

**National Report to the Fifth Session of the United Nations Forum on
Forests**

I.R. of IRAN

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II. Progress and issues related to implementation of IPF/IEF proposals for action

General

1. Please provide additional or new information on initiatives taken or lessons learned since 1997 further to the information on forests included in your national reports¹ to UNFF-2, UNFF-3 and UNFF-4, the Commission on Sustainable Development, and other international instruments and organizations

Following UNCED in June 1992, the National Committee on Sustainable Development (NCSD) was formed in 1996 to follow up and achieve UNCED main objectives. The committee is chaired by the High Council of Environment and consists of various sub-committees including Forest Principles sub-committee. It is composed of members from Energy Ministry, Science, Research & Technology Ministry, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Meteorological Organization, Department of Environment, and is responsible to follow up the implementation of proposals for action at national level.

In this regard, The open-ended international expert meeting on Special Needs and Requirements of Low Forest Cover Countries and Unique Types of Forest, a government-led initiative in support of the programme of work of the IFF, was held in Tehran from 4 to 8 October 1999, attended by 77 participants from 39 countries and 6 international and bilateral organizations and NGOs .

Combating deforestation and forest degradation

2. Preparing diagnostic studies to analyze historical and underlying causes of deforestation and forest degradation, including processes outside the forest sector

There are several studies about the underlying causes of deforestation and forest degradation in Iran, of which most of them deal with processes outside the forestry sector. Up to 1960, one of the greatest factors contributing to forest degradation was fuel wood production for supply that as a result led to the expansion of rangelands in the country. In 1962, the whole forests of the country became nationalized. Since then, although forest exploitation was licensed just for traditional animal husbandry, the population growth due to high standard of living, increased needs for food and crop lands and therefore aggravated deforestation trend coupled with policies for, wheat and meat self-sufficiency increase of foreign currency rate as well as urbanization, rural development and expansion of industries. In recent years, on the basis of new laws any land use change of agricultural lands forbidden.

3. Formulating and implementing national policies and strategies, through an open and participatory process, for addressing the underlying causes of deforestation

Forest, Range and Watershed Management Organization (FRWO) commit itself to formulate NFP as emphasized by the National Committee on Sustainable Development. Formulation of NFP requires capacity building. Recently, many actions have been taken to combat deforestation and forest degradation including transfer of livestock from forests and resettlement of the forest dwellers, forest extension, and rehabilitation of degraded forests as well as replacement of fossil fuels with fuel woods parallel to measures taken to update and enact forest laws.

4. Raising awareness of the importance of issues related to deforestation and forest degradation and the multiple values of forests

Action has been made to raise the awareness of public and policy-makers on forest resources and hazard forest degradation and deforestation in collaboration with other sectors. In this regard, a number of publications and documentary films funded by FRWO were produced. TV and radio also play a major role in this direction. Ministry of Education has included subject matters in the curricula to further acquaint students with environmental issues and consequences of forest degradation. Bureau of Extension and Public Participation of FRWO also encourages NGOs to play an active role in this regard. The Cabinet and the Parliament support for forest protection illustrate the public awareness towards forest issues.

Forest conservation and protection of unique types of forest and fragile ecosystems

5. Creating or expanding protected areas to safeguard forest and related ecosystems and their full range of values and, developing and applying criteria and methodologies for assessing the conditions and management effectiveness in protected forest areas.

One of forest strategies in Iran is to conserve biological diversity. Conservation of biodiversity is carried out by FRWO in cooperation with Department of Environment. The conservation approach considers in-situ protection of rare species. In 2000, 10 percent of the forests were designated as protected areas in addition to forest areas already assigned to and managed by Department of Environment as national parks, as well as biosphere and forest reserves. Besides, FRWO directly manages several reserves in various regions of the country of unique and rare plant species and set the criteria and methodology for their assessment and monitoring. It is note worthy that the biological diversity standards are formulated and performed in national and regional forest Management plans. Recently, conservation of fragile ecosystems in dry, sub-dry and sub-humid areas is specifically taken into consideration and restoration of these ecosystems is given high priority in executive programmes. For instance, some degraded mangrove forests are rehabilitated in recent years.

6. Developing and implementing partnership mechanisms to engage forest owners, private sector, indigenous people and local communities in the planning and management of forest conservation areas and developing and implementing a range of innovative mechanisms for financing and encouraging forest conservation

Private sector involvement in planning, formulation and implementation projects is stipulated by law. Local communities, NGOs and indigenous people involve formally in the process of formulating, planning and implementing forest plans as well as forest policy forest management plans. At present forest and rangeland protection is mainly carried out with the collaboration of local communities.

7. Giving high priority in national forest programs to the rehabilitation and sustainable management of forests and trees in environmentally critical areas, recognising the linkage between forest protection and sustainable development and improving the coordination among such policies and programmes

In the national forest policy and forest protection strategies, priority has been given to rehabilitation and sustainable forest management of environmentally critical areas. It is believed that sustainable forestry is necessary for sustainable development. To this end, several cross-sectoral measures have taken with other organizations such as Meteorological Organization, ministry of Energy, Department of Environment and agriculture sector

Rehabilitation and conservation strategies for countries with low forest cover

8. Expanding forested area, establishing and managing plantations to enhance production of forest goods and services, while avoiding the replacement of natural ecosystems, and recognizing the role of imports in satisfying the needs for forest products and services .

Iran is one of the low forest cover countries, because its forests cover less than 10% of its total land area. Therefore, the main objective of forest policy is to protect forests in natural ecosystem. Plantations have established and managed to meet local needs. In recent years, the areas forested to combat desertification (sand dune fixation) are being managed and their goods and services are utilized. Since 2003, formulation of management plan for these plantations have begun and implemented with the collaboration of local communities and private sector. In the Caspian region forest policy aims at forest promotion. Therefore, parts of the woodlands in mountainous areas which are converted into summer ranges are being afforested each year. Forest promotion of the Caspian region is of high importance because of wood production, protection of biological diversity and soil and water conservation in watershed basins. The programme was commenced in 2001. Iran is among wood importer countries which has enhanced import volume to support its forests.

9. Promoting the regeneration and restoration of degraded forest areas including through partnerships and building capacities to promote effective participation in decision making, and development and transfer of environmentally sound technologies

The regeneration and restoration of degraded forest areas is undertaken on the basis of forest management plans which is primarily formulated for the Caspian forests in the past decade . Restoration of degraded forests is carried out by native species and plantation of native pioneer species. The main objective of rehabilitation is to achieve ecosystem sustainability in forest area and increased biological diversity. In 1996, FRWO launched the forest management plan for sub-humid forests, mainly dominated by oak species. Restoration of these forests carried out through natural regeneration and coppice system in which plantation is done with multipurpose species. In formulation of forestry plans modern technologies such as GIS is used in cooperation with private sector. In fact, forest policy aims at capacity building of private sector, local communities as well as NGOs. Forest management plans are implemented by the government, cooperatives and private sectors which the latter will be more involved in the process in future.

10. Improving the efficiency of international cooperation to support the management, conservation and sustainable development of all types of forests and building capacity to monitor forest resources

Iran actively participates in international and regional meetings and has signed some bilateral and multilateral agreements in the field of sustainable development of forest areas, biological diversity protection and forest parks management. In fact, the forest policy aims is to enhance international cooperation in order to manage all types of forests.

Rehabilitation and restoration of degraded lands and promotion of natural and planted forests

11. Promoting the creation of new forest resources through plantations and recognizing their role in rehabilitation of degraded lands and forests in environmentally critical areas

One of the ways to promote forest resources in Iran is to plant multipurpose tree species and poplars. The plantations are normally established in private lands and on degraded wood -lands entrusted to private sector. Development of forest resources meet the need for forest products and restore degraded lands, protects biodiversity and maintains landscapes. However, it should be noted that expansion of forest resources in the private farm lands is not so successful in compared with farming and crop production. To this end, it is necessary to provide incentives such as bank loans, land transfer and even training and extension. This policy can have positive effects only through involvement of all the stakeholders who provide themselves parts of investment and protection.

12. Promoting policies to meet increasing demand for wood and non-wood forest products and services, through sustainable forest management.

Iran has adopted a new policy in partnership of all stakeholders, to promote forest resources. In this connection FRWO has formulated and implemented a master plan to promote forest resources using single or multipurpose species. To produce wood and non-wood products, the woody species as well as multipurpose trees were planted in private lands as well as state-owned lands which were entrusted to private sector with bank loan. Disadvantages of the plan were shortage of irrigation for new plantations and late-yielding period compared with farming. The main objective of the plan is to support sustainable forest management at national level through meeting the needs for forest goods and services.

Implementation of the IPF/IFF proposals for action related to issues of UNFF-3

Please refer to your national report if appropriate, or provide new or updated information on: activities undertaken since 1997, progress made, constraints encountered, lessons learned, and issues that have emerged, as well as relevant information related to means of implementation (financing, transfer of environmentally sound technologies, and capacity-building) to support the following actions:

Economic aspects of forests, including trade

13. valuation of forest goods and services (this may include, among other things, the development and use of new valuation methodologies, valuation of a wider range of goods and services, and policy decisions that reflect a more comprehensive assessment of forest values)

Iran started the valuation of forest goods and services, with partnership of forest sector and private sector consultancy in two phases in 2001. In the first stage, economic valuation of goods finished and in the Second stage, valuation of forest services which is under way. The costs of this national study are funded by FRWO. The main obstacle of the study is insufficient data and information on the extent of traditional use of forest goods and services by local communities. In forestry services valuation, there are some problems with methods of valuation due to their limited application.

14. the amount, scope, or quality of market data and information for wood and non-wood forest products and their substitutes

Data on official wood market is precisely collected, but data on non wood forest products is not sufficient, because some parts of harvesting of non- wood forest and range products carried out by local communities is traditional and is used by themselves or sold in the local markets. There is, however, exact statistics on non-wood forest products for export.

15. Use of economic and policy instruments to facilitate progress toward sustainable forest management (these may include improved tax policies and forest revenue collection systems)

Since 1997, the following economic and policy instruments have been applied to attain sustainable forest management:

Policy instruments

- Support participatory process in planning , implementation, monitoring and evaluation of forestry plans
- Support and encourage private sector , local communities and NGOs involvement in forestry related activities
- Promote cross- sectoral and international cooperation
- Delineate and specify the boundaries of private forest and range lands
- Organize training programmes and provide technical services to participants

Economic instruments

- Provide low-interest loans for plantation programmes particularly, multi purpose tree species
- Provide low-interest loans for forest-related cooperatives
- Eliminate tariffs on wood import
- Entrust low price lands for plantations

16. Efforts to reduce negative impacts of trade

Iran is an importer of wood. Wood and wood products imports have had negative impacts on the country wood industries. In recent years, poplar wood has been exported to the neighboring countries through border cities which have raised the income of private sector. This trend has increased the price of poplar wood at home and has encouraged poplar planters. In a recent action taken by the government, the tariff for wood importation is eliminated.

17. Participation in forest certification and labelling schemes and work toward mutual recognition and comparability of such schemes

In Iran forest are owned by the government and forestry projects are carried out in the framework of forest management plans prepared, approved and supervised by FRWO on the basis of specific principles and guidelines. The existing principles and standards guarantee sustainable forestry in area unit level.

18. Efforts to reduce illegal trade (exports from or imports into your country) in wood or non-wood forest products. Please indicate achievements made, lessons learned, constraints encountered, and planned initiatives.

Wood trade is undertaken and managed according to customs laws and regulations. So far, there has been no report of illegal trade of wood and non-wood forest products from customs. It seems that forest policy instruments and planning initiatives have more effective role than other financial and economic ones.

Forest health and productivity

19. If damage to forests from air pollution is a significant problem in your country, please provide information on recent national strategies or programmes to minimize damaging air pollution. Please indicate if your country is involved in any international cooperation efforts aimed at strengthening scientific knowledge, increasing information access or reducing the impacts of long-range air pollution on forests, as well as your views on the role of enhanced cooperation at the regional and international levels to facilitate such work.

Fortunately, there is no damage on forests due to air pollution, but in large cities there are long-range air pollution symptoms on urban trees and forests.

Maintaining forest cover to meet present and future needs

20. Please indicate progress made and lessons learned in efforts to harmonize or to make compatible policy frameworks in your country (e.g. national forest programme or a similar policy framework for forests, biodiversity strategies and action plans, national action plans to combat desertification, etc.) that collectively address the full range of forest values.

Forest policy formulation is a cross-sectoral process that requires the involvement of other sectors. Therefore, in the formulation of forestry policies and programmes all relevant administrative sectors are involved. The I.R. of Iran has formulated its National Action Programme to combat desertification as well as National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan which in both of them, forest ecosystems play special role.

National Action Programme to combat desertification:

The National Action Programme to Combat Desertification of I.R. of Iran was finalized in 2004. In this connection A National Committee (NCCD) chaired by Minister of Jihad- Agriculture and comprised of deputy ministers of Agriculture, Energy, Petroleum, Foreign Affairs, Interior, Science, Research and Technology and Health as well as Management and Planning, The Meteorological and Geological Organizations and the Department of Environment was formed. The Committee is mandated to coordinate government organizations and institutes as well as establish the macro policies for anti- desertification activities. The NAP framework consists of four pivots:

- Identification and control of the factors contributing to desertification
- Support for the sustainable use and management of natural resources through conservation and reclamation.
- Promotion of sustainable livelihoods in affected areas through job creating, income generation and the improvement of socio-economic standards.
- Strengthening the role of rural communities in terms of decision-making, planning, designing, implementation, monitoring and evaluation.

The National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan:

The Enabling Activity Project known as “The National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan” started in 1998 in collaboration with UNDP.GEF and IUCN and on the basis of obligations restored due to the joining of the Islamic Republic of Iran to the

Convention of Biological Diversity. The activities for identification of the natural resources in Iran have led to the preparation of a series of 28 reports, each assessed by members of the Steering Committee.

According to the approval of both the Steering Committee in February 2001 and the National Committee on Sustainable Development in May 2001, four strategies are ratified as follows:

- Promotion of the public awareness and participation
- Formation of biodiversity information systems
- Sustainable use of biodiversity resources
- Integrated conservation of biodiversity

21. Please provide information on recent efforts to assess long-term trends in national supply and demand for wood, non-wood forest products and services and whether your country's national forest programme or similar policy framework for forests takes into consideration future needs for forest goods and services. Please provide views on how enhanced cooperation at the regional and international levels, including through UNFF, could further facilitate implementation of the IPF/IFF proposals for action

The I. R. of Iran has prepared two strategic frameworks for the assessment of long-term needs of forests goods and services through a cross-sectoral expert committee consist of representatives from universities, research sector, NGOs, Department of Environment and private sector.

Forest Resources Assessment (FRA 2005) :

The Forest Resources Assessment is a process led by FAO and involving all countries and other partners. It aims to produce a comprehensive update of FRA 2000 for sustainable forest management, focusing on status and trends of forest resources, their management and uses. The I. R of Iran has been among countries in the region that has actively dealt with the issue through forming a cross-sectoral committee and has submitted report to FAO in December 2004.

Forestry Outlook Study for West and Central Asia (FOWECA):

The Forestry Outlook Study for West and Central Asia is one among the series of regional forestry sector outlook studies initiated by FAO in collaboration of member countries to examine the direction of developments of forests and forestry. The primary objective of FOWECA is to provide a long-term perspective of the development of forestry sector in the context of economic, social, institutional and technological changes. It also aims to analyse the trends and driving forces that will shape the sector and to identify policies, programmes and investment options that can enhance the sectors contribution to sustainable development. FOWECA is designed to complete other forest related strategic planning initiatives, including national forest programmes.

Social and cultural aspects of forests

22. promoting the fair and equitable sharing of the benefits arising from the utilization of forest genetic resources and addressing the issue of intellectual property rights, including the identification of the origins of forest genetic resources, taking into account work undertaken by the Convention on Biological Diversity and other international agreements

Promotion of fair and equitable sharing of the forest genetic resources and intellectual property rights is described in para26.

23. Strengthening the role of women in sustainable forest management, including through capacity building and greater participation in community-based forest management

One of the central strategies of government is to achieve social cultural, economic and political development. There is no doubt that the gap between basic needs and existing human capacities has put many challenges on the way of development. In the light of the above strategy, there is basically no limitation for women's participation in forestry activities in Iran. Women have equal opportunity for higher education and employment in natural resources sector parallel to other sectors. There are also a good number of women cooperatives and NGOs active in natural resources sector particularly forestry. Women in local communities also play an important role in forest related activities such as seedling production and plantation. Therefore, FRWO organizes training workshops to enhance the skills and capacities to local women.

24. Integrating local and indigenous communities in sustainable forest management programmes, particularly as regards (a) recognition and respect of the customary and traditional rights and privileges of indigenous and local communities

Customary rights of the indigenous and local communities are recognized in all forestry projects and their involvement in the process of decision making is encouraged Besides the land tenure right of the local communities is also officially recognized and respected by law.

Traditional forest-related knowledge

25. Inventorying, cataloguing, and applying traditional forest related knowledge for sustainable forest management and promoting research on TFRK with the involvement of the knowledge holders

Iran Processes rich traditional knowledge for the management of natural resources particularly forests. Nowadays application of traditional knowledge is becoming widely popular. Based on a research study the Extension and Public Participation Bureau is studying and collecting traditional knowledge in the fields of forestry, silvics, range management, afforestation and watershed management and apply the results in executive plans. Research of forestry traditional knowledge is carried out in cooperation with NGOs and universities funded by FRWO (for instance MSc. and Ph.D. thesis on traditional knowledge).

Basically the involvement of local communities and traditional knowledge holders are central in this process. Traditional knowledge supports sustainable forest management in two ways. Firstly, it prevents waste of financial resources and secondly, the local communities accept to participate in forestry plans. Department of Environment also in its joint projects with FRWO utilizes traditional biodiversity related knowledge of the local communities.

26. Supporting the application of intellectual property rights and/or other protection regimes for traditional forest related knowledge, and the fair and equitable sharing of benefits arising from the use of traditional forest related knowledge, innovations and practices

Regarding intellectual property rights particularly in the field of traditional knowledge, the following measures have taken:

- Iran became a member of WIPO after the ratification of the parliament in 2003.
- In 2003, the High Council for Traditional Knowledge was established to adopt policies and programmes on traditional knowledge, which is composed of 15 representatives from various ministries.
- In the Fourth Social and Economic 5 Year Development Plan to be enforced in 2005, the required credit to support traditional knowledge and intellectual property rights of civil societies is anticipated.

Scientific forest-related knowledge

27. Disseminating scientific knowledge to all interested parties, including through new and innovative ways, and strengthening capacity and mobilizing funding for national and regional research institutions and networks

One of the national prerequisites for capacity building is to strengthen forest research centers and relevant faculties. In this connection, Forest & Range Research Institute that is one of renewed research institute in Iran is equipped with modern research equipments and has vast international contacts. This is of course due to increase in forestry research spending. The research results are made available through

publications or compact disks in seminars and workshops for experts and free of charge or can be access on internet.

28. Enhancing interaction between scientific research and policy processes, including priority setting of research, addressing of knowledge gaps and using scientific knowledge to support decision-making

Collaboration between forestry sector and forest research has considerably enhanced. In this regard, research centers meet executive needs to government and concentrate on applied research. Besides, research sector and natural resources faculties have close collaboration in monitoring and assessment of forestry projects and measurement of criteria and indicators for sustainable forest management.

Monitoring , assessment and reporting , concepts , terminology and definitions

29. Improving information on national forest resources, making the information widely available, assisting other countries in their related efforts

The I.R. of Iran has conducted measures to meet the information needs for sustainable forest management, policy revision and international cooperation to develop and update forest resources information. Developing GIS technology and equipping the relevant units is the first step in this regard. It is believed that international cooperation can help improve information collection methods. At present, FRWO is preparing vegetation cover map of Iran in various scales through GIS that in this way, various types of forests can be specified in the map. One of the main objectives of the plan is to determine the exact area of the forests, monitor standing volume and composition of forests. It also aims to study trees outside forest which is of high importance in sustainable forest management. The information on Iranian forests is available at the web site: www.frw.ir

Criteria and indicators of sustainable forest management

30. Developing and using criteria and indicators of sustainable forest management (at national level and/or sub national level and for policy, planning, management and/or monitoring purposes), and participating in regional and/or international C&I processes

The I. R. of Iran is located in the Near East region. The process for the development and implementation of criteria and indicators was established by FAO/UNEP meeting of expert in Cairo-Egypt in October 1996. Iran is actively involved in the formulation, measurement and implementation of C& I for sustainable forest management in 2002. FRWO in collaboration with other sectors has launched the national C & I and provided relevant national indicators. The first report was completed and published in 2003. Formulation of C& I of sustainable forest management in unit level is put in the

agenda of FRWO. Meanwhile, FRWO has actively attended in international related meetings too.

III. Preparation of the Report

31. Describe the process of preparing this report, including which government agencies and stakeholder groups were involved, and the extent to which they contributed. Provide information on successes, challenges and lessons learned in the preparation of this report.

The preparation of this report has been coordinated in Forest, Range and Watershed Management Organization through the assistance of Department of Environment, NGOs and universities.