



**Lebanon Recovery Fund Project:
Integrated forest fires management – forest fires prevention and control
OSRO/LEB/703/UNJ**



FAO hands over tools and equipment for fire fighting to the Lebanese Civil Defense

Within the framework of the Forest Fire Management, Prevention and Control project, the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) held a ceremony on Thursday 5 February 2009 to hand over forest fire equipment and tools to the Lebanese Civil Defense.

The event jointly organized with the European Union (EU), will took place in the Civil Defense warehouse in Tahwita – Beirut in the presence of the Ministers of Environment and Interior Antoine Karam and Ziad Baroud represented by the General Darwish Hobeika.

The event featured a statement presenting the project by FAO Representative in Lebanon, Dr. Ali Moumen, as well as the hand over of some equipment to the civil defense and the Ministry of Agriculture procured by an EU fire project.

As part of the project, FAO handed over fire hoses (180), fire swatter and back pack assembly (120), fire rake and shovel (90), axes (60) and drip torch (30). In addition to that, the international agency will be receiving in the coming days 100 sets of uniforms and protection gears; each set comprises a pant, coat, shirt, gloves, carbon shield bandanasref, helmet and goggles. Six forest fire vehicles for the first intervention will be ordered through this project once the Ministry of Environment finalizes the specifications of these vehicles.

Background

The Forest Fire Management, Prevention and Control project is funded by the Lebanese Recovery Fund - set up during the Stockholm Donor Conference in August 2006 - and implemented by the FAO, the Ministry of Environment (MOE) and the Association for Forests, Development and Conservation (AFDC). The main partners are the Ministries of Agriculture and Interior, the Civil Defense and Local Communities.

The US\$2.6 Million project, which was launched in November 2008 upon the placement of the cornerstone of a nursery in the village of Andaket, northern Lebanon, will run for two years, and tackle almost all the components of forest fire fighting starting from prevention to the rehabilitation of damaged areas.

The project entails three means of intervention; the first aiming at fire preventive measures, the second concentrating on fire fighting control and the third focusing on damaged forests assessment and rehabilitation. It aims at the prevention of future forests fires and the efficient fighting of fires when they occur. In addition to the training sessions and the awareness campaigns that will be conducted, the project also intends to rehabilitate damaged forest areas that were affected by the 2006 war and those that were damaged by the 2007 fires to allow for re-access of rural communities to their land resources (woodlands, forests, etc.) through the alleviation of obstacles, such as demining. The project will conduct an assessment of ecological and socio-economic losses and the damage caused to the infrastructure of the forestry sector in Lebanon.

Achievements:

As for the achievements that were accomplished, they include a three-day training session on forest fire fighting techniques for volunteers that had been conducted in the Mediterranean Forest Development and Conservation Center of Lebanon (MFDCL). Four remaining sessions will be undertaken progressively starting February 2009.



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Additionally, an unprecedented national awareness campaign on forest fire prevention, fighting and rehabilitation targeting the local communities at large was organized and some 500 forest fire awareness kits were developed including Press Ads, Radio spots, and billboards and Unipoles.

It is worth mentioning that a nursery assessment was achieved and a forest assessment, which will be the tool for management plan and technical forest intervention, is ongoing.