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FAO Regional Conference for the Near East

Thirty-second Session

Rome, Italy, 24-28 February 2014

The Third Mediterranean Forest Week

I. INTRODUCTION

1. From 17-21 March 2013 the Committee on Mediterranean Forestry Questions-*Silva Mediterranea* ('the Committee') organized the Third Mediterranean Forest Week (III MFW) in Tlemcen. The III MFW was held with the support of the Algerian Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development and several other key members of the Collaborative Partnership on Mediterranean Forests. After the success of the first two Mediterranean Forest Weeks, in 2010 in Antalya (Turkey) and in 2011 in Avignon (France), the Algerian authorities welcomed this third edition in Tlemcen on the following issue: "Mediterranean forests for sustainable development of territories: what strategies of mitigation and adaptation to global change?"¹.

2. The Committee underlined that forest ecosystems and other wooded lands in the Mediterranean are both sources of wood, cork, energy, food, incomes and many other goods and services (*biodiversity conservation, soils and water protection, recreational areas, significant potential for carbon storage*) often crucial for many economic sectors (*food and agriculture, soils and water conservation, drinking water supply, tourism, energy and forest industry*). They contribute significantly to rural development, poverty alleviation and food security of Mediterranean landscapes.

3. The agenda highlighted the following key challenges:

- Global changes that affect the Mediterranean region have often significant negative effects on forest ecosystems and other wooded land (*loss of biodiversity, increasing risk of forest fires and other biotic disturbances, watershed degradation and desertification processes*). This jeopardizes the sustainable provision of multiple goods and services to populations.
- The emergent desertification in Mediterranean landscapes forms a serious threat to the forests, combating this should be a key priority in all regional/national forest and environmental policies.

¹ See the website of the IIIMFW: http://www.iii-med.forestweek.org/sites/default/files/press/presentations_iiisfm_english_low.pdf

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4. Subsequently, outcomes of the III MFW include:
- The launch of the first edition of the State of Mediterranean Forests (SoMF);
 - The organization of a high level segment, chaired by the Algerian Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development, to endorse a new "Strategic Framework on Mediterranean Forests: policy orientations for integrated management of forest ecosystems in Mediterranean landscapes" (SFMF) and to adopt the Tlemcen Declaration;
 - The celebration of the first International Day of Forests on March 21, 2013, where the tree planting ceremony created an excellent opportunity to highlight the importance of forest ecosystems and other wooded lands for Mediterranean landscapes.

II. THE STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK ON MEDITERRANEAN FORESTS

5. The SFMF is the result of a long regional dynamic initiated in April 2011 in Avignon, France, during the Second Mediterranean Forest Week (II SFM).

6. In September 2012 in Chania, Greece, an expert workshop was organized to prepare the first draft of this strategic document aiming to provide common policy orientations for the integrated management of Mediterranean forest ecosystems.

7. This SFMF is based on information from the SoMF and formulates three objectives. Each of the three main objectives proposes the implementation of three key strategic lines with expected results and concrete recommendations addressed to decision makers for the sustainable management of forest ecosystems and other wooded lands in the Mediterranean:

1) Developing and promoting goods and services provided by forest ecosystems and other wooded lands in the Mediterranean through implementation of the following strategic lines:

- Improve sustainable production of goods and services by Mediterranean forests;
- Enhance the role of Mediterranean forests in rural development;
- Promote forest governance and land tenure reform in Mediterranean landscapes;

2) Promoting resilience of forest ecosystems and other wooded lands in the Mediterranean to face global changes through the implementation of the following strategic lines:

- Promote wildfire prevention by integrating the increasing risks associated to ongoing climate change in the Mediterranean;
- Manage forest genetic resources and biodiversity to enhance adaptation of forest ecosystems and other wooded lands to climate change in the Mediterranean;
- Restore degraded Mediterranean forest landscapes.

3) Enhancing capacity of stakeholders and the resources mobilization necessary for the sustainable management of forest ecosystems and other wooded lands in the Mediterranean through the implementation of the following strategic lines:

- Develop knowledge, training and communication on Mediterranean forests;
- Reinforce international cooperation on Mediterranean forests;
- Adapt existing financing schemes and develop innovative mechanisms to support implementation of forest policies and programs on Mediterranean forests.

III. THE TLEMCCEN DECLARATION

8. The SMSF was shared with foresters throughout the Mediterranean region during an extensive process of consultation which was finalised in Tlemcen in Algeria where the Tlemcen Declaration was adopted. The Tlemcen Declaration calls upon political and administrative authorities at national, regional and local level and all other stakeholders involved in the management of forest ecosystems and other wooded lands in the Mediterranean (*private or public managers and civil society*) to develop and, if necessary, adapt their strategies and policies, for sustainable development of Mediterranean landscapes. The Declaration requests from forest managers, experts and the scientific community of the forestry sector to develop and implement innovative and sustainable management practices for landscapes to be disseminated and shared in the Mediterranean region.

9. The Tlemcen Declaration requests all member states to implement the main recommendations proposed in the SMSF, yet takes into account specific characteristics and needs of each country; it has potential to become an efficient tool in order to:

- Improve the visibility of the forest sector and promote the mobilization of financial and human resources in the coming years;
- Provide a consensual framework to improve intersectoral coordination and fostering partnerships between the various stakeholders involved in the management of forest ecosystems and other wooded lands in countries of the region after its integration in national policies (public / private);
- Contribute to a better coordination for development and implementation of sub-regional and intersectoral programs and / or projects;
- Facilitate identification and promotion of common positions on Mediterranean forest ecosystems and other wooded lands in international fora;
- Provide a common vision and roadmap to the Committee.