

## Towards a regional programme on Forest and Landscape Restoration in the Mediterranean

The [Strategic Framework on Mediterranean Forests](#) adopted in 2013 has identified Forest and Landscape Restoration (FLR) as a strategic line to address the objective of promoting the resilience of forests under global changes in the Mediterranean region. The working group of *Silva Mediterranea* on desertification and restoration of Mediterranean drylands has worked closely since 2014 with the Forest and Landscape Restoration Mechanism (FLRM) of FAO to promote this strategic line. In March 2017, the Committee *Silva Mediterranea* and the FLRM co-organized with partnering institutions the [5<sup>th</sup> Mediterranean Forest Week](#) in Agadir, Morocco, on the topic of the restoration of degraded Mediterranean landscapes. The main outcome of the 5<sup>th</sup> Mediterranean Forest Week was the adoption on 24 March 2017 by nine Mediterranean countries (Algeria, France, Iran, Lebanon, Morocco, Portugal, Spain, Tunisia, and Turkey) of the [Agadir Commitment](#) to improve FLR, Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN) and biodiversity conservation efforts in the Mediterranean region, with an objective to restore 8 million hectares of degraded lands in the Mediterranean by 2030. The Agadir Commitment defines a roadmap based on FLR to support the achievement of the [Bonn Challenge](#) and [Sustainable Development Goal 15](#).

The [European Forestry Commission](#) at its 39<sup>th</sup> session in October 2017 in Warsaw, Poland, made strong recommendation on FLR and explicitly mentioned the Global Environment Facility (GEF) as a resource partner to address to increase the support of member countries in FLR activities. The [Near East Forestry and Range Commission](#) (NEFRC) requested FAO at its 22<sup>nd</sup> session in December 2015 in Algeria to support

assessing and monitoring previous and ongoing country restoration initiatives and developing sound restoration programmes in drylands. At its 23<sup>rd</sup> session in December 2017 in Beirut, Lebanon, the NEFRC further encouraged countries to develop activities on FLR and to request FAO's support in this regards.



Lebanese landscape @N. Picard

The emerging programming directions of the 7<sup>th</sup> replenishment of the [GEF](#) include an impact programme on food systems, land use and restoration that matches the priorities on FLR defined by Mediterranean countries in the Agadir Commitment. The GEF-7 impact programme on restoration is particularly relevant for Mediterranean forest ecosystems that are often part at the landscape level of agro-silvo-pastoral systems, or strongly connected to such systems. The Agadir Commitment ensures that Mediterranean efforts on FLR will contribute to the Bonn Challenge. The programming directions of the GEF-7 also include an impact programme on sustainable forest management that is a cross-cutting program addressing the biodiversity, climate change and land degradation focal areas that is particularly relevant for the Mediterranean forests and rangelands.

Therefore, the development of a Mediterranean regional programme to increase the resilience of Mediterranean landscapes and populations

through the Forest and Landscape Restoration of degraded lands seems timely. This regional programme should include climate change adaptation and sustainable forest management practices for the sustainable provision of forest ecosystems goods and services. It should work at landscape level to capture synergies between forests (and agroforestry) and other landscape components and to optimize forest-based climate change adaptation and mitigation measures, taking into consideration the environmental, social and economic context. A landscape approach will also generate other benefits, including:

1. Biodiversity conservation and sustainable use: reduce threats to biodiversity; mainstream conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity into production landscapes and sectors.
2. Combatting land degradation: generate sustainable flows of ecosystem services from Mediterranean forest landscapes; reduce pressures on natural resources by managing competing land uses in broader landscapes.

The programme should also work at national level to help create an enabling policy environment conducive to forests and climate change adaptation and mitigation.



Participants to the 23<sup>rd</sup> session of the Near East Forestry and Range Commission at field trip @N. Picard

A side event was held during the 23<sup>rd</sup> session of the NEFRC on 12 December 2017 in Beirut, Lebanon, to further promote and accelerate restoration for multiple environment and social benefits in the Mediterranean region. Highlights of the emerging GEF-7 programming direction were presented during this side event, together with the possibility to develop a regional umbrella project on top of national projects. Countries encouraged the development of a Mediterranean regional programme on forest and landscape restoration in the context of the GEF-7 to address the commitment taken by countries under the Agadir Commitment and complement the countries' baseline efforts on the sustainable management of forests and rangelands. Countries further recommended FAO to continue its support to countries in developing GEF-7 proposals on forest and landscape restoration in the Mediterranean, including capacity building on the GEF-7 structure and processes.

## News from forestry questions in climate negotiations

Two major events on climate change were held in the last quarter of 2017: the [UNFCCC COP23](#) from 6 to 17 November in Bonn, Germany, and the [One Planet Summit](#) on 12 December in Boulogne-Billancourt, France. During the COP 23, countries continued to negotiate the finer details of how the [Paris Agreement](#) will work from 2020 onwards. Negotiations centered on the development of the Paris "rulebook" that establishes the technical rules and processes needed to fulfill the Paris Agreement's ambition, including setting the framework of country pledges (known as nationally determined contributions, or [NDCs](#)), reporting of adaptation efforts, the transparent reporting of action in 2023, and how to monitor compliance with the Paris Agreement.

One notable outcome from the UNFCCC COP23 was the end of a deadlock on agriculture which had lasted for more than five years, despite the growing consensus among experts that agriculture – and more generally the land use sector – needs to rise at the top of UNFCCC agenda. Parties at the COP23 agreed to work over the next few years on a series of issues linking climate change and agriculture. They agreed that the two subsidiary bodies of UNFCCC (Subsidiary Body for Scientific and Technological Advice – [SBSTA](#), and Subsidiary Body for Implementation – [SBI](#)) work together into one process on addressing issues related to agriculture. Countries have been asked to submit their views on what should be included in the work by 31 March 2018, with options including how to improve soil carbon and fertility, how to assess adaptation and resilience and the creation of better livestock management systems.

Except one positive step on indigenous peoples' rights, COP23 showed slow progress in forestry questions. As regards the coordination of [REDD+](#) support, parties at the COP23 could not agree on whether the voluntary meetings of national [REDD+](#) focal points should continue and if so, what their future scope and purpose would be. The development of the Paris "rule-book" showed little progress as regards forestry questions, largely due to the fact that land and forest emissions are currently dealt with under separate rules for developed (i.e. [LULUCF](#) rules) and developing countries (i.e. [REDD+](#) rules) countries. Forests and land-use also came up in negotiations relating to Article 6 of the Paris Agreement – market and non-market approaches. One of the concerns was that parties exchanging credits for reducing emissions could lead to double-counting if the country selling a credit for emissions reductions also counts the reduction in their NDC.

As regards climate finance, one outcome of the

UNFCCC COP23 regards the [Adaptation Fund](#), a relatively small but politically significant multilateral fund for small-scale projects. Member countries of the Kyoto Protocol, which the fund currently serves, agreed at COP23 that the fund shall serve the Paris Agreement. The Adaptation Fund also received more than USD90 million (including USD50 million from Germany) in new pledges during the COP. The same amount was also pledged to the [Least Developed Countries Fund](#).



*Cedrus libani* at the Shouf biosphere reserve, Lebanon @N. Picard

At the One Planet Summit on 12 December 2017, several major development finance institutions announced the alignment of their financial flows with the Paris Agreement. Members of the International Development Finance Club (IDFC) and of the Multilateral Development Banks (MDBs) committed indeed in a [joint statement](#) to deepen their collaboration in order to:

1. Further embed climate change considerations within their strategies and activities,
2. Redirect financial flows in support of transitions towards low-carbon and climate resilient sustainable development,
3. Catalyze investments to address new economic, social and environmental challenges and opportunities related to climate change,
4. Pursue the development of processes, tools,



methodologies and institutional arrangements that make it possible to design and implement climate action at the required scale,

5. Collaborate with national and sub-national governments in promoting the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions,
6. Support the development of enabling policy and regulatory environments,
7. Further support countries and partners to accelerate climate action and ambition by 2020.

Moreover, the [Land Degradation Neutrality \(LDN\) Fund](#) brokered by the Global Mechanism of the UNCCD and managed by Mirova was showcased at the One Planet Summit as a new investment model for the planet. Among the USD300 million that are needed to activate the LDN Fund and mobilize action against land degradation and desertification, more than USD100 million have already been contributed by public (European Investment Bank, French Agency for Development, Government of Luxembourg, Global Environment Facility, WWF Global Fund, and French Foundation) and private (Fondation) investors.

## 6<sup>th</sup> Mediterranean Forest Week

The Mediterranean Forest Week (MFW) brings together a diverse set of actors to participate in one of the most vital fora on Mediterranean forests today. The biennial event facilitates cooperation amongst the research community, policy-makers and other relevant stakeholders by providing a common regional platform for dialogue. The [last MFW](#) in March 2017 in Agadir, Morocco, brought together more than 280 participants on the topic of forest and landscape restoration in the Mediterranean. The 6<sup>th</sup> MFW will take place on 1-5 April 2019 in Lebanon. At its 22<sup>nd</sup> session held in March 2017 during

the 5<sup>th</sup> MFW in Agadir, the Committee *Silva Mediterranea* decided to organize its sessions during the MFW. Based on this decision, the bureau of *Silva Mediterranea* at its meeting in Madrid in July 2017 (see [Newsletter 27](#)) decided to set up a Joint Organizing Committee (JOC) for the 6<sup>th</sup> MFW and the 23<sup>rd</sup> session of *Silva Mediterranea*.

The first meeting of the JOC of the 6<sup>th</sup> MFW and 23<sup>rd</sup> session of *Silva Mediterranea* took place on 14-15 December 2017 in Beirut, Lebanon. The JOC agreed that the 6<sup>th</sup> MFW will deal with the role of Mediterranean forests in the Paris Agreement, their challenges and opportunities. The main objective of the 6<sup>th</sup> MFW will be to show how Mediterranean forests are important to address climate change and implement the Paris Agreement, with four specific objectives:

- How Mediterranean forests contribute to global commitments related to climate change?
- How important Mediterranean forests are for adaptation of people to climate change?
- How important Mediterranean forests are for the adaptation of water, agriculture, cities and other forest-related sectors to climate change?
- How important Mediterranean forests are for mitigating the effects of climate change?

An expected outcome of the 6<sup>th</sup> MFW is a stronger support to the integration of Forest and Landscape Restoration (FLR) and Land Use, Land-Use Change and Forestry (LULUCF) options within the Nationally determined contributions (NDCs) of countries in the Mediterranean region.

The 6<sup>th</sup> MFW and 23<sup>rd</sup> session of *Silva Mediterranea* will consist of ten sessions, with a balance between the MFW and the Committee ses-

sion. Session 1 of the 6<sup>th</sup> MFW will present where we stand as regards the role of Mediterranean forests in global commitments (including targets on Land Degradation Neutrality and Aichi targets) and the role of LULUCF in implementing the NDCs of the Mediterranean countries. The session will also present the most recent advances regarding forest-related topics in the three Rio Conventions.



Argan seed in the Agadir region, Morocco @P. Valbuena

Session 2 of the 6<sup>th</sup> MFW will present forest-based solutions to achieve the goals of international commitments by focusing on landscape approaches that connect the forests to other sectors. The solutions presented will involve e.g. forest and water, forest and agriculture, or forests and cities. These solutions may be implemented in the framework of forest and landscape restoration, biodiversity conservation, or adaptation to or mitigation of climate change. The session will focus on prominent case studies exemplifying how stakeholders concretely addressed problems.

Session 3 of the 6<sup>th</sup> MFW will present forest-based solutions to achieve the goals of international commitments by focusing on the role of non-wood forest products in the economy and participatory approaches.

Session 4 of the 6<sup>th</sup> MFW will focus on forest monitoring as a major enabling condition to implement forest-based solutions, addressing different questions: Monitoring what? Why moni-

toring? How to synergize monitoring efforts?

Session 5 of the 6<sup>th</sup> MFW will focus on the climate financing as a major condition for scaling up forest-based solutions. The objectives of this session will be twofold: to show to countries the relevant financing opportunities that they have to scale-up investments in forest-based solutions to climate change and set up financing mechanisms at national level, and to show to donors the commitment of Mediterranean countries in forestry questions related to climate change. The session will build on the most recent developments from financing institutions on the Paris Agreement.

The 6<sup>th</sup> MFW will also include a one-day field trip. More details on the preparation of the 6<sup>th</sup> MFW and 23<sup>rd</sup> session of *Silva Mediterranea* can be found in the [report](#) of the first meeting of the JOC.

## Changing the nature of cities: towards the 1<sup>st</sup> World Forum on Urban Forests

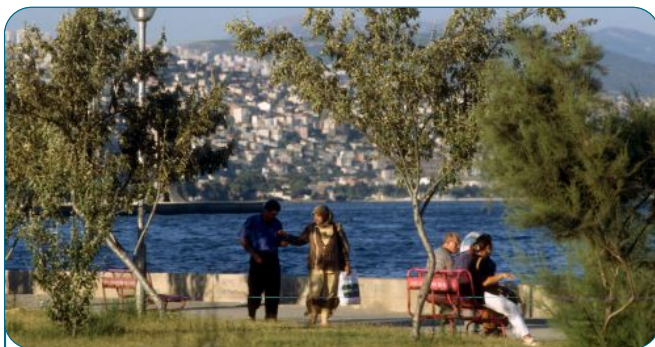
Urban forests and green spaces are increasingly recognized as key components of sustainable and resilient urban development for the wide range of socio-economic and environmental ecosystem goods and services they can provide. In fact, they can play an important role toward the implementation of the [New Urban Agenda](#) and the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, in particular [SDG11](#), which focuses on making cities safe, resilient and sustainable.

In most countries, however, the potential contribution of urban forests and trees to the livelihood and well-being of urban communities is still far from being fully exploited. This is mainly due to a lack of sound urban governance and plan-

ning, knowledge, expertise and information on the issue.

In response to this, the Forestry Department of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) – in collaboration with the [City of Mantova](#), the [Politecnico di Milano](#) and the [Italian Society for Silviculture and Forest Ecology](#) – is organizing the 1<sup>st</sup> World Forum on Urban Forests, to be held in Mantova (Italy) in November 2018.

Regional discussions on the issue have been ongoing in Europe and North America for a number of years and more recently have started in Asia-Pacific and Latin America. The growing participation in forums, groups and blogs on urban forests, green infrastructure and related issues, suggests that the time is ripe to initiate a global process to enhance communication and networking among practitioners, scientists, and decision-makers concerned with the environmental aspects of urban and peri-urban landscapes and particularly the urban forest and green infrastructure issues.



People enjoying their free time in a park in Izmir, Turkey ©R. Messori

Aim of this first Forum is to highlight positive examples of planning, design and management approaches of cities with diverse cultures, forms, structures and histories, which have used urban forestry and green infrastructure to develop economic and environmental services and to strengthen social cohesion and

public involvement. The event will bring together representatives of national and local governments, research and academic institutions, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), urban planners, urban foresters, arborists, landscape architects and designers and professionals from many other sectors to exchange experience and lessons learned, and discuss possible long-term collaboration on the development of urban forestry strategies and the identification of nature-based solutions towards a greener, healthier, and happier future.

For additional information on the event, please visit the dedicated webpage at [www.wfuf2018.com](http://www.wfuf2018.com).

## The State of Mediterranean Forests 2018

The preparation of the 2018 edition of the *State of Mediterranean Forests* is entering in its final phase. The texts of all thirteen chapters have been written, revised and compiled, and are currently undergoing final reviewing by the scientific committee. To give a flavor of this new edition, two main conclusions can be drawn from the current version of the report: Mediterranean forest ecosystems can play an active role in addressing the challenges the Mediterranean region is currently facing, conditionally on the recognition of the value of the goods and services provided by these forest ecosystems; Mediterranean forests and trees will be able to play a role in tackling global threats only if they are viewed from a broad perspective that connects the forest sector to other related sectors. The question of Mediterranean forests is no longer restricted to forest managers but also addressed to users benefiting from the ecosystem services provided by forests. Mediterranean forests are mentioned in the Nationally De-

terminated Contributions to reductions in greenhouse gas emissions under the UNFCCC of the Mediterranean countries, in their National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans under the CBD, and in their National Action Programmes under the UNCCD. Mediterranean forests can therefore play a greater role in the global agenda on forests if enabling conditions are fulfilled.

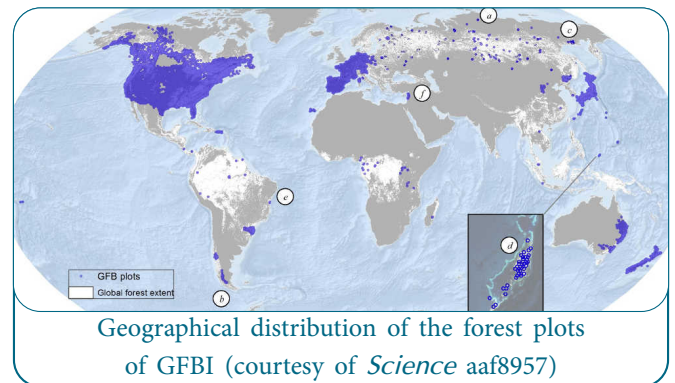
## Proceedings of the 5<sup>th</sup> Mediterranean Forest Week

The proceedings of the 5<sup>th</sup> Mediterranean Forest Week (MFW) have been published in a special issue of the journal *Forêt méditerranéenne* (volume 38, number 3) in September 2017. This bilingual (English and French) issue contains twenty articles on the main communications made at the 5<sup>th</sup> MFW, thus allowing the reader to have an overview of the Forest and Landscape Restoration question in the Mediterranean. The proceedings also reproduce the Agadir Commitment taken by nine Mediterranean countries to improve Forest and Landscape Restoration, Land Degradation Neutrality, and biodiversity conservation efforts in the Mediterranean region, with an objective to restore on a voluntary basis 8 million hectares of degraded lands in the Mediterranean.

## Did you know? The Global Forest Biodiversity Initiative

Biodiversity has a huge value in the goods and services that it provides, including those of cultural and other humanitarian significance. Forests, harboring more than two-thirds of all land-based animal and plant species, are more biologically diverse than any other terrestrial ecosystems. Under-valuing forests and under-recognizing the broad array of ecosystem ser-

vices that they provide often leads to forest degradation. A better assessment of the value brought by forest biodiversity first requires a better understanding of the diversity of trees and other types of plants hosted by forests.



The Global Forest Biodiversity Initiative (GFBI – <http://www.gfbinitiative.org/>), an international multi-stakeholder network of foresters and forest scientists, was established in 2016 with an aim at better assessing the forest biodiversity based on global ground-sourced data of tree-level forest inventories, as well as at addressing prominent scientific questions on the ecology and management of forests. The GFBI database currently covers more than 70 countries with over 1.2 million forest inventory plots. In the second half of 2018, three GFBI Hubs are scheduled to come online in Spain, China, and the United States to facilitate big data analytics and distribution. The establishment of GFBI Hubs as the key centers of activity of the GFBI will also equip GFBI with important physical facilities to promote international collaborations on forest-related research and education.

The GFBI has published in 2016 a [study](#) showing a positive relationship between forest biodiversity and forest productivity at global level, whereby a continued biodiversity loss would result in an accelerating decline in forest productivity worldwide. This study estimated the value of biodiversity in maintaining commercial forest



productivity alone in the range US\$166–490 billion per year, which is over two to six times the total estimated cost that would be necessary for effective global conservation. GFBI is currently investigating global forest biodiversity, carbon sequestration, and interaction between climate change, forest sector, and biosphere.

For the Mediterranean region, a hotspot of forest biodiversity, GFBI has already incorporated national forest inventory data from France, Italy, and Spain. Several Mediterranean institutions like [Università degli Studi of Firenze](#) in Italy and [Universitat de Lleida](#) in Spain are partner institutes of GFBI. Universitat de Lleida in particular provides a key support to GFBI by hosting one of the GFBI Hubs for the management, integration and processing of the big data, and fostering aca-

demically exchange and cooperation on forest research and education. GFBI welcomes contribution in terms of forest inventory data, especially from the tropics, and is dedicated to supporting research on different aspects of forest biodiversity.

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## MEDITERRANEAN NEWS

### **Symposium on wildlife and Mediterranean forests**

14-15 March 2018 – Plan d’Aups, France

<http://www.foret-mediterrannee.org/emails/5d125791e53493d633bdb4ed2ae40139.html>

### **WFUF 2018, 1<sup>st</sup> World Forum on Urban Forests – Changing the nature of cities: the role of urban forestry for a green, healthier and happier future**

28 November-1 December 2018, Mantova, Italy

<https://www.wfuf2018.com/>

### **MEDFIRE 1 - Mediterranean forest fires in a complex scenario**

26-29 November 2018, Granada, Spain

### **8 ICFFR, VIII International Conference on Forest Fire Research**

10-16 November 2018, Coimbra, Portugal

<https://www.adai.pt/event/event/home/index.php>

### **Joint Conference on Forests and Water 2018, II Congreso Latinoamericano Bosques y Agua & V IUFRO Conference on Forests and Water in a Changing Environment**

5-9 November 2018, Valdivia, Chile

<http://forestsandwater2018.cl/>

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