



Fifth Mediterranean Forests Week

Opening Speech

20 March 2017

İsmail BELEN

President of the Mediterranean Forestry Questions-

Silva Mediterranea

Excellency's,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Dear Colleagues

It is my pleasure to greet you on my behalf and on behalf of the Committee on Mediterranean Forestry Questions.

The Mediterranean Forests Week, which was first organized in Turkey in 2010, followed by France in 2011, Algiers in 2013 and Spain in 2015, is now organized at another city of the Mediterranean Region, in Agadir.

This beautiful city has the spirit of both the Mediterranean and the Atlantic Ocean, enhanced by an African flavor. It is a perfect place to share our experiences and further our work.

The Mediterranean Forests Week has become a truly active and operative regional initiative.

It is my pleasure to convey to you the best wishes of my Minister, H.E. Prof. Dr. Veysel Eroğlu, Minister of Forestry and Water Affairs of Turkey, for the success of this meeting.

I would like to congratulate the High Commission of Water, Forest and Fight Against Desertification; the Administration of Agadir, as well as the members of the Organizing Committee for their valuable work.

I also thank the participants who come from different parts of the Mediterranean Region, the cradle of many civilizations.

Distinguished Guests,

Under the able leadership of H.E. Mr. Abdeladim Lhafi, the High Commissioner of Water, Forest and Fight Against Desertification of the Kingdom of Morocco, plays a crucial role both at national, regional and global levels. Morocco has hosted the UNFCCC COP 22, together with its preparatory meetings. I congratulate him and his team, including Mr. Houmy and my other dear friends for their success.

The Mediterranean Forestry Questions Committee, which I have been chairing since 2012, is like a home with full of wonderful teams and partners. It is one of the oldest such committees, dating back to 1911. It is an effective regional initiative with members stretching from Iran to Portugal and from Turkey to Sudan. I feel honored to be part of this Committee.

Recently, this Committee has accomplished several international activities and produced very important policy documents. Mediterranean Forests Weeks, Collaborative Partnership

on Mediterranean Forests, the Strategic Framework on Mediterranean Forests, the State of Mediterranean Forests 2013, and Tlemcen Declaration are some of them. It also has a useful web page. The newsletters produced by the Secretariat is among the most regular and well-organized ones in the forestry area. As I will be chairing the Committee for the last time, let me express my appreciation to the Secretariat, Working Groups, Focal Points and all Partners for their valuable support.

Distinguished Participants,

During this week we will have important meetings and witness important events.

Besides the MWF programs, this afternoon, we have a side event organized by the Secretariat of the Collaborative Partnership on Mediterranean Forest. One of the items will be the next edition of the State of Mediterranean Forest. <http://www.gonder.org.tr/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/CPMF-20-March-2017.pdf>

I am pleased to remind that the CPMF was also launched in Turkey in 2010.

Tomorrow we are going to celebrate the International Day of Forest. We are going to have a site visit on the 22nd of March, Wednesday. On Wednesday afternoon we are organizing the 22nd Session of the Silva Mediterranean. We will choose our new President.

Last day, on the 24th of March, Friday, the high level session of this week will be organized. <http://www.gonder.org.tr/?p=5683>

During the high level session, the most important outcome of this meeting will be negotiated and most probably approved by the High Level Participants. I will represent Turkey at the High Level Segment. Turkey supports the adoption of the draft Agadir Declaration. Turkey also supports the establishment of a Regional Mediterranean Initiative on FLR with a quantified and measurable target.

=====

Distinguished Participants,

Following the World Forestry Congress, Turkey hosted UNFF 10 in İstanbul and UNCCD COP 12 in Ankara. FAO Subregional Office for Central Asia was established in Ankara. The UNCCD Coordinating Unit for Northern Mediterranean Countries was opened in Istanbul.

UNCCD COP 12 Ankara Conference agreed that striving to achieve target 15.3 of Sustainable Development Goal 15 on land degradation neutrality was a strong vehicle for driving implementation of the Convention. The Conference also endorsed a science-based definition of land degradation neutrality as a “state whereby the amount and quality of land resources necessary to support ecosystem functions and services and enhance food security remain stable or increase within specified temporal and spatial scales and ecosystems”. So far, 102 countries are committed to the land degradation neutrality target setting exercise.

Land degradation, drought, desertification, loss of fertility triggered by climate change brings about socio-economic loss, poverty, unemployment, food scarcity, famine and migration.

Combatting desertification helps mitigate biodiversity loss and human-induced global climate change. Environmental management approaches for combatting desertification, mitigating climate change and conserving biodiversity are interlinked in many ways. Therefore, joint implementation of major environmental conventions can lead to increased synergy and effectiveness.

The Ankara Initiative, which was launched at the twelfth session of the Conference of the Parties, seeks to facilitate the implementation of the Convention, and the COP 12 decisions, as well as contribute to the Land Degradation Neutrality (LDN) target. In her capacity as the President of COP12, Turkey has been sharing its experience and know-how on combating drought and desertification with a view to achieve the relevant Sustainable Development Goal on land degradation neutrality, with the countries in need. At this juncture, relevant Turkish institutions are providing assistance for the preparation of LDN targets to the countries in need.

The Memorandum of Understanding on Combating Desertification signed last year between the Ministry of Forestry and Water Affairs of Turkey, and the Pan-African Great Green Wall Agency is also anticipated to facilitate the implementation of planned works to combat desertification and the institutional capacity building activities, as set out by the Ankara Initiative.

The upcoming Agadir Commitment and Ankara Initiative have mutually shared aims and visions. In order to reach the Sustainable Development Goals, especially the target on land degradation neutrality, and to reach more a sustained and restored landscape, all the stakeholders, including the private sector, civil society, and forestry trade unions must work together.

We need national, as well as, regional networks to reach our goals. Since recovering degraded land is also an opportunity for job creation, our efforts should also include the private sector. Cooperation and coordination at a larger scale is a must to achieve tangible results.

In this context, I would like to refer also to the two new initiatives of the African continent namely Sustainability, Stability and Security in Africa (3S) and Adaptation for African Agriculture (3A) which were Launched during the UNFCCC COP22 in Marrakech.

3 S is a political commitment for measures in connection with the impacts of climate change and land degradation on migration and population movements, and on addressing the drivers that create or exacerbate them. Whereas, the Adaptation for African Agriculture pursues the objective of reducing the vulnerability of African agriculture to climate change.

To do so, it will promote and support the implementation of improved agricultural practices, including sustainable soil management, water use, and climate risk management. Comprehensive solutions are needed to address the complex challenges that we face.

Distinguished Guests,

At this juncture, when important steps are being taken, , we are participating in this event with a different team composition.

I am here to represent the Government of Turkey, as well as Silva Mediterranea.

We have the representative of the Öz Orman-İş Trade Union. They are working in the field of forestry with a membership reaching 30 thousand. We have here also friends from the Greener Turkey Foresters Association and from the Foundation of the People Caring for Future - CARFU, which I am the chair. CARFU also represents PLANFOR (the Platform of the Associations of Nature and Forestry) which has members from several countries besides Turkey, including Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kyrgyzstan. www.carfu.org

Our NGOs are here to seek cooperation possibilities with other NGOs and individuals. They are here with the support of a special program, under the UN Delegation to Turkey. <http://sivildusun.net/hakkimizda/>

They are also supported by the Öz Orman-İş Trade Union which has been very active in land management and combating desertification, besides forestry. During the UNCCD COP12, they organized a side event with the title “The Role of Trade Unions in Combatting Desertification” and invited to the event several trade unions from around the world. It is also the first accredited trade union to the UNCCD.

Dear Participants, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Before I end of my speech, I would like to thank again all of you for being here. I would also like to thank Turkey’s Ministry of Forests and Water Affairs for their full support to my presidency of Silva Mediterranea.

I also thank again the organizers and I wish a successful conference.