



FORESTS AND WATER IN DRYLANDS: A VIRTUOUS CYCLE

Information exchange from the Mediterranean to Central Asia



7-8 July 2011

Palais des Nations, Geneva, Switzerland,
room IX

*An event of the
UNECE/FAO Forest and Water Week,
4-8 July 2011*

INFORMATION NOTICE

I. Objectives

The workshop will bring together countries and stakeholders from the region encompassing the whole Mediterranean to Central Asia to discuss the nexus forests and water and drylands, with the aim to:

- Present the functions of the forests in drylands, their specific relationship to water management as well as the challenges
- Elaborate on challenges/possible solutions, such as trade-offs between water use by trees in drylands, with decreased run-off and water availability for other land uses, and the environmental services and goods provided by forests and other wooded lands
- Exchange experience on forest and water management tools and policies that enhance both forests and water, including on management and adaptation measures under climate change
- Share experience and case studies of integrated management of forests and water in drylands
- Explore the potential and challenges of existing or future use of payments for ecosystems services (PES) in this area
- Identify areas of gaps and future work on forests and water in drylands.

This workshop is part of the 2010-2012 workplan of the UNECE Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes (Water Convention). Its outcome will feed into the 28th session of the European

Forestry Commission Working Party on the Management of Mountain Watersheds "Forests for Water – Water for Forests" (12-16 September 2011, Kastamonu, Turkey). The workshop will also allow to prepare the discussions at the seventh "Environment for Europe" Ministerial Conference (Astana, 21-23 September 2011) on the two conference themes: *sustainable management of water and water-related ecosystems* and *greening the economy, mainstreaming the environment into economic development*. Its results will be presented at the joint session of the UNECE Timber Committee and FAO European Forestry Commission on 10-14 October 2011 in Antalya, Turkey. It will also feed into the 6th World Water Forum (12-17 March 2012, Marseille, France) and into the 6th Meeting of the Parties to the UNECE Water Convention (November 2012, Italy).

This workshop is a follow-up to the Workshop on Forest and Water organized in May 2009 in Antalya, Turkey, which was hosted by Turkey and co-organised with Switzerland, Forest Europe, the UNECE Water Convention and FAO (<http://www.foresteuropa.org/MCPFE+Workshop+on+Forests+and+Water.9UFRjWZf.ips>).

FAO and key partner organizations are finalizing a publication which synthesizes the main outcomes of many forests and water events held between 2008 and 2010 and proposes follow-up action for the next years

II. Background

Dryland regions are defined by low precipitation and frequent droughts, high evapotranspiration and slow vegetation growth. Forests in drylands have specific challenges compared to other types of forests and are in general more fragile. Their location in dry climate makes them very sensitive to threats such as climate change, fires, storms, etc. In addition, all projections on climate change anticipate conditions of increased water scarcity in arid and semi-arid areas, such as the Mediterranean basin. Moreover, they are under heavy anthropogenic pressures, such as grazing, browsing, fuelwood collection, over-exploitation, deforestation and desertification, conversion into agriculture, urban land-use, etc. In arid and semi arid regions water is as a priority used for agriculture. At the same time, land use, and in particular forest cover and types of forests, strongly influence runoff, evapotranspiration and infiltration and therefore availability of water resources.

Finding solutions to the above problems is often complicated by the widespread lack of cross-sectoral cooperation not only between the forest and the water authorities, but also with the agriculture, urban development and nature protection sectors, at all levels.

The Conferences of the Parties (COP) to the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) in a series of decisions taken from COP4 to COP.9 consistently encouraged Parties and relevant institutions to explore opportunities to promote sustainable forest management, conservation and utilization including strengthening integrated water management in critical watershed areas and river basins¹. Also, the 20th session of the Committee on Forestry of the FAO in 2010 recommended that countries pay increased attention on socio-economic issues related to forests and water and to financing

¹ www.unccd.int

mechanisms such as payments for environmental services provided by forests with particular focus on semi arid and arid areas. Other priority areas identified by the Committee include the relationships between water, forests, soil and climate change; strengthened cooperation and partnership in river basin management, focusing on institutional and policy development and innovative economic mechanisms such as payments for ecosystem services.²

At the workshop, different case studies will be presented and discussed allowing the exchange of experiences on the challenges of forests and water in drylands, and solutions and tools that can help their integrated management maximising benefits for both sectors, including payments for ecosystem services. The Recommendations on Payments for Ecosystem Services in Integrated Water Resources Management developed by the UNECE Water Convention will also be presented.

III. Organization of work and call for contributions

The workshop is organized by the Swiss Federal Office for the Environment and the UNECE Water Convention secretariat, in close cooperation with the UNECE/FAO Forestry and Timber Section, the FAO Forest Conservation Team (FOMC) and the secretariat of the UN Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD).

The workshop is part of the UNECE/FAO Forest and Water Week, that will be held from 4 to 8 July 2011 in Geneva. A workshop on "Payments for Ecosystem Services: What role for a green economy" will be held on 4-5 July. This workshop should inspire the discussion on valuation of and payments for ecosystem services as well as enabling conditions.

The workshop is targeted to countries in the UNECE and the Mediterranean region - including North Africa and West Asia - having semi arid and arid forest cover. It is addressed to all those who are responsible for forest and water managements in dry regions: first and foremost national policy makers responsible for forestry, water and related ecosystems, but also local authorities, landowners and managers, practitioners and representatives of academia, research institutes, non-governmental and other international organizations.

Contributions are invited on the following topics:

- Functions of the forests in drylands as well as their specific relationship to water management and relevant challenges
- Challenges and possible solutions, such as trade-offs between water use by trees in drylands, with decreased run-off and water availability for other land uses, and the environmental services and goods provided by forests and other wooded lands
- Forest and water management tools and policies that enhance both forests and water, including management and adaptation measures under climate change

² Report of the 20th session of the FAO Committee on Forestry is available at: <http://www.fao.org/docrep/meeting/019/ma116e.pdf>.

- Case studies of forests and water in drylands
- Potential and challenges of existing or future use of PES in this area
- Gaps and future areas of work on forests and water in drylands

Abstracts for presentations on the above topics should be sent to the UNECE Water Convention Secretariat and the Swiss Federal Office for the Environment (sonja.koeppel@unece.org; sibylle.vermont@bafu.admin.ch) by 30 May 2011.

A detailed programme will be issued in June 2011 and will be posted on the meeting [webpage](http://www.unece.org/env/water/meetings/forest_water_drylands_workshop.html) at: http://www.unece.org/env/water/meetings/forest_water_drylands_workshop.html

IV. Practical information

The workshop will start at 10.00 a.m. on Thursday, 7 July 2011 and end at 5.00 p.m. on Friday, 8 July 2011. It will be held in the Palais des Nations, Geneva, Switzerland.

Eligible participants from countries with economies in transition and developing countries may apply for financial support to facilitate their participation in the workshop. Requests for financial support should be submitted to the UNECE secretariat (margaret.muindi@unece.org) as soon as possible, but not later than **30 May 2011. No application will be accepted after this deadline.** Due to the limited funds available, priority will be given to experts providing inputs to the workshop.

Switzerland is part of the Schengen zone since 2009. Participants needing entry visa should **submit their application as soon as possible and initiate visa procedures at least three weeks before the meeting (please address requests to margaret.muindi@unece.org).** Information on the requirements for visa for Switzerland can be found at: <http://www.eda.admin.ch/eda/en/home/rebs.html>.

In accordance with United Nations accreditation procedures, participants are requested to complete the registration form available online at www.unece.org and to transmit it to the UNECE secretariat **by 20 June 2011** by e-mail (margaret.muindi@unece.org). On their way to the meeting, participants should obtain an identification badge at the Pass and Identification Unit of the United Nations Office at Geneva Security and Safety Section located at the Pregny Gate, 14 Avenue de la Paix. Please allow time for this. In case of difficulty, please contact the secretariat by telephone at +41 22 917 23 46.

We advise the participants to make the hotel booking as soon as possible. Note that many hotels offer preferential rates for delegates and meeting participants. More practical information for Delegates can be found at: <http://www.unece.org/meetings/practical.html>.