

Side event

Valorisation of forests and preservation from impact of mass-tourism

by International Association for Mediterranean Forests (AIFM)

During the 6th Mediterranean Forest Week, which took place in Lebanon in April 2019, a parallel session was organized by the International Association for Mediterranean Forests (AIFM) on the theme of Mediterranean forests and the impact of mass-tourism.

During this side event, Nelly Bourlion (Plan Bleu) made a presentation entitled : “ Tourism and forests presentation: State of Mediterranean Forests 2018” where she emphasized the increased tourism pressure on Mediterranean costs. More than 300 million international tourist arrivals were registered in 2015 (UNWTO, 2017); this represents 30% of global tourist arrivals. Tourism is considered as a pillar of Mediterranean economies, especially for employment opportunities (11.5% of the total number of jobs in 2014) and economic growth (11.3% of the region’s GDP).

But this importance is accompanied by ecosystem degradation and the increasing risk of losing cultural and natural heritage (27% of all UNESCO World Heritage sites are located in Mediterranean countries). She talked about an important issue “ How to preserve forests

while ensuring tourism development? » and took the example of a Exploratory AFD project and its report “State of the PPP Legal Framework for Protected Area Management in the Southern and Eastern Mediterranean: Private-Public Partnerships for Protected Area Management”.

A case study was presented by Consuelo Rosaura, Region of Murcia; the Sierra Espuña National Park. The example of forest-hydrological restoration was shown and the situation between the 19th century and now was compared. A very interesting effort at forest restoration has been made and park visitors reached more than 134000. Ecotourism development strategy of this park was also presented with a commitment to sustainable tourism (ECTS).

Ioanna Augustides (AIFM) made a presentation about “Valorising Mediterranean forests through sustainable tourism: INHERIT and BleuTourMed European projects ”. She presented the INHERIT project (2018-2022) with 15 partners and 10 countries in the Northern Mediterranean area. Three main negative impacts (UNEP, 2001) were cited: depletion of natural resources (water, land degradation, energy, food), pollution (air pollution and noise, solid waste and littering, sewage, aesthetic pollution) and physical impacts: (construction activities and development of infrastructure, deforestation, marina development, extensive paving of shorelines, trampling, mooring, alteration of ecosystems by activities). The positive aspects of tourism development have been also mentioned: income (stimulation of rural development, dynamism and attractivity, public investment), preservation of natural sites (if considered economically valuable) and Valorization of cultural heritage.

After these 3 presentations, a panel discussion was moderated by Dr. Jean Stephan (Lebanese University, Faculty of Sciences) with Joelle Barakat (Biosphere Reserve of Jabal Moussa, Lebanon), Jad Abou Arrage (Lebanese Mountain Trail), Marcos Valderrabano (IUCN Centre for Mediterranean Cooperation) and Sami Dhouib (WWF Tunisia).

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