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Rome, 22-25 November 2021

Item 5(c) of the provisional agenda

FAO European Forestry matters: Progress of Silva**Mediterranea and EFC Working Party on the Management of
Mountain Watersheds****Forty-first session**

Rome, 22-25 November 2021

**Progress of Silva Mediterranea and progress report of the
European Forestry Commission Working Party on the
Management of Mountain Watersheds****Note by the Secretariat***Summary*

This paper provides basic information on the activities conducted under the auspices of the Committee of Mediterranean Forestry Questions – Silva Mediterranea.

The paper also provides brief information on the activities of European Forestry Commission (EFC) Working Party on the Management of Mountain Watersheds including the most recent developments on the protective functions of forests in a changing climate.



I. Activities of *Silva Mediterranea*

A. Strategic Framework for Mediterranean Forests

1. The Strategic Framework for Mediterranean Forests draws on recommendations provided in the State of Mediterranean Forests 2013 (SoMF 2013) publication. This strategy was shared during the Third Mediterranean Forest Week that was held in Algeria from 17 to 21 March, 2013, and it also inspired the creation of the Tlemcen Declaration. In the context of the 23rd Session of the Committee on Mediterranean Forestry Questions – *Silva Mediterranea* held in Brummana, Lebanon from 1 to 5 April 2019, the 2019-2030 Strategy for *Silva Mediterranea* was established.

2. Based on the Tlemcen Declaration and the Strategic Framework on Mediterranean Forests, this decade-long strategy was designed to support the Committee of *Silva Mediterranea* to fulfil its vision in the current and future contexts of Mediterranean forest changes.

B. State of Mediterranean Forests (2023 edition)

3. In February 2020, a survey was launched to determine the themes of the 2023 edition of the State of Mediterranean Forests. With the unprecedented pandemic-related circumstances the world underwent in 2020 and the change of *Silva Mediterranea* Secretariat that occurred in September 2020, the Secretariat chose to renew the survey, and it will be launched in the upcoming months.

C. Seventh Mediterranean Forest Week and twenty-fourth of the Committee of *Silva Mediterranea*

4. The last meeting of the Bureau of the Committee on Mediterranean Forestry Questions - *Silva Mediterranea* was held on 15 July 2019 in Rome, Italy, at the headquarters of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. A following meeting had been scheduled to take place during the 25th Session of the Committee on Forestry (COFO) from 22 to 26 June 2020. Nevertheless, along with indirect consequences of the pandemic, a variety of changes took place, resulting in a workplan change of the *Silva Mediterranea* Committee.

5. During the 23rd Session of the Committee on Mediterranean Forestry Questions - *Silva Mediterranea*, held in Brummana from 1 to 5 April 2019, the Committee decided that the 24th Session of the Committee would take place in Tunisia during the 7th Mediterranean Forest Week in March 2021. On 17 July 2020, the Tunisian Ministry of Agriculture, Water Resources and Fisheries, expressed its sincere and deep regrets of not being able to host the 7th Mediterranean Forest Week as planned. On 13 August 2020, the Turkish General Directorate of Forestry expressed its willingness to host the 24th Session of the Committee on Mediterranean Forestry Questions - *Silva Mediterranea* and the 7th Mediterranean Forest Week.

6. For these reasons, the *Silva Mediterranea* Secretariat, called upon the Bureau of the Committee on Mediterranean Forestry Questions - *Silva Mediterranea* for an extraordinary session to be held from 17 to 18 May 2021. The agenda of the extraordinary meeting included topics related to the continuity of the Secretariat of *Silva Mediterranea*, the 24th session of the Committee, the preparation of the 7th Mediterranean Forest Week, to be held in the first half of 2022 in Turkey, and the preparation of the 3rd edition of the State of Mediterranean Forests.

7. The Secretariat has collaborated with the Bureau members and the hosting country to establish the new Organizing Committee of the 7th Mediterranean Forest Week. The first meeting of the Organizing Committee of the 7th Mediterranean Forest Week (OC) was held from 5 to 6 July 2021, including both hosting country representatives and Mediterranean forestry experts to define the organizational aspects of the Week according to the indications

coming from the Silva Mediterranea Bureau. Some specific aspects of the Week, entitled “Forest and ecosystem restoration for the next Mediterranean generations”, have been defined, including the date, venue, themes and main forest topics to be handled, side event proposals, organizational responsibilities and budget matters. The OC established as main topics of the 7th Mediterranean Forest Week the identification of opportunities offered to young people by forest-based solutions, and promoting landscape approaches with a focus on restoration and conservation of biodiversity.

D. Points for Consideration

8. The Commission may wish to:

(a) Encourage the development of activities related to youth entrepreneurship in the bioeconomy as a way to address the challenges faced by Mediterranean forests in the context of global changes;

(b) Contribute to the preparation and encourage high-level participation in the 7th Mediterranean Forest Week to be held in 2022 in Antalya (Turkey).

II. Activities of the Working Party on the Management of Mountain Watersheds

A. Activities of the Working Party

9. In the period 2019 – 2021, three steering committee meetings of the Working Party on the Management of Mountain Watersheds (WPMW) were held virtually. The meeting in April 2020 focused on Working Group Strategy documents and the preparation of the publication “The Protective Functions of Forests in a Changing Climate–European experience”. The meeting held in November 2020 focused on the preparation of a side event and co-leadership of a session on cooperation for forest management at the World Forestry Congress. The meeting held in May 2021 discussed the preparation of the 33rd Session of EFC WPMW in Austria.

10. Three Working Groups (WG), namely WG1 “Forest and Water”, WG2 “Hazards and Disaster Risk management”, and WG3 “Protective Functions of Forests”, concretized and implemented activities of their work plans described in strategic documents and produced outcomes based on their strategies. The Working Groups are coordinated by lead countries (WG1: Czech Republic, WG2: Austria and France, WG3: Austria). The creation of WG3 was approved at the 32nd Session in 2019. All Member Nations of the EFC were encouraged and invited to join these working groups according to their interests and priorities.

11. In February 2020, WG1 “Forest and Water” held a conference on “30 years of Headwater Control: Forest and Water in Changing Environment and Society” in Prague, Czech Republic. The publication on the Conference theme will be published in “International Soil and Water Conservation Research” (journal of the Elsevier group). The book on “Environmental Sustainability Education for a Changing World” was published in March 2021.

12. WG2 “Hazards and Disaster Risk management” organized the workshop on “Forestal and Technical Measures on Erosion-Torrent Control and Landslide Management in Mountain Watersheds” in September 2021 in Trabzon-Rize, Turkey. In the workshop, the participants discussed the effects of protection forests and of check dams on permanent sediment retention and landslide management considering countries experiences and the site visit to the watershed of the Andon as a case study. The publication, “Hazards and Disaster Risk Management in Mountains: International exchange of know-how and practices” was published in 2021 in an Austrian scientific journal on the topic of torrent and avalanche control.

13. The first meeting of WG3 “Protective Functions of Forests” took place in January 2021, where the strategic agenda of WG 3 was discussed and later approved in March 2021.

The second meeting was organized in June 2021 to exchange views on the protective function of forests and arrangements for the 33rd Session of the Working Party.

14. The Working Party held its 33rd Session in Traunkirchen, Austria, from 13 to 15 October 2021. With the overall theme of “Integral approach to the flood protection effect of the forest with special consideration of water and sediment retention”, the session included an overview of the Working Party and Working Groups, followed by reports from the countries, structured strategy discussions for each Working Group and discussions on the action plan for the next five years. An adjoining conference on the overall theme was held with experts from various countries. An excursion focused on “Model-Watershed” provided the participants with insights into the rich experiences of Austria regarding watershed management. A co-publication with the Austrian Government on “The protective functions of forests in a changing climate –European experience“ featuring the examples and recommendations of Working Party members is expected to be released as the main result of the 32nd session and subsequent work among Member Nations and the Secretariat. Other outcomes of the session will be presented to EFC Members by the Secretariat.

B. Points for Consideration

15. The Commission may wish to take full advantage of the services of the Working Party and facilitate its work by:

- (a) Strengthen further their commitment to the Working Party, including through designating a focal point to serve on the Working Party;
 - (b) Provide continued guidance for the Working Party, in particular in terms of priority topics to be addressed by the group;
 - (c) Publicize the work of the Working Party and make full use of its services, for example through the submission of news items and announcements to be posted on the website of the Working Party.
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