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NEAR EAST FORESTRY COMMISSION

NINETEENTH SESSION

NEAR EAST FORESTRY WEEK

HAMMAMET, TUNISIA
5 – 9 APRIL 2010

**Forests and range: adapting to global changes for sustainable
development**

**REPORT OF THE NEAR EAST FORESTRY DAY
(XIII WORLD FORESTRY CONGRESS,
BUENOS AIRES, ARGENTINA, OCTOBER 2009)**

1. Within the framework of the Near East Forestry Commission inter-sessional activities, it was proposed to use the occasion of the XIII World Forestry Congress in Buenos Aires, Argentina, to organize a Near East Forestry Day (NEFD). This event was held on the 19th of October 2009 and attended by approximately 60 participants from the Near East Region, Africa and Latin America, including government officials and representatives of private and non-governmental organizations (NGOs).
2. The NEFD's main objective was to ensure the visibility of Near East forestry and to inform the international forestry community of the many facets of forestry in the region so as to increase the awareness of decision-makers in the countries of the importance of the sector.
3. The event also allowed participants from the Near East to share views and experiences from all over the world on key issues and challenges facing forestry in the region, by highlighting the efforts and activities of countries and some key partners from the region.

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4. Participants reviewed and discussed the forestry situation and the challenges the sector faces, through presentations on general aspects of forests and forestry in the different sub-regions and on more specific topics such as:
- forestry policy and sustainable development;
 - rangelands and biodiversity conservation;
 - wildlife and protected areas management;
 - afforestation; and
 - oil trees.
5. Among these, the following factors were highlighted strongly:
- in the Near East Region, forestry is closely related to range and should complement range management as well as cover all relevant plant resources including range, land management, trees outside forests, urban and peri-urban forests, shrubs and perennials;
 - the Near East is a water-deprived region in which rain and surface water resources are very limited; a situation which is aggravated by centuries-old high water consuming irrigation techniques. These particular geographical and climatic features present constraints and opportunities for forest-related activities;
 - water scarcity and unavailability in the Near East is exacerbated by poverty and a growing population and it is forecast that the region will be greatly affected by climate change and desertification;
 - the scope of activities is closely related to land management and control of desertification and land degradation. Due consideration should be given to mainstreaming forestry-related issues within the framework of the implementation and application of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification;
 - the region suffers from a lack of funding and the absence of cooperation between the different institutions dealing with forestry in the country; and
 - integrated ecosystem approaches seem to be the most appropriate for conservation, management and development of the resources, for the conservation of biological diversity, including marine biodiversity, and for the mitigation of climate change

Recommendations

- (i) Although there has been some progress in forestry-related activities, there is still a real need for raising awareness at national and regional levels as well as sharing lessons learned and experience gained through well-defined coordination mechanisms. This can be achieved through regional projects and training programmes.
- (ii) There have been some concrete results in dealing with problems affecting the region such as desertification, forest and wooded land degradation, water scarcity, and soil loss. Further efforts are needed to support the implementation of appropriate policies and related strategies in the forestry sector as well as integrating forest policies and strategies within the framework of land resources management as a whole. Countries are invited to develop and implement national forest programmes (nfps) or related processes.
- (iii) Mobilizing necessary resources (technical and financial) is a crucial issue to be considered. Solutions need to be found in order to reverse the trend of declining allocation of resources to the Near East forestry sector.
- (iv) Strengthening collaboration between private and public sectors and non-governmental organizations and research institutions is necessary for the promotion and valorization of forest products and services in the dry lands.