



## Forestry sector and sustainable development in the Mediterranean : challenges, policies and governance

Regional forum, Rabat 24 - 26 November 2005

### Conclusions & Recommendations

More than a hundred managers, experts and researchers from the Mediterranean countries and international and regional organisations met during the regional Forum " Forestry sector and sustainable development in the Mediterranean: challenges, policies and governance " held in Rabat from the 24<sup>th</sup> to 26<sup>th</sup> November 2005. This forum was organised by the "Haut Commissariat aux Eaux et Forêts et à la Lutte Contre la Desertification" of the Kingdom of Morocco and by the Plan Bleu, within the framework of the partnership established with FAO and with the support of France, following the recommendations of the Committee *Silva Mediterranea*.

#### Report and Stakes

The participants:

1. **Recalled:**

- the specificities of the Mediterranean forests and woodlands and their historical link with people;
- their global importance in terms of biodiversity;
- their essential role in the hydrological cycle and combating desertification.

2. **Underscored :**

- the social and economic importance of these wooded areas in the livelihood of the rural populations, in particular in the eastern and southern Mediterranean countries;
- the role these resources play in fighting poverty and in enhancing food security;
- their current and potential importance in terms of non-wood forest products, goods and services including the development of a sustainable tourism.

3. **Emphasized** the need to alert the political and economic decision makers of the Mediterranean countries and the European Union on:

- the gravity of degradation of these forests and woodlands on account of neglect and overexploitation;
- the irremediable loss of biodiversity (ecosystemic, specific, genetic), the increase in fire incidence, the silting of dams and the consequent environmental impacts;
- their increasing effects on the whole of the Mediterranean economies and societies and in the long-term stability of Euro-Mediterranean area.

4. **Appreciated** the first evaluation of the ecological and economic value of the non-marketed benefits of the Mediterranean forests highlighting the importance of the multi-functionality of Mediterranean forests and woodlands.

5. **Noted** the relevance of the many cases demonstrating the possibility of closely associating the populations in the design and implementation of forestry policies and programmes, and the introduction of a better governance involving all stakeholders.



6. **Welcomed** the recent progress made regarding the integration of the principles of sustainable development in forest policies, notably by setting up integrated and participative local development actions, such as elaborated in the various examples and studies presented at the forum.
7. **Underscored:**
  - the growing role that forest managers can and must play in sustainable rural development in the Mediterranean,
  - the need for reinforcing the human capacities and financial means to reverse the unacceptable current trend from the economic, social and environmental points of view,
  - the need for developing and for sharing specific case studies, bearing on problems of local or regional importance (natural and/or assisted regeneration, landscape restorations, ...).

### **Directions and Proposed Actions**

The participants recommend:

1. **To continue and accelerate:** the adaptation of national forest strategies, policies and programmes to the priorities and principles of sustainable development in the Mediterranean by giving emphasis to integrated and participative approaches to contribute to the Millennium Development Goals and the various conventions of the United Nations (Biodiversity, Climatic Change and Combating Desertification) and those of the Mediterranean Strategy for Sustainable Development; development of performance indicators and the development and adoption of certification.
2. **To reinforce** Mediterranean cooperation, North-South and South-South, for :
  - Developing a platform and network for sharing experience and information as regards indicators, references of good practices and tools for increasing the contribution of the forestry sector to sustainable development;
  - reinforcement of the synergy between the various research and regional training centres aiming at introducing, into their programmes, new tools and integrated and participative development approaches;
  - reinforcement of Mediterranean cooperation by developing concrete actions on preventing and controlling forest fires, addressing climatic change and supporting the sustainable management of the cork forests;
  - increase the awareness about Mediterranean forestry and its challenges at the international and regional levels, such as the United Nations Forum on Forests and the Euro-Mediterranean conferences on environment and rural development.
3. **To encourage** the involvement of the local authorities and the civil society organizations, particularly the national, regional and international NGOs, for the implementation of integrated and sustainable projects in the Mediterranean region.
4. **To continue** and broaden experience associating all stakeholders, particularly the inhabitants and users, in the design and implementation of conservation and management programmes and projects



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5. **To ensure** that forest projects take into account the restoration of the functions of Mediterranean forests, to improve their contribution to the economic and social well-being of the population and conserve biodiversity.
6. **To evaluate and develop** a better understanding of the economic, social and ecological impacts of the global challenges on Mediterranean forests, in particular those of climatic changes, and build up appropriate strategies.
7. **To evaluate** the consequences of the national, regional and international processes, such as the bilateral and multilateral agreements on free trade and competitiveness, including access to the Mediterranean forest products markets, and to identify appropriate actions.
8. **To take action** leading to the establishment of a platform meant for sharing regional experiences and to follow up the development of forests and forestry that would help countries in decision-making. This would also help to avoid duplication of efforts, to reinforce synergies between different organizations and to encourage the involvement of existing institutions.
9. **To reinforce** financial and political commitments of the Mediterranean countries and to mobilize bilateral, multilateral and community mechanisms for financing development in these directions, in particular with regard to the link between climate change and the Mediterranean forest ecosystems.
10. **To continue**, with the support of France and other countries and donors concerned in the region, the project "Mediterranean forests and sustainable development" carried out by the Plan Bleu, in line with these objectives.
11. **To invite** the Plan Bleu and FAO to hold the Project Steering committee, within 2 months, to specify concrete actions to be given to the forum recommendations.
12. **To bring** the elements of this declaration to the knowledge of national, regional and international authorities concerned, and in particular to the next session of the *Silva Mediterranea* committee.