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AFWC/EFC/NEFRC COMMITTEE ON MEDITERRANEAN FORESTRY QUESTIONS – *SILVA MEDITERRANEA*

THE ANTALYA DECLARATION FOR THE ROLE OF FOREST AND ECOSYSTEM RESTORATION FOR FUTURE MEDITERRANEAN GENERATIONS

We, the participants of the high-level segment of the Seventh Mediterranean Forest Week, held in Antalya, Turkey, on 24 March 2022, support the orientations of the Seventh Mediterranean Forest Week regarding the role of forest and ecosystem restoration for future Mediterranean generations.

Noting the importance of forest and ecosystem restoration for the achievement of global commitments made by Mediterranean countries within the framework of the Rio Conventions, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the United Nations Forum on Forests (UNFF):

- The forest sector plays a prominent role in the nationally determined contributions (NDCs) of Mediterranean countries and the European Union to mitigate and adapt to climate change.
- Mediterranean countries have prepared their National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans (NBSAPs) in the context of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)'s Aichi Targets 5 and 15, reporting on their efforts towards forest rehabilitation and the fight against deforestation, and they are now preparing to fulfil the post-2020 global biodiversity framework.
- All national action programmes (NAPs) prepared by Mediterranean countries to implement the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) explicitly refer to land restoration as a major dimension to achieve land degradation neutrality (LDN) and enhance societal resilience to drought.
- Restoring forests and preventing deforestation and forest degradation to address climate change are both expressed in Global Forest Goal 1 of the United Nations Strategic Plan for Forests 2017–2030.

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Noting in the 2021 Glasgow Leaders' Declaration on Forests and Land Use adopted at the Twenty-Sixth United Nations Climate Change Conference of the Parties (COP26) the commitment of parties to conserve forests and other terrestrial ecosystems and accelerate their restoration,

Noting the recommendations of the 2021 Ministerial Declaration on the Environment and Climate Action of the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) regarding protection, restoration and sustainable management of biodiversity and ecosystems, and integrating youth considerations into climate and environment policies, actions and investments,

Recognizing the importance of the adoption of the Brummana Declaration in 2019, which highlights the need to empower young entrepreneurs by turning project ideas into viable businesses in the green economy,

Recognizing the link between the restoration of degraded forests and ecosystems and job creation in rural areas, which also contributes to Sustainable Development Goal 8 of the United Nations' 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development to "promote inclusive and sustainable economic growth, employment and decent work for all",

Recognizing that the restoration of degraded forests and ecosystems is an essential pathway to recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic and that green recovery investments not only create jobs and income, but also mitigate the risk of future zoonotic diseases,

Highlighting that forest and ecosystem integrity plays a crucial role in keeping societies healthy and on a path towards sustainability,

Recognizing the importance of forest fire management, prevention and post-fire restoration in the context of climate change,

Echoing the endorsement of the Mediterranean regional statement on wildfires at the Seventh International Wildland Fire Conference in 2019, which urges the fostering of transboundary and regional cooperation in fire management as a major driver of land degradation,

Endorsing the Agadir Commitment in 2017, towards a Mediterranean regional initiative on forest and landscape restoration,

Welcoming the United Nations Decade on Ecosystem Restoration 2021–2030 adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on 1 March 2019 and launched on 5 June 2021, to offer an unparalleled opportunity for reviving damaged Mediterranean ecosystems and addressing climate change, food security and job creation,

Recognizing the critical role of World Restoration Flagships and the potential of restoration activities in the Mediterranean region as being among the world's most significant restoration efforts,

We, the participants of the Seventh Mediterranean Forest Week, recognize the importance of forest and ecosystem restoration for future Mediterranean generations.

We underline that the restoration of degraded forests and ecosystems ensures a healthy ecosystem structure and function, and plays a vital role in climate change mitigation and adaptation.

We underline that restoration can create employment and economic diversification, reconnect Mediterranean people to their landscapes, and promote capacity building, experience and knowledge sharing.

We underline the importance of youth empowerment and engagement in building climate resilience in the Mediterranean region.

We underline the importance of gender equality and women's empowerment in decision-making on forest and ecosystem restoration in the Mediterranean region.

We underline that COVID-19 recovery strategies must promote productive and sustainably managed forests and ecosystems as essential nature-based solutions to avert a climate and biodiversity crisis, and for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.

We, therefore, call on the political and administrative authorities at regional, national and local levels to reinforce and promote the restoration of forests and ecosystems in their strategies and plans.

We also encourage all stakeholders involved in the management of forests and ecosystems in the Mediterranean region to implement and scale up restoration actions, and to support younger and future generations to contribute to biodiversity conservation, climate change mitigation and adaptation.

We invite FAO to facilitate the exchange of technical knowledge and experience on forest and ecosystem restoration in the Mediterranean region through the transfer of human resources by developing partnership programmes, agreements and cooperation mechanisms.

We invite further discussions on drought and desertification in the Mediterranean region, considering their link with restoration opportunities, and to enhance collaboration on these issues with other regional actors.

In this spirit, we encourage the political and administrative authorities at the national level to:

1. Strengthen bilateral regional cooperation, partnerships and joint action to:

- address common environmental and climate challenges, build capacities and exchange knowledge and best practices; and
- mainstream the role of Mediterranean forests and ecosystems in the international framework of the United Nations Decade on Ecosystem Restoration 2021–2030 by submitting a nomination for a Mediterranean Flagship Initiative.

2. Engage stakeholders, including civil society, political and administrative authorities, the private sector and the scientific community in the planning, development, implementation and monitoring of restoration actions.

3. Promote the management of Mediterranean forests and landscapes towards a vision where social, environmental, economic and cultural benefits are equally integrated, such as in the Model Forest approach.

4. Continue to reinforce, with the support of the scientific community, knowledge and experience sharing on forest and ecosystem restoration, with a view to:

- periodically and systematically assessing the potential efforts for forest and ecosystem restoration in the Mediterranean region;
- assessing the role of youth and gender equality in restoration efforts; and
- assessing the costs and benefits of restoration for current and future generations.

5. Create with the support of international organizations, academic institutions and the private sector, incentives and opportunities for youth to participate in diversified educational programmes focusing on forest and ecosystem restoration, and sustainable management, including through the creation of job opportunities, to:

- increase the access of young entrepreneurs in the Mediterranean region to the restoration of degraded forests and ecosystems; and
 - promote networks of Mediterranean young entrepreneurs for turning innovative ideas into business opportunities.
6. Mobilize funds with the support of stakeholders and relevant agencies, including the Adaptation Fund, the Green Climate Fund and the Global Environment Fund, which entails:
- preparing investment frameworks, integrating restoration as a nature-based solution to climate change mitigation and adaptation; and
 - diversifying strategies for restoration financing efforts.