

Terms of reference for consulting services

Programme Preparation: Mediterranean Forest Initiative

1. Context

This consultation is published by Plan Bleu, Regional Activity Center of the Mediterranean Action Plan (MAP), established in the form of a French association in Marseille, France. The MAP is one of the main components of the Regional Seas Program of the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP). It has a legal instrument: the Barcelona Convention and relies on six regional activity centers ("RACs") responsible in particular for promoting the implementation of the various protocols attached to the convention. Plan Bleu is one of these six centers mandated by the twenty-one countries Parties to the Barcelona Convention and the European Union (Contracting Parties to the Barcelona Convention). Plan Bleu acts as an observatory of the environment and sustainable development in the Mediterranean, and conducts thematic, systemic and prospective analyzes to enlighten decision-makers of the region on the environmental risks and the challenges of sustainable development.

Plan Bleu cooperates with the United Nations Environment Programme Ecosystems Division to prepare an ambitious programme of ecosystem restoration in the Mediterranean Basin, with a focus on regional cooperation to protect and restore forests.

The assignment described in these terms of reference focuses on the preparation phase of this regional programme - the Mediterranean Forest Initiative.

2. Objectives

The general objective of this assignment is to further develop a Concept Note and Implementation Plan for an ambitious Mediterranean Forest Initiative.

The specific objectives are:

- to provide an analysis of risks and opportunities for forest protection and restoration in the Mediterranean Basin, based on existing materials and literature;
- based on a preliminary concept note (Annex A) to further define objectives, expected outcomes and outputs, including proposed feasibility studies and assessments, to be aligned with relevant UNEP strategies, programmes and projects;
- to propose partnerships and institutional arrangements for the Initiative, including knowledge/communication partnerships and field implementation options (potentially including UNREDD);
- to identify Mediterranean Basin "champions" for the initiative;

- to develop a detailed budget and timeframe for Stage 3 (development of detailed feasibility studies), which will lead to resource mobilization for Stage 4 (see below);
- to identify potential donors for Phases 3 and 4;
- to prepare and deliver a workshop and a briefing to present the results of the activities above.

3. Description of activities

The assignment will include the following tasks:

Task 1: At the beginning of the assignment, the consultant will provide a methodological note, detailing

- the resources planned to be deployed for this assignment,
- the different steps of the assignment and the methodological approach planned to be followed,
- a first overview of bibliography and references that will be used for the assignment,
- a draft table of contents of the concept note and implementation plan, and
- the time schedule for this assignment.

This note will be presented and discussed during a kick-off meeting with Plan Bleu and potentially a representative from UNEP Ecosystems Division. Following the kick-off meeting, the consultant will adjust the note as needed.

Task 2: Building on the draft concept note included in Annex A, the consultant will develop a preliminary version of a Concept Note and Implementation Plan for the Mediterranean Forest Initiative. The concept note will include the following elements:

- an analysis of risks and opportunities for forest protection and restoration in the Mediterranean Basin, based on existing materials and literature;
- a further definition of the objectives, expected outcomes and outputs, including proposed feasibility studies and assessments, to be aligned with relevant UNEP strategies, programmes and projects;
- proposed partnerships and institutional arrangements for the Initiative, including knowledge/communication partnerships and field implementation options (potentially including UNREDD);
- the identification of potential Mediterranean Basin "champions" for the initiative;
- a detailed budget and timeframe for the development of detailed feasibility studies, which will lead to resource mobilization (stages 3 and 4 in Annex A); and
- an identification of potential donors for Phases 3 and 4.

Task 3: Based on a first set of comments provided by Plan Bleu and potentially UNEP Ecosystems Division on the preliminary Concept Note and Implementation Plan, and based on further desk work by the Consultant, the Consultant will fully develop the Concept Note and Implementation Plan. The Consultant will also elaborate a slideshow that presents the main elements of the Concept Note and Implementation Plan.

Task 4: The Consultant will prepare and deliver a Workshop on the Concept Note and Implementation Plan, with participation of UNEP/MAP, Nature for Climate and Disasters and Conflicts Branch Heads, UNREDD and Plan Bleu (online/hybrid at UNEP/MAP);

Task 5: The Consultant will prepare and deliver a Briefing on the Mediterranean Forest Initiative to UNEP leadership (Ecosystems Division, Regional Offices, Executive Office) (online);

Task 6: Building on results from the Workshop and Briefing (Tasks 4 and 5 above), the Consultant will update and complete the Concept Note and Implementation Plan and the slideshow.

4. Schedule of tasks and deliverables

The mission is planned to start on 1 October 2022 and end on 20 December 2022.

The assignment will include the following steps, and the expected number of working days is as follows:

#	Tasks and deliverables	Approximate number of working days	Delivery Date (2022)
1	Methodological note for conducting this assignment prepared, Kick-off meeting prepared and conducted and Methodological note updated	1	early October
2	Preliminary draft of Concept Note for the Mediterranean Forest Initiative, building on the elements in Annex A, and including an implementation plan, budget and recommendations for UN and other partnerships	18	24 October
3	Fully developed Concept Note for the Mediterranean Forest Initiative, building on the elements in Annex A, and including an implementation plan, budget and recommendations for UN and other partnerships); and slideshow presenting main results prepared	10	20 November
4	Workshop on Concept Note and proposed next steps prepared and delivered with participation of UNEP/MAP, Nature for Climate and Disasters and Conflicts Branch Heads, UNREDD and Plan Bleu (online/hybrid at UNEP/MAP)	3	early December (tbc)
5	Briefing on the Mediterranean Forest Initiative prepared and delivered to UNEP leadership (Ecosystems Division, Regional Offices, Executive Office) (online)	2	early December (tbc), after workshop
6	Final concept note and implementation plan and final version of slideshow presenting main results	2	20 December
TOTAL number of estimated working days		36 days	

All deliverables mentioned in the table above have to be transmitted to Plan Bleu in English. The deliverables have to be formally approved by Plan Bleu. No payments will be made without prior approval of the linked deliverables.

The consultant will provide all source data used in the study, for example data in excel format, or cartographic material in shapefiles format with the attribute tables if maps are designed.

The UN Environment Programme and Plan Bleu will cooperate to monitor the progress of this assignment. The consultant will work under the supervision of a Plan Bleu programme officer and he/she will also work in collaboration with Plan Bleu's Head of the Environment and Sustainable Development Observatory to ensure a smooth integration of source data used for the assignment in Plan Bleu's database. Especially if the consultant intends to use cartographic material under this assignment, he/she will advise Plan Bleu of this intention and exchange with Plan Bleu to comply with international standards for geospatial data and metadata (for e.g OGC and ISO), United Nations boundaries and required disclaimers are used. The consultant will regularly exchange with Plan Bleu team members as required.

5. Selection criteria

Plan Bleu is seeking an experienced lead consultant with technical expertise on forest, including their relevance to Mediterranean Basin ecosystems, economies and climate resilience, in line with the UNEP/MAP Medium Term Strategy.

Plan Bleu invites individual consultants, associations of consultants, and consulting firms to apply for this assignment. Qualified candidates unite the following competences and criteria:

Education:

- University diploma of at least Master's level or equivalent in a relevant field

Experience:

- Minimum of 10 years of relevant experience in the field of sustainable development, with good knowledge of ecosystems and in particular forests
- Minimum of 5 years of working experience in and specific knowledge of environmental issues in the Mediterranean
- A solid experience in working with international donors and other international development, environment and climate finance organizations
- A strong experience in elaborating large programme proposals

Competences:

- Excellent analytical, synthesis and writing skills
- Good knowledge of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals framework
- Good knowledge of climate resilience and climate finance issues
- Knowledge of the Mediterranean Basin and stakeholders related to sustainable development
- Good knowledge of the structure and key success factors of large programme/project proposals
- An excellent command of English is a must. Working knowledge of other Mediterranean-rim languages is a plus.

6. Selection of the Consultant

The selection of the consultant will be based on the evaluation of the consultant's technical proposal (experience and competences, as well as proposed methodology to implement the assignment) with a weighting factor of 75%, and the consultant's financial proposal with a weighting factor of 25%. The financial offer must include all applicable taxes (such as but not limited to VAT), and any other costs that the consultant may incur for the carrying out of the assignment.

Applicants should submit references of their previous work on similar topics as well as relevant documents by email to the address listed below if not indicated by an active web link. In addition, candidates must demonstrate their legal capacity to sign contracts and issue invoices according to the legislation of their country. To this end, they must also include in their offer the following documents:

For consulting firms:

- KBIS extract less than 3 months old for a French company
- Document justifying the registration as a company in their country, with the tax number indicated (for companies situated outside of France)
- Full Bank Identity Statement (BIC, IBAN or BBAN) issued by the bank.

For individual consultants:

- Certificate of registration in the Directory of Companies and Establishments
- Document certifying the right to exercise this profession (registration certificate, for example) according to the legislation of the consultant's country with the tax number (for consultants situated out of France).
- Full Bank Identity Statement (RIB) (BIC, IBAN or BBAN) provided by the bank.

The final selection of the candidate may require an interview via videoconference.

7. Contractual, financial and practical conditions

Acceptance of the assignment implies acceptance of the conditions and schedule detailed in these terms of reference, including the following payment calendar:

- 65 % of the total amount after acceptance by Plan Bleu of the deliverables pertaining to tasks 1 and 2 indicated above; and

- 35 % of the total amount after acceptance by Plan Bleu of all deliverables pertaining to this assignment, as listed above.

A duly issued invoice will be required for scheduled payments. The payment deadline for invoices will be as follows: bank transfer 15 days after the invoice date. The tax legislation in force on the date of acceptance of the offer will be applied.

8. To respond to this call for applications

Plan Bleu invites consulting firms, associations/consortiums of consultants and individual consultants interested in this mission to indicate their motivation by sending a response to this call for applications including: a letter of expression of interest, the CV(s) of the expert(s), as well as a detailed financial and technical offer in response to these terms of reference.

Applications have to be submitted at the latest on **25 September 2022** on www.planbleu.org and via e-mail to [\[aterrisse@planbleu.org\]](mailto:aterrisse@planbleu.org) and [\[planbleu@planbleu.org\]](mailto:planbleu@planbleu.org). For more information, please contact Mr. Arnaud Terrisse [\[aterrisse@planbleu.org\]](mailto:aterrisse@planbleu.org).

Annex A

Draft Concept Note

Mediterranean Forests Security Flagship

DRAFT OUTLINE July 2022

SUMMARY: *The Mediterranean Basin is a global hotspot of biological diversity, the most diverse biome in Europe. The Mediterranean environment is highly vulnerable to climate change and other pressures, with observed impacts on nature, livelihoods, human health and security. Climate impacts are already evident, and risk exacerbating other regional tensions and crises.*

*A proposed UNEP-FAO **Mediterranean Forest Initiative will deliver an ambitious programme of ecosystem restoration in the Mediterranean Basin, with a focus on regional cooperation to protect and restore forests.** The Initiative will boost Mediterranean regional efforts to combat climate change, create green jobs, and reinforce regional interdependencies to build peace.*

The proposed initiative rests on three pre-existing pillars:

- 1. **Scientific analysis** by UNEP and FAO of Mediterranean climate change and ecosystems, and identification of nature-based **solutions** to climate-related challenges;*
- 2. **Networks for Mediterranean regional environmental cooperation**, including the UNEP-hosted Mediterranean Action Plan system and the FAO-hosted *Silva Mediterranea*;*
- 3. **Delivery mechanisms for environmental support to fragile and conflict-affected states and societies**, potentially including UNREDD, UNEP partnerships with UN missions, and the Climate Security Mechanism.*

*The initiative also builds on **new opportunities for ambitious action**, including the [Glasgow Leaders Declaration on Forests and Land Use](#), the availability of increased climate finance, and new mandates and capacities for UN action to promote transboundary environmental cooperation in conflict-affected areas. Ambitious action on Mediterranean forests will **deliver mitigation, adaptation and development objectives** for the region, including enhanced security, justice and jobs.*

1. Context

Forests are critical to Mediterranean adaptation and stability, in the face of climate change and other environmental stresses. In 2015, forests occupied 10.04 percent of the total area of Mediterranean countries, equivalent to the combined size of Spain and Morocco. Forests provide a wide range of provisioning, regulating and cultural services of value to societies in the Mediterranean region:

- In 2015, Mediterranean forests stored 5 066 billion tonnes of carbon, equivalent to 1.7 percent of global forest carbon;
- Forests offer protection against erosion, important for soil quality and for reducing the risk of landslides and other disasters;
- Forests and trees play a critical role in conserving and regulating water resources. Forested watersheds and wetlands supply 75 percent of portable water to rural and urban areas in the Mediterranean. More than half of the world's "water poor" population is concentrated around the Mediterranean basin, which holds only 3 percent of the world's freshwater resources (UNEP/MAP, 2017). Protection of such watersheds will be critical for agriculture, ecology and human health in the context of climate change;

- Trees grown in agricultural lands enhance soil fertility and serve as a reservoir of biodiversity and ecological corridors.

Mediterranean forests are threatened: During the past decade, limited growth of forests in the northern Mediterranean Basin has been accompanied by a decline in forest area in the south and eastern Mediterranean. Constraints on the Mediterranean's water resources are already a major cause of Mediterranean forest degradation. These constraints include climate change, anthropic pressures arising from growing water demand for domestic and industrial uses, the development of irrigated zones and tourism.

Climate change has already contributed to major biodiversity loss and increased water deficit.¹ Climate impacts on Mediterranean societies include declining agricultural productivity, [food commodity price shocks](#) (affecting food importing countries), escalating risk of [extraordinary landscape fires](#), sea level rise, and adaptive [societal](#) responses, including increased migration.

These trends will intensify during the coming decades. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) [assesses](#) that extreme agricultural drought in the Mediterranean Basin will be at least twice as likely at 1.5°C global warming, 150 to 200% more likely at 2°C warming, and over 200% at 4°C. On land and in the sea, heat waves will intensify in duration and peak temperatures. Despite strong regional variations, summer rainfall will likely be reduced by 10 to 30% in some regions, increasing existing water shortages, desertification and decreasing agricultural productivity. Mediterranean drylands will likely become drier and their extent is expected to increase across the region. Global warming projections of 1.5°C, 2°C and 4°C above pre-industrial levels correspond to 12%, 20% and 41% increases in dryland area respectively.

For freshwater systems, projections suggest decreased hydrological connectivity, increased concentration of pollutants during droughts, changes in biological communities as a result of harsher environmental conditions, and a decrease in biological processes like nutrient uptake, primary production, or decomposition. Increased pressure by users on the shrinking water resources will likely aggravate impacts on river ecosystems.

Climate change may lead to a general reduction in the provision of regulating ecosystems services provided by forests (e.g. carbon storage, regulation of freshwater quantity and quality) and a general increase in the number of fires, burnt areas and generally, an increase in climate-related forest hazards.² With the expected increase in wildfires, burnt area could increase across the region by up to 40% for 1.5°C warming, and up to 100% from current levels for 3°C warming at the end of the 21st century. Climate change risks also include conversion of forests to fire prone shrub communities, and outbreaks of pests and pathogens. Semi-natural ecosystems are at risk of fragmentation or disappearance due to human pressure, especially in the southernmost part of the Mediterranean Basin.

Fragility and conflict in the Mediterranean Basin undermine efforts to protect the environment, contributing to a downwards spiral of resource depletion and degradation. The Mediterranean is impacted by numerous sources of fragility, as outlined by the European Union in its 2021 [New Agenda for the Mediterranean](#). These include protracted conflicts, displacement, and unsustainable use of natural resources which – together with climate change - “jeopardise access to water, food, and energy, accelerate desertification and loss of biodiversity, and threaten lives and livelihoods”. Economic and gender inequalities persist, and governments struggle to meet the aspirations of a youthful population.

¹ IPCC AR6 WG2 p.2-85

² “Ecosystem services provision by Mediterranean forests will be compromised above 2°C warming”, *Global Change Biology* 27(18), Alejandra Morán-Ordóñez, Julia Ramsauer, Lluís Coll, Lluís Brotons, Aitor Ameztegui, first published: 06 July 2021
<https://doi.org/10.1111/gcb.15745>

In conflict-affected parts of the region, environmental governance and especially transboundary governance is weak or absent. Mediterranean societies are further impacted by the consequences of crises across the Middle East, in sub-Saharan Africa and Asia: many host high numbers of refugees, and grapple with other dimensions of regional instability including illicit trade and irregular migration. Reinforcing regional stability and cooperation will be critical as the Mediterranean Basin begins to experience strong climate change impacts.

Other primary drivers of environmental degradation are urbanization, tourism, transport, business and industry (including mining and energy operations) and agricultural developments. These are propelled by demographic growth, pollution, overexploitation of natural resources (hunting, gathering and fishing), natural disasters and human disturbances. The Mediterranean population has grown from 259 million in 1960 to 552 million in 2018, and is expected to increase to 670 million by 2050 (World Bank, 2015). Most of the population growth is occurring in southern and eastern Mediterranean countries, particularly in urban and coastal areas – many of which are threatened by sea level rise.

Faced with shared ecological threats, efforts to protect Mediterranean forest ecosystems will be most effective if communities and states share knowledge and cooperate on ecosystem restoration across boundaries.

Transboundary cooperation would help to protect vital ecosystems in the Mediterranean, for the following reasons:

1. **Climate adaptation planning will be most effective if it includes regional and transboundary analysis of pathways, benefits and impacts.** Regional and transboundary [adaptation](#) planning requires scientific knowledge and cooperation at all scales, and should be recognized as delivering, in some cases, regional or global public goods. Adaptation is not necessarily benign – it can redistribute vulnerability and create or magnify risk for others, especially across borders. Transboundary planning is therefore necessary to maximize the benefits of adaptation and prevent maladaptation.
2. **The climate adaptation practices already identified by Mediterranean scientists can be applied most effectively via cooperation across boundaries.** MedECC scientists, for example, recommend:
 - Promotion of “climate-wise connectivity” through permeability of landscapes, conservation or creation of dispersal corridors and habitat networks may all facilitate the upward migration of lowland species to mountains in order to adapt to new climate change conditions;
 - Promotion of more adequate forest management taking into account local conditions and future projections can improve the adaptation of Mediterranean forests to warmer climates (e.g., mixed-species forest stands, thinning, management of understory);
 - The management of spatial heterogeneity in landscapes, to reduce fire extent under climate warming;
 - Preserving the natural flow variability of Mediterranean rivers and streams and wide riparian zones, along with reductions in water demand may assist adaptation of freshwater ecosystems to future environmental change.

Implementing such measures will require transboundary cooperation between the states of the Mediterranean Basin.

3. **Sharing Mediterranean societies’ existing knowledge of natural resource management can help protect ecosystems – sometimes without introduction of new technologies or extensive planning processes.** This existing knowledge is especially valuable in contexts of crisis or conflict, in which state weakness impedes large-scale investments and centralized adaptation planning. However, this knowledge of

measures to protect natural resources “is often under-exploited due to a lack of means and conditions for valorizing this knowledge. Natural resources in rural areas are a source of both marketable and non-marketable goods and services. While these are underestimated and frequently go unrecorded, they are nevertheless essential to human development ... These range from food and water through to aromatic and medicinal plants, fuels, wood and building materials. Maintaining the health of these fragile agrosilvopastoral ecosystems is therefore crucial to conserving both biodiversity and human well-being.”³

2. Opportunity

While the confluence of security and climate crises in the Mediterranean Basin may lead to further instability in the coming years, **significant opportunities are emerging for enhanced regional environmental cooperation and interdependence**. By working cooperatively across boundaries and via regional networks, states and societies can enhance climate action and reinforce interdependencies. **Tackling the climate crisis can thus become a driver of regional integration, with co-benefits for the environment and for peace.**

Opportunities include:

Existence of viable transboundary environmental management frameworks and options to promote ecosystem restoration: Mediterranean states cooperate actively on environmental protection and management, via mature multilateral networks that have functioned for many decades. These include the UNEP [Mediterranean Action Plan](#)/Barcelona Convention system, which provides a comprehensive institutional, legal and implementation framework for concerted action to fulfill the vision of a healthy Mediterranean Sea and Coast; and the [Silva Mediterranea](#) Committee on Mediterranean Forestry, which with FAO guidance advises and coordinates the work of Mediterranean governments on forestry questions. In a politically fragmented region, the existence of such well-established networks reduces transaction costs of cooperation, and facilitates low-profile, effective engagement among regional states.

Furthermore, and within these scientific and cooperative frameworks, UNEP and FAO – working with scientific and expert partners – have delivered thorough analyses and recommendations relating to environment and development in the Mediterranean Basin, describing key challenges and proposing relevant solutions. Recent analytical publications include:

- [State of Mediterranean Forests](#) (2018);
- [The State of the Environment and Development in the Mediterranean](#) (2020);
- The first [Mediterranean Assessment Report](#) on *Climate and Environmental Change in the Mediterranean Basin: Current Situation and Risks for the Future* (by Mediterranean Experts on Climate and Environmental Change, MedECC) (2020);
- Mediterranean aspects of the UNEP-GRID report [Spreading like Wildfire: the rising threat of extraordinary landscape fires](#) (2022).

In these analytical reports, policy options have been identified that, if implemented, can enhance the resilience of critical Mediterranean ecosystems under environmental change. Management options are, in many cases, relatively low-cost, and (with contextual knowledge and local participation, supplemented by external support) could be implemented in societies with limited state capacity. Many also have transboundary dimensions, and – as noted above – would be implemented most effectively with transboundary cooperation.

³ State of Mediterranean Forests, UNEP/FAO 2018, p.4

Commitments by regional states to cooperate on environmental protection and climate resilience: Environment is one of only a few areas in which dialogue among Mediterranean Basin states has been sustained over decades, and in which regional leaders show *growing* ambition to cooperate. Recent examples of commitment to enhancing regional environmental cooperation include:

- **The 2017 Agadir Commitment**, in which Mediterranean states [pledged](#) to “reinforce regional cooperation on Forest and Landscape Restoration and on Land Degradation Neutrality”;
- **The 2021 [Athens Declaration on climate change and environment in the Mediterranean](#)**, in which the nine Mediterranean member states in the EU jointly “Acknowledge the need for decisive adaptation and resilience policies ...; Agree to intensify multilateral cooperation through the sharing of experiences and best practices in planning and implementing the necessary adaptation policies and prevention measures [and] Underline the need to engage in active dialogue and promote common initiatives and responses with all Mediterranean states, taking a regional approach to the climate crisis in alignment with EU action”;
- **The 2021 Antalya Ministerial Declaration**, December 2021, in which parties to the Barcelona Convention [jointly](#) expressed their deep concern about “interrelated global climate, biodiversity and pollution crises and their results in the Mediterranean”, and pledged to “work with all involved international and regional partners and stakeholders to *increase climate ambition, build resilience and lower emissions through strong collective actions*”, and to widen “*engagement in active dialogue and promote common initiatives, supporting regional responses* to our shared environmental challenges in order to amplify their impact, across and beyond the basin.”
- **2022 Mediterranean Forests:** In the 2022 [Antalya Declaration](#) Mediterranean countries noted that “green recovery investments not only create jobs and income, but also mitigate the risk of future zoonotic diseases”; recognized “the importance of forest fire management, prevention, and post fire restoration in the context of climate change”; and encouraged stakeholders “to implement and scale up restoration actions, and to support younger and future generations to contribute to biodiversity conservation, climate change mitigation and adaptation.”

Beyond these formal joint commitments to increase environmental action, Mediterranean leaders are showing increased interest in environmental protection and management – including decision-makers at the centre of government, who have scope to influence economic and investment directions, and foreign relations. In addition, the increased availability of climate finance – including finance for forests and ecosystems for mitigation and adaptation – provides a critical opportunity for scaling up ambition and action. If regional states and their international partners seize such opportunities for cooperation and ecosystem restoration now, they will help to build a future for the Mediterranean Basin that is more prosperous, resilient and secure.

3. Proposed focus of the Mediterranean Forests initiative

UNEP proposes to develop an ambitious programme for forest protection and restoration – working where possible with FAO and other partners. The programme will be characterized by **high ambition**; an effort to **leverage existing Mediterranean Basin partnerships and knowledge**; and a commitment to **intensify support to fragile and conflict-affected states and societies**.

High ambition

In alignment with the ambition of the [Decade on Ecosystem Restoration](#), this initiative will deliver large scale restoration of forest ecosystems in the Mediterranean, which will provide numerous benefits: slowing climate change; bringing back biodiversity; reducing pressure on nature by reducing land conversion; providing jobs; restoring nature’s buffers against zoonotic diseases; and helping vulnerable communities adapt to the changing climate.

The benefits of investing in nature are well-documented:

- Every dollar invested in restoration creates up to 30 dollars in economic benefits;
- Restoration as a climate change adaptation solution is cheaper and brings more co-benefits than technology-based solutions;
- Investing just four dollars per resident in growing trees in cities could improve the health of millions of people by filtering and cooling air.

Leveraging existing Mediterranean Basin partnerships and knowledge

The initiative will build on and leverage existing partnerships and knowledge, including UNEP-hosted Mediterranean Action Plan and Regional Activity Centres, especially Plan Bleu; the FAO-hosted *Silva Mediterranea*; and other networks and Basin-wide entities including the Union for Mediterranean, the Center for Mediterranean Integration, and IUCN Centre for Mediterranean Cooperation.

Intensifying support to fragile and conflict-affected states

UN member states increasingly recognise the detrimental effects of climate change on peace and security. Urgent action is needed to protect and restore critical ecosystems, *especially* in states affected by insecurity and conflict, and *including transboundary cooperation* between conflicting parties on issues relating to the environment.

To date, funding for climate adaptation globally has been inadequate, and climate finance to fragile states has also been substantially lower than to non-fragile countries.⁴ The Secretary-General [warned](#) the Security Council in its September 2021 debate on climate change and security that “to deal with the already dire impacts of climate disruption on the lives and livelihoods of people all over the world, *we need a breakthrough on adaptation and resilience... We simply cannot achieve our shared climate goals – nor achieve hope for lasting peace and security – if resilience and adaptation continue to be the forgotten half of the climate equation.*”

UNEP has made a clear commitment in its current programme of work to dedicate support to fragile and conflict-affected states and regions. The following commitments are particularly relevant to this initiative:

- (I) Under section III (A medium-term strategy for the decade of action) UNEP will work to “leave no one behind” while increasing its focus on the **special needs of disaster- and conflict-affected States**. By focusing on the special needs of countries that are vulnerable to or **affected by disaster and conflicts**, UNEP will assist Member States in fully implementing the Sendai Framework for **Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030**. In addition, “**UNEP will assist United Nations peacekeeping, peacebuilding and humanitarian and political missions where dedicated responses to environmental dimensions of a crisis are required**... UNEP will also engage in emergency and short- to medium-term post-crisis support, assisting Member States with integrating environmental considerations into oversight, assessment and planning for better **response and recovery**” (emphasis added);
- (II) Under the climate action sub programme, there will be a focus “on those who can contribute to the highest impact while supporting the most vulnerable... UNEP will continue to support adaptation action while integrating aspects of human health, gender responsiveness, **environmental security and poverty eradication, particularly in the countries that are most vulnerable and most in need, such as disaster- and conflict- affected countries...**”;

⁴ See CLIMATE FINANCE FOR SUSTAINING PEACE, UNDP, 2021 p. 26.

- (III) Under the nature for action sub programme, and in particular under outcome 3 (nature conservation and restoration are enhanced), “UNEP will support habitat management through transformative processes and outcomes, **including large-scale ecosystem restoration**, complemented by social and behavior change, to minimize damage to highly valued **ecosystems, including damage from disasters, conflict and climate change.**”

The benefits of ecosystem restoration for climate resilience are particularly relevant to the Mediterranean region’s crisis- and conflict affected states and societies. In such contexts, nature loss and pollution are intense, but governance of natural resources and ecosystems is weak and other aspects of climate adaptation and mitigation are hard to implement. In the State of [Palestine](#), for example, development and maintenance of high-value infrastructure is affected by ongoing conflicts and access restrictions. The political situation limits the policy space for sound environmental governance, and impedes the use of best practice solutions to address natural resource scarcity and urbanization challenges. And in Lebanon, implementation of the country’s ambitious Nationally Determined Contribution has been limited because much depends on the transition in the electricity sector from heavy fuel oil to natural gas and renewable sources. Transition of the electricity sector is yet to happen, due to longstanding governance challenges and constraints.