



UNITED NATIONS



UN-ISDR Wildland Fire Advisory Group / Global Wildland Fire Network

Coordinator and Secretariat: Global Fire Monitoring Center (GFMC), Freiburg, Germany

Regional Balkan Wildland Fire Network / Global Wildland Fire Network

International Technical and Scientific Consultation "Forest Fire Management in the Balkan Region"

Ohrid, Macedonia, 4 to 5 April 2005

Conclusions

On 4-5 April 2005 the Republic of Macedonia hosted the International Technical and Scientific Consultation "Forest Fire Management in the Balkan Region". The conference was sponsored by the UN-ISDR Wildland Fire Advisory Group / Global Wildland Fire Network through its Coordinator and Secretariat, the Global Fire Monitoring Center (GFMC). Funding of the consultation was provided by the German Foreign Office (represented by the GFMC) and contributions by the participating and contributing countries (Albania, Bulgaria, Croatia, Greece, Hungary, Macedonia, Serbia and Montenegro, Turkey).

The participants of the consultation:

Recognizing the importance of forests as providers of environmental services and social, economic, and ecological benefits to humankind in Southeast Europe;

Expressing concern about the increasing frequency and destructive force of wildfires in Southeast Europe affecting human health and wellbeing, economic assets, property, biodiversity, water resources, soil, atmosphere and climate;

Noting that changing land use and rural exodus in some parts of the region is resulting in increased wildfire hazard and vulnerability of ecosystems; likewise urban encroachment in wildlands resulting in increased vulnerability of human populations to fire, notably at the rural-urban interface;

Noting an increase in vulnerability of humans and ecosystems to secondary disasters following fires, including floods, landslides and soil erosion;

Noting that the effects of climate variability and climate change caused by human activities are already producing periods of extreme drought resulting in an increase in the severity of fires in some ecosystems;

Concluding from the analyses and reports of the countries of the Balkan region presented at this consultation, it is evident that the majority of countries in the regions are ready to establish and strengthen a regional dialogue on cooperation and exchange of information, research and wildland fire management as a contribution to forest and environmental protection, stability and peace; bilateral and multilateral agreements should be considered;

Expressing the intention to overcome **current gaps and shortages** in:

- Consistent information and statistics about fires, their causes and their effects
- Applied research in social sciences and humanities, including finances for research
- Integration of social, economic, environmental considerations and institutions in developing tangible policies and practices related to wildland fire
- Integration of fire as a component of land, resource, and forest management
- Community-based approaches to fire management
- Training in the appropriate use of fire (for example, prescribed burning for fuel reduction and nature conservation)
- Training in the safe and efficient use of resources for fire suppression (for example, appropriate equipment for fire suppression, wildland fire safety)

- Compatible approaches, e.g., global implementation of the Incident Command System (ICS) and the International Wildland Fire Agreements Template

Recalling the recommendations of the International Wildland Fire Summit (Sydney, 2003), the UN-ISDR Wildland Fire Advisory Group / Global Wildland Fire Network (2004), and the FAO Ministerial Meeting on Forests (2005) with respect to the management of wildland fires and the strategy to strengthen international cooperation in wildland fire management;

Endorsing the efforts of the United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (UN-ISDR) and its Wildland Fire Advisory Group to assist and strengthen the efforts of United Nations bodies, other international organizations, and non-governmental organizations, to reduce the negative impacts of wildland fires;

Supporting the objectives of the ISDR Global Wildland Fire Network (GWFN) and the Global Fire Monitoring Center (GFMC) to systematically increase the intra- and inter-regional cooperation in wildland fire management for the world;

Expressing gratitude to the Faculty of Forestry of Skopje, represented by Mr. Nikola Nikolov, for the preparation and organisation of the consultation;

Recommend to governments, international organizations and non-government organizations the following action plan for cooperation on wildland fire research and management in Southeast Europe:

Research

- Secure financing of a regional wildland fire research programme
- Strengthen wildland fire research cooperation between neighbouring countries
- Develop standardization of terminology and procedures
- Develop standardized data collection i.a.w. the further development of global wildland fire data collection
- Encourage increased involvement of the science community in wildland fire-related research programmes (interdisciplinary research)
- Support the establishment of national or regional (international) wildland fire research centers
- Establish a regional wildland fire weather network
- Approach the EU Erasmus/Sokrates programme for developing a dedicated programme for wildland fire exchange

Consolidation of the Regional Network

- Expand the current focus on the Balkan Region to a “Regional South East European Wildland Fire Network” and invite countries adjoining to the Balkan region to cooperate
- Establish a network of country Focal Points, preferably with one representative of a government agency and a representative of the academia
- Support the network co-coordinators that are representing the main stakeholders involved (Mr. Nikola Nikolov, Macedonia, Research; Mr. Vladimir Konstantinov, Bulgaria, Forest Service; Mr. Dulijano Grum, Croatia, Fire Service) (initially nominated for a 1-year period)
- Seek for widespread membership in the network
- Maintain a publicly accessible website of the network (communication language: English)
- Produce an initial publication of this regional consultation and the network foundation, to be published in UN-ECE/FAO International Forest Fire News, including a summary of previous activities in international cooperation in the SE European Region
- Conduct a first Regional Advanced Wildland Fire Management Training Course not later than 2006, based on experiences in other regions and the FAO courses in Bulgaria; seek support from the German Foreign Office
- Request a FAO Technical Development Project (TCP) on “Development of a Regional SE European Strategy for International Cooperation in Wildland Fire Management”, preferably to be conducted before 2007
- Improve access and reliability of regional and country / ecosystem specific early warning information, including automatic distribution
- Participate at the 4th International Wildland Fire Conference, Madrid, Spain (May 2007)
- Convene the next network meeting not later than 2006