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EFC matters**Forest and Landscape Restoration works under climate
change conditions in the region****Food and Agriculture Organization****European Forestry Commission****Thirty-ninth session**

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**Forest and Landscape Restoration works under
climate change conditions in the region****Note by the Secretariat***Summary*

Deforestation and land degradation are major causes of biodiversity loss and significantly reduce the productivity of the natural assets upon which the well-being of humanity relies. Responding to these challenges, FAO launched the Forest and Landscape Restoration Mechanism (FLR Mechanism) at the 22nd Session of COFO in 2014, helping countries to achieve their commitments towards the Bonn Challenge, the Aichi Targets and related goals, catalysing the work of the Organization in close collaboration with key partners in the context of the Global Partnership on Forest and Landscape Restoration. This paper provides background information about FAO's projects in the region and in particular FLR Mechanism implementation at country regional and global level.

1. Background on Forest and Landscape Restoration (FLR)

1. Deforestation and land degradation are major causes of biodiversity loss and significantly reduce the productivity of the natural assets upon which the well-being of humanity relies. Ecosystem services, including the provision of fresh water, food, fuel and fibre, biodiversity, air and water quality, and climate regulation are being negatively impacted by these processes causing serious economic consequences globally.
2. Given the right tools and incentives, much of the deforested and degraded lands can be restored – that is, ecological integrity restored and human well-being improved through better management of forests, woodlands, trees and other woody plants at the landscape level. The Global Partnership on Forest and Landscape Restoration (GPFLR) has identified more than 2 billion hectares of deforested and degraded landscapes worldwide – an area larger than South America – where opportunities for forest and landscape restoration may be found.
3. There is a growing awareness of the importance of forest and landscape restoration:
 - Landscape restoration and reforestation emerged as top priorities for 140 countries in their Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs), National Biodiversity Strategies (NBSAPs), and National Action Plans (NAPs) under the UNCCD. Further, of these countries, 99 have signed the UNCCD commitment for land degradation neutrality (LDN). Restoration of land and reduction of deforestation is vital for protection of biodiversity, as reflected in the NBSAPs of more than 100 countries.
 - The Aichi target of the CBD calls for restoring 15 percent of the degraded ecosystems worldwide by 2020.
 - Restoration through afforestation and reforestation has long been a part of the Clean Development Mechanism (CDM) of the UNFCCC and plays an important role in REDD+ efforts.
 - Restoration of degraded lands is the underlying concept of LDN.
 - Sustainable Development Goal 15 calls to “protect, restore, and sustainably use terrestrial ecosystems”.
 - The Bonn Challenge is a global effort to restore 150 million hectares of the world’s deforested and degraded land by 2020 and 350 million hectares by 2030.
4. Responding to COFO 21 recommendations, FAO launched the Forest and Landscape Restoration Mechanism (FLR Mechanism), helping countries to achieve their commitments on restoration.

2. The Role of the FLR Mechanism

5. For its first five-year period (2015-2020) the FLR Mechanism primary focus is on:
 - (a) Facilitating a multi-stakeholder process in selected countries to define needs and opportunities for FLR, resulting, as needed, in a national FLR plan that includes:
 - areas targeted for restoration;
 - the potential roles and responsibilities of all actors;
 - capacity development needs; and financial resources and technical support required and an indication of how to mobilize such support.
 - (b) Developing, compiling and disseminating tools and best practices related to FLR, taking into account existing related efforts (e.g., on land use planning, participation, genetic

resources, biodiversity protection from pests and disease, fire management, water and soil conservation, landscape values, etc.).

(c) Supporting the establishment of pilot projects and helping broker new large-scale projects and programmes with national, bilateral and multilateral donors and the private sector.

(d) Supporting adequate quality control of well-established FLR efforts, to ensure compliance with accepted guidelines, norms and standards.

6. The FLR Mechanism is also working at the global level in developing guidelines and standards for the establishment of baselines and the monitoring, measurement, reporting and verification of successful restoration efforts, and providing a financial intelligence function.

7. The FLR Mechanism is currently funded through voluntary contributions from the Republic of Korea and Sweden, while new funding support from Germany and through GEF will become available in the near future.

3. Importance of FLR for Europe and Central Asia

8. Although not a major issue at the European level, some regions have experienced forest and land degradation. In South and South-eastern parts of Europe, specifically wooded landscapes like cork oak forests, there has been significant degradation due to changes in management practices, and pilot restoration actions have been undertaken to engage local communities and landowners in sustainable practices, consistently with the current forest uses. Large programmes of forest restoration for soil and water conservation (in particular in Turkey) and post-fire restoration activities (Spain) have also been implemented to combat forest degradation. At the scale of the Mediterranean basin (including South and South-eastern Europe, North Africa and Near-East) and based on the data of the Global Drylands Assessment, it has been estimated that approximately 80 million ha of wooded landscapes were degraded to some extent.

9. The Eastern European and Central Asian countries represent very diverse characteristics in terms of climatic, social and economic conditions, which have important impacts on forests land resources. In Eastern and Southeast Europe, the ecotone is a densely populated and agriculturally important zone that has been under human influence for millennia. Unsustainable logging, grazing, fires, mining and urban development have, in certain degrees, impacted forest ecosystems' integrity. Moreover, impacts of climate change, such as predicted increased frequency of droughts and sinking of groundwater levels, and changes in species and their composition, may further threaten the stability of forest ecosystems in the region. Land degradation and desertification, exacerbated by climate change are serious issues, mainly because of inappropriate agricultural practices (e.g. dependency on cotton in the Central Asia region that is associated with inappropriate irrigation practices).

10. Most of the challenges listed above are attributed to the lack of resources and capacities on personal, institutional and societal level (i.e., frameworks and policies, cooperation within and across sectors). Thus, FAO is providing capacity building and raising awareness on forest and landscape degradation issues in the region with particular focus in Central Asia, Caucasus and Balkan countries.

4. Activities of the FLR Mechanism in Europe and Central Asia region

11. The FAO Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia (REU) and the Sub-regional Office for Central Asia (SEC) have been implementing several national and regional forest and land restoration projects in the region with landscape approaches (in Armenia,

Azerbaijan, Georgia, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Turkey, Turkmenistan, Ukraine, and Uzbekistan). These projects funded through different sources including Global Environmental Facility (GEF), Technical Cooperation Programme (TCP), International Climate Initiative (IKI), and Green Climate Fund (GCF). Detailed presentation about these projects will be provided under the agenda item 4a. In addition to the established funding mechanisms, the FAO-Turkish Forest Partnership programme has been set up to further facilitate restoration and conservation of forests and landscapes.

12. During the period 2015-2017, the FLR Mechanism supported the working group on desertification and restoration in Mediterranean drylands of the Committee on Mediterranean Forestry Questions - *Silva Mediterranea*. Its 2015 workshop produced FAO's "Global guidelines for the restoration of degraded forests and landscapes in drylands - Building resilience and sustainable livelihoods".

13. The State of Mediterranean Forests (SoMF) report is designed to compensate for the lack of data on Mediterranean forests and provide a sound basis for the management of Mediterranean forests. The FLR Mechanism is coordinating the chapter on forest and landscape restoration in the new edition of the SoMF to be published in 2018.

14. The Mediterranean Forest Week (MFW) is a biennial event on Mediterranean forests organized by the Committee *Silva Mediterranea* with its partners within the Collaborative Partnership on Mediterranean Forests. The 5th MFW focused on forest and landscape restoration, and mitigation and adaptation of Mediterranean forest landscapes to climate change. Its main outcome was the endorsement¹ at the high-level segment on 24 March 2017 of the Agadir Commitment to improve Forest and Landscape Restoration, Land Degradation Neutrality and biodiversity conservation efforts in the region. This regional Mediterranean initiative, aims to restore at least 8 million hectares by 2030, is focused on the four main components: (1) Assess the ongoing national efforts on FLR; (2) Reinforce regional cooperation on Forest and Landscape Restoration and Land Degradation Neutrality; (3) Cooperate, among interested partners, to develop a consensual and diversified strategy for the financing of FLR efforts and reinforce national capacities; (4) Assess the respective efforts of countries through the establishment of a voluntary monitoring and notification system for FLR and LDN efforts in the Mediterranean context.

15. The follow-up of the Agadir Commitment will be ensured under the new Spanish presidency of the Committee on Mediterranean Forestry Questions-*Silva Mediterranea* with the support of the FLR Mechanism.

5. Points for consideration

16. The Commission may wish to invite countries in the region to:

- (a) develop or strengthen mechanisms to ensure greater inter-sectoral cooperation amongst various land management agencies responsible for agriculture, forestry, fisheries, and livestock management through a more integrated landscape approach;
- (b) strengthen forest and landscape restoration activities at all levels and support the mobilization of adequate resources;
- (c) provide financial and/or in-kind contributions to scale up the FLR Mechanism at FAO.

¹ Endorsed by Algeria, France, Iran, Lebanon, Morocco, Portugal, Spain, Tunisia, and Turkey

17. The Committee may wish to recommend FAO to:

- (a) support country efforts in the region to plan and implement activities related to the restoration of forests and other degraded lands, in particular through activities of the FLR Mechanism, including national strategy and actions plan;
- (b) seek further cooperation with regional partners to promote the restoration of degraded lands, in particular through direct involvement in global partnerships and initiatives, including the GPFLR, International Model Forest Network, and the Landscapes for People, Food and Nature Initiative, as well as with the members of the Collaborative Partnership on Forests;
- (c) engage in cross-cutting and inter-departmental work to support landscape approaches;
- (d) pursue active engagement with multilateral, bilateral and private sector resource partners, including the GEF, Green Climate Fund and multilateral and regional development banks, to enable FAO to increase its support to member countries in FLR activities.