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San Marino, 20-23 November 2023

Item 6(c) of the provisional agenda

**European Forestry Commission matters (Food and
Agriculture Organization): Progress of *Silva Mediterranea*
and the European Forestry Commission Working Party on
the Management of Mountain Watersheds****Forty-second session**

San Marino, 20-23 November 2023

**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 by Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) 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. Seventh Mediterranean Forest Week and Twenty-fourth session of Committee on Mediterranean Forestry Questions – *Silva Mediterranea*

1. The Twenty-fourth session of the Committee was held from 21 to 25 March 2022 in Antalya, Türkiye, in conjunction with the Seventh Mediterranean Forest Week (MFW).
2. The title of the Seventh Mediterranean Forest Week was “Forest and ecosystem restoration for the next Mediterranean generations”. It had brought together country representatives from 15 Mediterranean member countries. Various events were hosted to explore a wide variety of issues related to forest landscape restoration (FLR) in the Mediterranean region. Participants from diverse age groups were encouraged to discuss the unique obstacles that affect their participation in restoration efforts. The dialogue included fruitful discussions led by young people on their own role in the mechanisms that govern FLR strategies.
3. Young people proved to play a pivotal role in the progress made and outcomes produced at the Seventh MFW through their participation in the Mediterranean Youth Dialogue. This resulted in an official Youth Statement.
4. Also resulting from the Seventh MFW was the Antalya Declaration, which called for countries and relevant stakeholders to increase restoration efforts and work with each other to address shared environment and climate challenges. These efforts will be evaluated at the next Mediterranean Forest Week. The declaration served to establish a unified approach to Mediterranean FLR initiatives, as well as strengthen the mechanisms currently in place.
5. The Seventh MFW was an opportunity for member countries to discuss what they should do going forward, as well as to reflect on the successes of initiatives that had already been undertaken. In addition to the new outcomes, participants also assessed the progress in the Agadir Commitment¹ and endorsed the submission of the Mediterranean region represented by four countries – Lebanon, Morocco, Tunisia, and Türkiye – as a World Restoration Flagship in the context of the United Nations Decade on Ecosystem Restoration 2021–2030 (hereafter UN Decade).
6. The Committee welcomed the offer of Tunisia to host the Eighth Mediterranean Forest Week in 2024. The Twenty-fifth session of the Committee will take place in 2024 during the Eighth Mediterranean Forest Week.

B. Submission and selection of the Mediterranean Flagship Initiative in the context of the United Nations Decade on Ecosystem Restoration Flagship

7. World Restoration Flagships are identified as the best or most promising examples of successful ecosystem restoration for which a country or region would like to obtain global recognition, embodying the ten restoration principles of the UN Decade. The main role of flagships is to inspire other countries and regions to scale up restoration efforts and to attract global attention and investments.
8. The Mediterranean flagship proposal, entitled “Restoration of degraded forest ecosystems as nature-based solutions to build resilience in the Mediterranean region”, presented what the Mediterranean region can bring to the UN Decade and how it may support ongoing and future restoration activities. The concept note was finalized at the Seventh Mediterranean Forest Week in Antalya and was submitted by committee members on the UN Decade website on 31 March 2022.

¹ Fifth Mediterranean Forest Week. Agadir, Morocco, 20 – 24 March 2017
<https://www.fao.org/forestry/45685-0ad87e3a1d4ccc359b37c38ffcbb5b1fc.pdf>

9. The Mediterranean flagship was evaluated among the twelve proposals recommended for receiving a targeted support from the Multi-Partner Trust Fund established in the context of the UN Decade. Targeted support is defined as demand-driven, catalytic support to provide specific and transformative technical assistance and support to the selected flagships. Consequently, a targeted support request was prepared and submitted on 2 June 2023 with the support of the Secretariat of *Silva Mediterranea*, entitled “Capitalizing good practices on post-fire restoration in the Mediterranean”.

C. Preparation of the next edition of the State of the Mediterranean Forests (SoMF)

10. The State of Mediterranean Forests (SoMF) is a publication that seeks to improve knowledge of Mediterranean forests. The first and second issues of SoMF were co-published in 2013 and 2018, respectively, by FAO and Plan Bleu. At its Twenty-Third Session in April 2019, *Silva Mediterranea* confirmed its interest in this publication and requested that FAO prepare the new issue with an expected publishing in 2024.

11. The new edition aims to provide an overview of the status of forest resources in the Mediterranean region based on the most recent available statistics and to showcase sound management, nature-based solutions and sustainable socioeconomic actions by reporting case studies and good practices. It will also report on recent advances and products in Mediterranean forest monitoring efforts, as well as research-oriented and innovative approaches.

D. Preparation of the Unasylya special issue

12. In 2013, the special issue of *Unasylya* 242, entitled “[A new Dynamic for Mediterranean Forests](#)”, underlined the strong technical basis and political will across the countries of the Mediterranean to find solutions to several threats affecting Mediterranean forests. These threats include climate change, with emphasis on the importance of establishing regional strategies such as the Strategic Framework on Mediterranean Forests, as described in the publication.

13. During the Twenty-Fourth Session of *Silva Mediterranea* in March 2022, the Committee suggested to the Unasylya Editorial Board to prepare a new special issue dedicated to Mediterranean forests to be launched in 2024 as a follow-up to *Unasylya* 242.

E. The Mediterranean Youth Task Force

14. The Mediterranean Youth Task Force is the result of a highlighted need and agreement to involve more young people to participate in forest sector issues in the region during the Seventh Mediterranean Forest Week in Antalya, Türkiye, in March 2022. During the week, a Mediterranean Youth Dialogue was held, resulting in the [Mediterranean Youth Statement](#), which contains the main challenges and recommendations presented by young participants to all stakeholders in the region.

15. The newly launched Mediterranean Youth Task Force represents an effort to promote and guide a regional network of engaged young people (up to 35 years old) who are either from or living in the Mediterranean region and are either students, researchers, young professionals or have other active roles in the forest sector of the region. It aims to be a self-led group supported by both the *Silva Mediterranea* Secretariat and the Mediterranean Facility of the European Forest Institute ([EFIMED](#)). Active members of the Task Force will have reserved places in any events, including workshop and international conferences of both the [European Forest Institute](#) and *Silva Mediterranea*.

F. Points for Consideration

16. The Commission may wish to:

- (a) Encourage Committee members to contribute to the development of the activities related to the Mediterranean Flagship Initiative;
- (b) Encourage the Committee to support the implementation of the priority topics of the Mediterranean Youth Task Force;
- (c) Recommend FAO and in particular the secretariat of Silva Mediterranea to coordinate the preparation of the planned publications (Unasylva and State of Mediterranean Forests), engaging with members, working groups and partners.

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

A. Activities of the Working Party

17. In the period 2021-2023, two steering committee meetings of the Working Party on the Management of Mountain Watersheds (WPMMW) were conducted virtually. The October 2022 meeting marked a smooth transition of the Chair of WPMMW from Austria to Italy, while the June 2023 meeting laid a foundation of the 34th Session of EFC WPMMW in Italy.

18. Two Working Groups (WG) - WG1 “Protective Forest in Mountain Watersheds”, and WG2 “Hazard and Disaster Risk Management in Mountains” – carried out their work plan as outlined in their strategic documents. They delivered valuable outcomes that reflected their strategies and goals. The Working Groups are coordinated by lead countries (WG1: Austria and Slovenia, WG2: France and Austria). All Member Nations of the EFC were welcomed and invited to join these Working Groups according to their interests and priorities.

19. In October 2022, WG1 held a workshop on “Protective Forest Management after largescale disturbance” in Villach/ Beljak, Austria and online. The workshop addressed the crucial issue of managing protective forests in general and after large-scale disturbances such as windthrow, bark beetle calamities, and wildfires. In particular Italy, Slovenia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Austria shared their insights and experiences under this topic. Moreover, participants joined an excursion to Lesachvalley, Austria, as well as Mojstrana and several places in Slovenia to enhance their knowledge of reforestation in the protective forest.

20. WG2 has planned a workshop on “How to manage a catchment prone to torrential hazards after the disappearance of protection forests – example of the Cerbère forest, struck by multiple forest fires” from November 8 to 10 in 2023 in Cerbère, France. The workshop will explore the protective effect of forests against torrential floods, preventive management of protective forests against fires in mountainous areas, and management of torrential watersheds after a forest fire. Furthermore, a site visit to the Riberal torrential watershed will be arranged as a case study to develop a proposal on how to manage the torrential watershed after a recent forest fire. This workshop will provide an opportunity for participants to learn from experts and practitioners in the field of torrential hazard management.

21. The Working Party will host its 34th Session in Bolzano, Italy, from 27 to 29 September 2023. With the overall theme of “Management of mountain waters in climate change perspective: from the Alps to Mediterranean areas,” the session will offer an overview of activities 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 years. An adjoining workshop on the overall theme will feature experts from various countries. An excursion prepared by the Forest Department and Mountain Watersheds Department of the Autonomous Province of Bolzano will showcase rich experiences of Italy regarding watershed management. Outcomes of the 34th session will be reported to Members of the European Forestry Commission by the Secretariat.

B. Points for Consideration

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

(a) Strengthening further their commitment to the Working Party, including through designating a focal point to serve on the Working Party.

(b) Providing continued guidance for the Working Party, in particular in terms of identifying priority topics to be addressed.

(c) Publicizing the work of the Working Party and making full use of its services.
