Forestry Development. In this regard, FAO assistance in the preparation of project proposals would be welcomed.

4.2 Guidelines for Good Forestry Practices in Arid and Semi-arid Zones

37. The Commission commended the efforts deployed in the preparation of the draft outline and in key elements of the Guidelines for Good Forestry Practices in the Near East Arid and Semi-Arid Zones

38. The Commission noted the importance of such guidelines as a tool for policy-making.

39. The Commission endorsed the principle of preparing the guidelines but requested that the deadline for providing comments on the proposed document be extended. It was therefore decided that amendments and comments would be accepted until 15 March 2008, after which date drafting of the detailed guidelines would commence.

40. The Commission urged the FAO Regional Office for the Near East to move ahead with the preparation of the guidelines and their submission in final form to the next session of the Committee on Forestry in 2009.

4.3 Near East Network on Forest Health and Invasive Species

41. The Commission commended the secretariat paper and the supporting document on the establishment of the Near East Network on Forest Health and Invasive Species. It noted the constant progression on dieback and forest decline in many countries as well as the undesirable proliferation of exotic plant and tree species.

42. The Commission therefore welcomed and endorsed the establishment of a Near East Network on Forest Health and Invasive Species (NENFHIS) as a regional platform to share information and experience on integrated and dynamic forest pest management and on the generation of baseline data for decision-making. It further recommended that the number of executive committee members be limited to five countries, to be selected on the basis of balanced geographical representation.

43. The Commission urged member countries to provide political support to and facilitate the participation of their respective Focal Points in the Network's activities.

REGIONAL ISSUES IDENTIFIED BY THE 18TH SESSION OF THE COMMISSION FOR THE 19TH SESSION OF THE COMMITTEE ON FORESTRY (Item 5)

44. The Commission stressed the importance of range and rangeland resources in the region and their close inter-linkages with forests. It further urged FAO to consider the repeated request to amend the title and the mandate of the Commission in order to include range concerns, as was the case for wildlife in the African Forestry Commission.

45. The Commission urged FAO to undertake a study on the forest policies, laws and institutions in the different countries of the region. The study would serve as a baseline to provide the necessary support to countries when updating their legislation and policies, where these exist, and when drafting, if necessary, new policies and legislation and to create synergies among all the institutions concerned.

46. The Commission requested that FAO undertake a study to document and highlight the economic, social and environmental importance of forests, trees outside forests, urban forests, oases and other particular ecosystems.

47. The Commissions further recommended that FAO and other members of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests (CPF) continue and increase their collaboration and cooperation in their forest and climate change programmes. They further called upon FAO to organize regional workshops on forests and climate change to share information on recent developments; exchange experiences;

facilitate regional and sub-regional cooperation; and, while recognizing variability among them, to develop unified approaches and positions.

48. The Commissions noted that many countries in the regions lacked adequate capacity and policy measures to manage fire effectively, including monitoring, early warning, preparedness, prevention, and restoration. Therefore, they recommended that (i) local communities be trained and engaged in fire management; (ii) regional cooperation be promoted, including the development of transboundary strategies; and (iii) intersectoral approaches be adopted for integrated fire management at local and national levels.

49. The Commissions recommended that (i) linkages between forests and water resources be studied further; (ii) integrated management of water and trees be encouraged, including incorporating forestry in watershed management plans; and (iii) innovative mechanisms, including payment for environmental services, be put in place to ensure efficient and sustainable water, range, trees and forests management.

ANY OTHER BUSINESS (Item 6)

50. The Commission noted the offer by the Arab Organization for Agricultural Development (AOAD) to make use of the facilities of the Arab Forest and Range Institute (AFRI) in Latakiah, Syria, for the organization of meetings, trainings and workshops. The AFRI had recently benefited from the support of FAO for the revision of its teaching curriculum and had made substantive improvements to its facilities.

51. The Commissions appreciated the visit to the Sunut forests, which were being managed within an integrated urbanization programme for New Khartoum. The Commissions commended the efforts made to harmonize social and environmental concerns with the overall economic approach of the project. The visit concluded with a tree planting ceremony, which allowed delegates to make a symbolic contribution to enhancing the greening of the area.

DATE AND PLACE OF NEXT SESSION (Item 7)

52. The Commission was informed of the official offer made in July 2007 by Tunisia to host the 19th Session of the Commission. It welcomed this offer. The Commission further advised other member countries which had expressed interest in hosting the session to send an official offer to the Director-General of FAO, who would seek the endorsement of the venue from the NEFC Executive Committee.

53. The Nineteenth Session of the Commission will take place in 2010, at a date to be decided in close consultation with the host country.

ADOPTION OF THE REPORT OF THE 18TH SESSION OF THE NEAR EAST FORESTRY COMMISSION (Item 8)

54. The Commission further examined the report submitted by the Secretariat and adopted it by acclamation.

**JOINT MEETING OF THE
18TH SESSION OF THE NEAR EAST FORESTRY COMMISSION
AND THE
16TH SESSION OF THE AFRICAN FORESTRY AND WILDLIFE COMMISSION**

FORESTS AND CLIMATE CHANGE (Joint Meeting Item 1)

55. The Commissions noted that climate change brought new challenges and opportunities to the forest sector, and that experience with sustainable forest management represented a sound foundation for climate change mitigation and adaptation measures in the sector.

56. The Commissions noted that several African and some Near East countries had high but unrealized potential to benefit financially from climate change mitigation activities. They highlighted that it had been difficult for countries to access Clean Development Mechanism (CDM) markets for afforestation/reforestation projects. The Commissions further noted that the voluntary carbon market was quite favourable to forestry projects, but some constraints had to be overcome in order for countries to participate more actively.

57. The Commissions therefore urged member countries to:

- a. share and exchange experiences from the CDM and voluntary market forestry projects, in particular ways in which difficulties had been overcome;
- b. promote the development of forest carbon projects through training, extension and policy and financial measures; and
- c. seek to fully engage the private sector in climate change mitigation projects in forestry.

58. The Commissions recognized that forestry cuts across both mitigation and adaptation, and that synergies between them can be created to bring benefits to the Near East and African regions. It was further recognized that mainstreaming local community needs within mitigation initiatives in the Near East and African countries could provide win-win solutions.

59. The Commissions requested FAO and other relevant organizations to pursue and increase their support to African and Near East countries in forests and climate change, including technical assistance and capacity strengthening in areas such as forest inventories, monitoring carbon stocks, development of forest carbon projects, and accessing carbon markets.

60. African countries were considered to be potentially well positioned to benefit from a future international instrument on reducing emissions from deforestation and forest degradation. However, many countries were not equipped to access potential benefits over the short-term. The Commission therefore requested FAO to help strengthen member countries' capacities and make the necessary preparations, including through developing national strategies and a reference scenario and in forest monitoring and assessment.

61. The Commissions strongly recommended that African and Near East countries address adaptation and mitigation opportunities in their forestry sectors in a holistic way in order to capture synergies, incorporate them in national forest programmes (nfps), and link them with human development needs. The Commissions requested FAO to provide assistance to member countries in their efforts to mainstream climate change within their nfps.

62. The potential for dryland forests in adaptation and mitigation deserved higher attention at the international level. The Commissions therefore urged their member countries to highlight this potential in the international climate change dialogue and to include these forests in their climate change programmes.

63. Recognizing that it was essential that forestry institutions be prepared and fully engaged in national and international actions regarding forests and climate change mitigation and adaptation, the Commissions called upon FAO to organize regional workshops on forests and climate change to share information on recent developments; exchange experiences; facilitate regional and sub-regional cooperation; and, while recognizing variability among them, to develop unified approaches and positions.

64. The Commissions stressed the need for member countries to seek to identify and capitalize on social and environmental co-benefits (livelihood support and ecosystem services) when developing mitigation and adaptation strategies in forestry.

65. The Commissions therefore recommended that collaboration and information exchange on forests and climate change mitigation and adaptation be strengthened and that, while recognizing the variability among countries, unified responses to international initiatives be developed.

66. The Commissions urged countries to work to harmonize their efforts in climate change with their commitments under other forest-related international conventions and agreements. They also requested that FAO and other members of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests (CPF) continue and increase their collaboration and cooperation in their forest and climate change programmes.

FORESTS AND ENERGY (Joint Meeting Item 2)

67. The Commissions noted the importance of wood energy in the African and Near East countries. They also noted the close link between woodfuel production, deforestation and climate change, and the competition between food, fibre and fuel production for land.

68. The Commissions noted the urgent need for new energy services in the regions as well as new and alternative technologies for (i) energy production; (ii) reliable and readily available data and information on wood energy; and (iii) equipping national forestry agencies to deal with the issues.

69. The Commissions therefore recommended that FAO assist member countries in their efforts to enhance national and regional capacities for the development, implementation and monitoring of wood energy systems, including the establishment of information systems.

70. The Commissions further urged member countries to evaluate with care the costs and benefits of investing in bioenergy, as such investments may compete with food production and increase deforestation.

71. FAO informed the Commissions of the forthcoming High-Level Conference on World Food Security and the Challenges of Climate Change and Bioenergy to be held at FAO Headquarters, Rome, Italy, from 3-5 June 2008.

FORESTS AND WILDFIRE (Joint Meeting Item 3)

72. The Commissions recognized that Africa and the Near East were fire-prone regions, and that the causes of fire were of human origin amplified by climatic conditions. It was further recognized that many countries in the regions lacked adequate capacity and policy measures to manage fire effectively, including monitoring, early warning, preparedness, prevention, and restoration.

73. The Commissions therefore recommended that (i) local communities be trained and engaged in fire management; (ii) regional cooperation be promoted, including the development of transboundary strategies; and (iii) intersectoral approaches be adopted for integrated fire management at local and national levels.

74. The Commissions were informed of FAO publications on wildfire, including “Global Assessment 2006”, “Review of International Cooperation 2006”, “Voluntary Guidelines: principles and strategic actions; and Implementation: Fire Management Actions Alliance”.

75. The Commissions recommended that FAO assist member countries in their efforts to implement the voluntary guidelines and to develop national and regional fire management plans.

76. The Commissions further urged member countries to consider their participation in the Forest Fire Alliance.

FORESTS AND WATER (Joint Meeting Item 4)

77. The Commissions discussed this item with great interest, recognizing the important linkage between forests and water resources, and the urgent need to use these linkages to successfully address many of the problems in both the forestry and water sectors.

78. Experiences from the regions were shared. The Commissions noted the importance of relevant initiatives such as the Green Wall of the Sahara and the *Fouta Djallon* Highlands Integrated Natural Resources Management of the great "water tower" of West Africa.

79. The Commissions recommended that (i) linkages between forests and water resources be studied further; (ii) integrated management of water and trees be encouraged, including incorporating forestry in watershed management plans; and (iii) innovative mechanisms, including payments for environmental services, be put in place to ensure efficient and sustainable water, trees and forests management.

SHAPING AN ACTION PROGRAMME FOR FAO IN THE AFRICA AND NEAR EAST REGIONS (Joint Meeting Item 5)

FAO Strategy for Forestry

80. The Commissions concurred with the process and time schedule presented. They noted the inclusive consultation process launched by FAO and that a few member countries had already sent their contributions prior to the session. Countries which not had yet done so were encouraged to provide the FAO Secretariat with feedback at the strategy website: www.fao.org/forestry/strategy or by email to: FO-strategy@fao.org as soon as possible after the sessions.

81. The Commissions requested FAO to circulate the draft strategy in mid-2008, including by means of an official communication to the national heads of forestry and by being posted on the FAO forestry and forestry strategy websites. They agreed to engage actively in the process, and requested that FAO present the new strategy to the 19th Session of COFO in March 2009 for its consideration. Members further expressed a number of views and highlighted priorities areas on sustainable forest management, updating the capacity of countries and on the importance of emphasizing wildlife in FAO's future work in forestry.

Global Forest Resources Assessment (FRA 2010)

82. The Commissions agreed to provide their national correspondents to FRA 2010 and their teams with the support needed to prepare the country reports and to participate in the remote sensing survey and any special studies that may cover their countries.

83. While they appreciated the planned regional and sub-regional training workshops from April to December 2008, the Commissions stressed the importance of the review and validation of the country reports by their national correspondents, and requested that FAO increase its efforts to strengthen the

capacity of national correspondents and provide them with the necessary support for procuring accurate data of high quality on all types of forests and other land uses.

Other Information Items

84. The Commissions noted the information items, including the State of the World's Forests (SOFO) 2009 and the XIII World Forestry Congress to be held in Buenos Aires, Argentina, in 2009. To raise awareness of forestry, members agreed to link their national activities to the forthcoming international years, including the International Year of Natural Fibres (2009), the International Year of Biodiversity (2010) and, in particular, the International Year of Forests (2011). The Commissions noted finally that the success of the awareness-raising campaigns would depend on the availability of resources.

85. The Commissions were informed by the United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF) Secretariat of the Non-Legally Binding Instrument (NLBI) approved by UNFF7 and the forthcoming sessions and themes to be addressed by UNFF. The Commissions were further informed of the forthcoming international congress of the World Conservation Union (IUCN) to take place in Barcelona, Spain, in October 2008.

CLOSURE OF THE 18TH SESSION OF THE NEAR EAST FORESTRY COMMISSION AND THE 16TH SESSION OF THE AFRICAN FORESTRY AND WILDLIFE COMMISSION

(Joint Meeting Item 6)

86. The Chairperson of the 16th Session of the African Forestry and Wildlife Commission, Mr. Abdelazim Mirghani Ibrahim commenced the closing ceremony by expressing his thanks to the 16th African Forestry and Wildlife Commission for electing him as its Chair, and to all delegates and observers of the two Commissions for having come to Sudan.

87. Mr Jan Heino, Assistant Director-General, Forestry Department, FAO, stressed again the uniqueness of the joint AFWC and NEFC session which, in his opinion, would serve as a good example to replicate. Mr. Heino further reiterated FAO's and his own thanks for the generous hospitality, warm welcome and excellent facilities and support received from the government, the Forests National Corporation and the national staff involved. He congratulated both Commissions on their successful sessions.

88. In closing the sessions, H.E. Elzubier Bashir Taha, Minister for Agriculture and Forests of the Republic of the Sudan, also congratulated the two Commissions for their excellent work. He read out a message to the Commissions from H.E. Omar Hassan Ahmed Al Bashir, President of the Republic of the Sudan, which further expressed the wish for the African and Near East experts to work together to find appropriate responses to the many challenges facing forestry and environmental degradation in the two regions. H.E. the Minister for Agriculture and Forests then declared the two sessions closed.

APPENDIX A**AGENDA**

1. Adoption of agenda
2. Election of officers
3. Sustainable use of natural resources in Near East arid and semi-arid ecosystems
 - 3.1 Management of forests, rangelands and other natural areas
 - 3.2 Policy formulation, legal frameworks and strengthening national and regional institutions
 - 3.3 Developing participatory approaches and building inter-sectoral linkages in the Near East Region
 - 3.4 *In-Session Seminar: Mobilization of domestic resources for forestry development in the Near East region*
4. FAO and other forestry activities of interest to the Near East Region
 - 4.1 NEFC and other FAO-supported activities and initiatives, including follow-up to the requests and recommendations of the 17th Session of the Commission
 - 4.2 Regional guidelines on best forestry practices in arid and semi-arid zones
 - 4.3 Regional network on forest health and invasive species
5. Regional issues identified by the 18th Session of the Commission for the 19th Session of the Committee on Forestry
6. Any other business
7. Date and place of next session
8. Adoption of the report of the 18th Session of the Near East Forestry Commission

Joint meeting with the 16th Session of the African Forestry and Wildlife Commission

- JM1 Forests and climate change
- JM2 Forests and energy
- JM3 Forests and wildfires
- JM4 Forests and water resources
- JM5 Shaping an action programme for FAO in the Africa and Near East Regions
 - FAO strategy for forestry
 - Global Forest Resources Assessment (FRA 2010)
 - State of the World's Forests (SOFO) 2009
 - XIII World Forestry Congress, Buenos Aires, Argentina, 2009
 - International Year of Forests 2011
- JM6 Closure of the 18th Session of the Near East Forestry Commission and the 16th Session of the African Forestry and Wildlife Commission

AFWC-NEFC Special Event – Thursday, 21 February 2008

- Tree planting
- Study tour

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*APPENDIX C***LIST OF DOCUMENTS****NEAR EAST FORESTRY COMMISSION**

FO:NEFC/2008/1	Provisional agenda
FO:NEFC/2008/3	Sustainable use of natural resources in the Near East arid and semi-arid ecosystems
FO:NEFC/2008/4	FAO and other forestry activities of interest to the Near East region

**JOINT MEETING OF THE 18TH NEAR EAST FORESTRY COMMISSION
AND THE
16TH AFRICAN FORESTRY AND WILDLIFE COMMISSION**

FO:AFWC/NEFC/2008/JM 1	Forests and climate change
FO:AFWC/NEFC/2008/JM 2	Forests and energy regional perspectives: opportunities and challenges for forests and forestry
FO:AFWC/NEFC/2008/JM 3	Forests and wildfires
FO:AFWC/NEFC/2008/JM 4	Forests and water resources
FO:AFWC/NEFC/2008/JM 5	Shaping an action programme for FAO in Africa and the Near East regions
FO:AFWC/NEFC/2008/JM Inf.1	Information note for participants
FO:AFWC/NEFC/2008/JM Inf.2	Provisional timetable and list of documents

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Jordan	Tajikistan
Kuwait	Tunisia
Kyrgyzstan	Turkey
Lebanon	United Arab Emirates
Libyan Arab Jamahiriya	Uzbekistan
Mauritania	Yemen
Morocco	

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