

## **Sixth Mediterranean Forest Week (MFW)**

### **Opening session –**

#### **Draft opening words – UNCCD Global Mechanism**

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The United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification, UNCCD and its Global Mechanism are pleased to be part of this important gathering driven by the Mediterranean Forest Week and its 6<sup>th</sup> edition, which is kindly hosted by the Government of Lebanon.

The sustainable use and management of forests are among the UNCCD priorities due to the diversified goods and services trees and forests provide, particularly in the drylands, where they play an important role in eradicating poverty and combatting desertification, land degradation and drought.

Along with our partners, namely our sister conventions on climate change and biodiversity as well as multilateral and bilateral agencies - to only name a few - we are fully committed to support the regional dynamic facilitated by the Mediterranean Forest Week and its translation into concrete action at country level.

Two years ago, in Agadir, participants of the 5<sup>th</sup> Mediterranean Forest Week, encouraged countries to strengthen initiatives on Forest and Landscape Restoration as well as Land Degradation Neutrality. The progress made by today is impressive:

- At global level, the UN General Assembly recently announced the upcoming UN Decade for Ecosystem Restoration, offering unique opportunities for job creation, food security and addressing climate change, the topic of today's meeting;
- In the Mediterranean, 11 countries<sup>1</sup> are among the 121 countries worldwide that have committed to set voluntary targets and initiated bold action to achieve Land Degradation Neutrality, and countries such as France, Spain and Turkey provide financial support to this process.

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<sup>1</sup> Algeria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Egypt, Italy, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, Serbia, Syrian Arab Republic and Turkey

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- Furthermore, both Turkey and Morocco kindly accepted to host the Regional Coordination Units of our Convention for the Northern Mediterranean and African regions respectively, showcasing their strong commitment to the objectives of the UNCCD.

Achieving Land Degradation targets provides significant benefits in terms of mitigation and adaptation to climate change. Halting and reversing land degradation can transform land from being a source of greenhouse gas emissions to a sink, by increasing carbon stocks in soils and vegetation, playing a key role in strengthening the resilience of rural communities against climate shocks by securing and improving the provision of vital ecosystem services.

These links between land and climate are reflected in the Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs): as of 2016, more than 165 NDCs included specific land-based activities for mitigation and/or adaptation to climate change.<sup>2</sup> LDN targets and the associated measures contribute to and depend on the implementation of these national climate plans – and forests play a key role to achieve LDN in most Mediterranean countries.

Let me in this context also highlight the important role of Forest and Landscape Restoration to address the challenges of climate change and to achieve the SDGs in general, and LDN in particular.

To achieve these targets in the Mediterranean region, the financing needs will be important. According to a UNCCD-FAO analysis<sup>3</sup>, more than 300 billion USD will be required annually to achieve LDN worldwide by 2030. To address this financing gap, the UNCCD is spearheading a multitude of initiatives, including the launching of the LDN Fund, an innovative financing instrument that is catalyzing public-private partnerships and the promotion of initiatives such as the Great Green Wall for the Sahara and the Sahel and the 3S initiative “Sustainability, Stability and Security in Africa”. We also support countries to develop transformative projects and programmes to achieve LDN, and I

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<sup>2</sup> UNCCD (2016). Achieving Land Degradation Neutrality at the country level

<sup>3</sup> FAO and GM of the UNCCD (2015). Sustainable financing for forest and Landscape restoration: Opportunities, Challenges and the way forward. Discussion paper.

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would like to commend countries such as our host country, Lebanon, and Turkey that recently prepared LDN projects in collaboration with partners such as FAO and UNDP.

Dear Participants,

Your engagement is a source of inspiration for the work of the UNCCD and we will take stock of the orientations and recommendations out of this important event particularly in view of our upcoming Conference of Parties, which will take place in India in September 2019. We will be honored to welcome representatives from your countries in India, where you will have the opportunity to convene the messages from this regional Mediterranean dynamic.

With all our appreciation for your efforts contributing to Land Degradation Neutrality, I wish us fruitful discussions and confirm our strong support to the upcoming Broummana Declaration.

Thank you.