



## **History of the EFC - Working Party on the Management of Mountain Watersheds**

Soil conservation, water management, restoration of degraded lands and torrent-control in upland watersheds are important challenges which require the collaboration of all the actors involved in the rational utilization of soil and water resources. In recognition of these facts, the FAO European Forestry Commission (EFC), on the occasion of its 3rd session held on September 1st, 1950, examined issues related to soil rehabilitation and conservation through the rational use of water resources within basins. During this meeting the “Working Party on Torrent Control, Protection from Avalanches and Watershed Management” was established. In the following year, FAO was asked to provide support to this new Working Party (WP). The first session of the WP was held in 1952 in Nancy. Since then, sessions have been held biannually. In 1970, the technical body was renamed into “Working Party on the Management of Mountain Watersheds” (WP-MMW). Members of the WP are officially designated by their respective governments. The role of forests and trees in the management of mountain watersheds has always been a core concern of the activities of the WP-MMW.

The WP is continuously confronted with emerging issues of global importance and needs to keep an active reflection alive on the relevance and the impact of its activities. Over more than five decades of its existence, the core concerns of the WP have progressively evolved – but its “modus operandi” and the mandate remained unchanged since 1970. On the other hand, a number of new processes and institutional mechanisms of relevance to the WP-MMW have developed in Europe in recent years and the “institutional landscape” has become more complex. Finally, the human and financial resources of countries are more and more stretched by the large number of institutional processes and mechanisms they have to service. As a result, the 35<sup>th</sup> session of the EFC (April 2010, Lisbon) requested the Secretariat of the WP-MMW to implement a review of its mandate and “modus operandi” and to come up with recommendations for the future direction of the WP-MMW. The review was to put special attention into identifying the specific niche of the WP and to evidence elements of particular importance for the member countries. The review was carried out in the course of 2011, after which its recommendations went through a number of consultation processes. The final results of the review were presented to the 37<sup>th</sup> session of the EFC in December 2013 in Rovaniemi. The commission endorsed the recommendations of the review and gave green light to their implementation. This Governance and Strategy Paper was developed based on the decisions in Rovaniemi and considers the recommendations of the review.