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## For the Southern Europe Regional Representative Position

To The IFSA Family,

I am Yezdan Rohat Köneş, a 22-year-old student from Istanbul, Türkiye. Currently, I am in my 4th year of a Bachelor's degree in Forest Engineering at Istanbul University-Cerrahpasa, and I am also in the 2nd year of a Geography bachelor's degree at Istanbul University. During my academic journey, I had the opportunity to participate in the Erasmus+ program at the University of Valladolid in Spain, where I also completed an internship with the "Smart Fishways" project under the Applied Ecohydraulics Group (GEA).

In 2021, I became acquainted with the International Forestry Students' Association (IFSA) and officially joined as a member in September 2022. Currently, I serve as the Local Committee (LC) Representative of Istanbul. I also had the opportunity to attend the Southern European Regional Meeting (SERM) 2023, the Balkan Meeting in 2024, 35<sup>th</sup> Forestry Versatility in Brno. I was also a delegate of IFSA for the Forest Europe meeting which was located in Istanbul (2023). They were all amazing and enlightening experiences that reinforced my commitment to sustainable forestry practices and international cooperation. Currently, I am preparing to participate in the IUFRO meeting, which will be held in June, as an IFSA delegate.

Looking ahead, my LC and I have taken on the responsibility of organizing SERM 2024, a role that I wholeheartedly embrace. My aspirations within IFSA extend beyond this event, and I am eager to contribute in various capacities within the organization to further its mission of global environmental stewardship. After SERM 2023, I realized my enjoyment in getting to know different cultures and the biological diversity of different regions, leading me to participate in IFSA's Cultural Days. Thanks to the encouragement of some of my friends who currently hold official positions within IFSA, I decided to explore the official positions. After researching IFSA's structure and its departments, I decided to apply for the "Southern Europe Regional Representative" position, which I have been thinking about for a year. I asked for advice from previous officials who had worked in this position before, focusing on their suggestions and opinions. I am feeling confident that I could handle the responsibilities and tasks.

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As the Regional Representative for IFSA for Southern Europe, my primary objective is going to be building a strong, cohesive community among all the local committees (LCs) in our region. I will aim to create a supportive network where every member feels heard, valued and empowered to participate in a variety of IFSA events. I will actively listen to each LC's needs and concerns and try to resolve their problems quickly and effectively. My goal is to lead with empathy and enthusiasm, encouraging greater collaboration and participation across all LCs. Together we can increase our collective impact by promoting sustainable forestry practices and education in Southern Europe.

All my duties and responsibilities aside, I have in mind to determine a forestry topic before each coffee hour and deliver articles on this subject to each LC, and when the coffee hour comes, aside from the main topics, I am planning to organize discussions on the articles read on the selected topic and share the students' perspectives. I aim to enable them to evaluate their opinions and comments together and to establish stronger bonds with each other.

My commitment is to support IFSA and generate opportunities for its members. I'm confident in my ability to perform effectively in this position and look forward to another successful term with the IFSA family!

IFSA hugs,

Yezdan Rohat Köneş

